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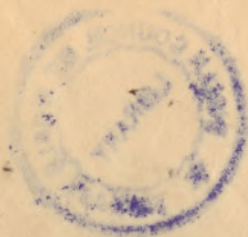


Algiers Conference of Non-aligned Countries

Address of Prime Minister
Indira Gandhi



September 6, 1973



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Address of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, to the Plenary Session of the Fourth Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers on September 6, 1973:

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:

It is an honour to be in Algiers and to pay tribute to the indomitable spirit of the men and women of this land, whose epic fight for freedom evokes a sense of pride in all of us. Remembering India's own protracted struggle of nearly ten decades and true to our tradition of anti-imperialism, our sympathies were naturally with the people of Algeria to whom we gave full support. We had in New Delhi a representative of the National Liberation Front from the very early days of the Algerian struggle. When after years of striving and sacrifice, independence came to this tortured land, my father hailed the event as "a tonic and a blessing".

We have watched with admiration Algeria's efforts to achieve social justice and its role in international affairs. The holding of this Conference is a tribute to that role and I bring to you, Mr. President, and to your people, the warm greetings of the Government and people of India.

Assembled in this Conference Hall are eminent leaders who have been rebels, architects of great revolutionary movements and creators of new nations. It gives me pleasure to see familiar faces; specially respected are two elder statesmen, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie, and President Tito, one of the inspirers of the non-aligned movement. I am glad to make new friends and to welcome new countries —

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Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Malta, Oman, Peru and Qatar — to our ranks as also Cambodia and the P.R.G. of South Vietnam. I am glad that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is joining us. He brings the faith and strength of the freedom-loving people of Bangladesh. We miss President Allende of Chile, who is fighting a battle which is common to us. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking my good friend, President Kaunda of Zambia, for the high sense of dedication and conscientiousness with which he has looked after the affairs of the non-aligned movement for the last three years.

Why have we, the Heads of nearly eighty Governments, gathered here, travelling long distances in spite of urgent domestic preoccupations? Is it to perform a mere ritual or to renew a dying faith by an act of congregation? The answer is firmly in the negative.

We are here because of our convictions and in response to the inspiration which initially brought us together and which is still valid in the contemporary world. We have a part to play in the re-making of the world. Non-alignment was born as an assertion of our will to be sovereign and not be mere objects of imperial history. It came into being after the travails of the Second World War when the world appeared to be rent asunder irrevocably. We said then that these divisions were inconsistent with the real interests of the masses who had just emerged from the long night of imperial exploitation. It was a deliberate, though difficult, attempt to lower tensions and tempers at a time when these were considered the accoutrements of strength. It was a principled contribution to peace. Non-alignment has not lost any of its relevance even though the rigid attitudes of the Cold War have softened.

We often hear the phrase "third world". Is this not a product of the unconscious desire of the small affluent section of humanity to continue as oases of prosperity in the midst of vast waste lands of want? Surely, our world is too small to be further fragmented. Mankind will survive together in hope and faith or give way to despair and destruction.

Three years ago I had suggested that we should direct our labours to carry forward the Unfinished Revolution of our times. One aspect of this Revolution is the political liberation of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin-America and the Caribbeans. Another is the endeavour to overcome the economic, technological and intellectual consequences of colonialism. But in reality and when seen in full historical perspective, the Revolution is much larger in its scope — ever unfolding new dimensions. The story of man is the story of his progressive emergence into freedom — in his social relationships, in his attitude to authority and in his economic dealings. If science is the means of acquiring power, the end should be the use of power for the good of man. The Unfinished Revolution must, therefore, continue until freedom is assured to all, until inequalities amongst nations and within them are narrowed and until the power at the disposal of nations is tamed through institutions in which all peoples can participate.)

At present we are unsure of ourselves and groping our way. Economic difficulties, political tensions and the uncertainty of the future bring many problems to the surface. Some groups adopt aggressive and chauvinistic attitudes, seeing them as substitutes for strength. We can be strong and can assert our own personalities only by following the right policies and by a mature combination of the old wisdom with new insights in order

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to evolve distinctive patterns of social organisation notably in administration, legal processes and education in its widest sense.

Each of our countries has a surfeit of its own domestic problems, many of which have accumulated over the centuries and some of which have arisen from development itself. To these are added the problems created by external forces. Any one nation's interpretation of its legitimate interests or an economic decision taken in response to an internal situation has immediate and long-term consequences for many other countries. Some concepts and technological discoveries have a worldwide impact. The work of scientists and technologists in the advanced countries in fields such as communications, space science, metallurgy, fuel technology or medicine poses many complex challenges for us.

When we became free, it was with high hopes of bringing about immediate changes in our society. We thought that the process of transformation, once initiated and pursued with fervour, would gather momentum. But political and economic interests, domestic as well as international, have proved to be formidable obstacles. As the economic struggle becomes more acute, the long suppressed voices of people sharpen, but with every step forward, the resistance of entrenched groups, often aligned with foreign interests, especially the faceless multinational corporations, becomes more vehement, unscrupulous and, at the same time, more subtle and even insidious, for it is no longer overt but indirectly subversive and provocative. In India we see these constraints in operation every day. Perhaps this is also the experience of other developing countries. Hence, the removal of poverty depends not merely on capital accu-

mulation, important as it is, but on the generation of conscious political forces to overcome these constraints.

(Colonialism has left deep scars of inferiority which become all the more sensitive in the face of the staggering advance of science and technology in the affluent countries. It is right that we acquire knowledge and profit from the experience of others. But in so doing, we should not lose sight of the actual needs of the majority of our people. Technology must not be mere transplantation or widen disparities and impose heavier burdens than our society is capable of bearing. Step by step we are being pushed in a particular direction, imitating patterns and methods which do not necessarily fit into or benefit our society. The time has come for a re-assessment, not only to avoid the problems created by industrialisation in other countries but more positively to clarify our own goals. For us the question of disparities and inequalities is not academic but one which affects our future, even our survival. The aim of our socio-economic transformation is not merely to augment the Gross National Product or to build consumer societies but to balance growth, social justice and the inculcation of cultural values which are inspired by perception and compassion.

Economic and social development cannot just be a domestic effort for any of us. It has to be a major international concern. We the non-aligned do believe that the fight against poverty demands cooperation in which resources and technology are shared among nations. We are all familiar with the political fluctuations of "aid" — with unfulfilled expectations and aid-weariness. The hope expressed at the Lusaka Conference that the shortcomings of the First Development Decade would be remedied in the Second has been belied. Since then much

has been written about aid for development. Perhaps one of the most interesting has been the Report of the Pearson Commission. It might be worthwhile to remind ourselves of the conclusion reached by the Commission: "A good deal of bilateral aid has indeed been dispensed in order to achieve short-term political favours, gain strategic advantages, or promote exports from the donor. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that hopes of satisfactory development progress were disappointed." Subordinating aid policies to foreign policy aims has seldom been a successful exercise.)

The rich today have become more preoccupied with themselves and alarmed that the new phenomena of planetary pollution and the shrinking of mineral and fuel resources are shaking the very foundations of their affluence. Although the compulsions of international co-operation demand a revision of old ideas and policies, they cling on. Even at the Lusaka Conference we had noted signs of a weakening of will in the protagonists of the Cold War and their realisation that confrontation was not yielding the results they had expected. Now rigid attitudes have blurred, and a new era of polycentrism and *detente* has begun. This we warmly welcome.

However, side by side with these favourable developments, there continue to exist areas of instability and conflict, of repression and injustice, of domination and discrimination. Attempts to order the world in the interests of a few countries have not been wholly abandoned. Nuclear stockpiles are increasing. So is the acquisition of conventional armaments, although there is some limitation on strategic weapons because of economic compulsions. We read horrifying reports of experiments in chemical and biological warfare. External interference, coercion and the occupation of the lands of

others continue. The deliberate induction of armaments in the name of promoting regional balances and the arming of small nations, beyond the limits that can be sustained by their own socio-economic structure, all these threaten peace.

In South-East Asia, the situation remains still critical. The full implementation of the agreements in Vietnam and Laos and the cessation of all outside interference in Cambodia are essential for peace and stability in that region. (The non-aligned nations must together ensure that Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are allowed to work out their future and that all must respect their sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and neutrality.)

The persistence of colonialism and racialism in Africa is an outrage on humanity. (This anachronistic colonialism could not have survived without the concealed or open support of their imperialist allies and the sub-imperialist system of South Africa and Rhodesia. The horrors reported from Mozambique and Angola are further tragic chapters in their grim history. We denounce these in the strongest terms. Ways must be found for giving more effective support to the liberation struggles of the peoples of Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.)

Indian tradition helps us to look at the world as one, and today science and technology open immense possibilities to transform this dream into reality. How much more necessary it becomes to ensure that various hues of racialism and other forms of narrow-mindedness do not come in the way of man's freedom.

We support the just cause of the Arab people for the return of their occupied lands and for the restoration

of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine. Israel should realise that it cannot purchase security by incurring the hostility of its neighbours. The short-term gain will be a long-term loss.

In our own area, we are striving ceaselessly to clear the old suspicions, to remove the barriers to understanding and to create conditions for an enduring friendship between Bangladesh, Pakistan and ourselves. Last year in Simla and again a few days ago in New Delhi we have signed agreements which incorporate solutions to complex issues. These agreements are important also because, through bilateral discussions, they hold out the hope of peace, on the basis of equality and trust, to 700 million people in the three countries of our sub-continent. We are determined to pursue this goal of reconciliation on our sub-continent.

Moves towards the limitation of nuclear armaments and other weapons of mass destruction are important to the relaxation of tensions. But they do not take us far enough. The total elimination of nuclear weapons and complete disarmament alone can lead to genuine peace. Such disarmament calls for far greater courage and conviction than is now in evidence. We have lent our support to the proposed World Disarmament Conference in the hope that it will be able to generate the will and find a way.

The tendency is to expect instant results from such conferences. We have not come here to negotiate or to settle disputes. The outcome is bound to be intangible but no less substantial: to take back with us a greater understanding and sense of comradeship, to return to our countries with renewed strength to work for our common ideals.

Once we were termed rebels. (I invoke the spirit of rebellion against all assumptions of superiority, against all attempts to dominate or dictate. At the same time, I invoke the spirit of a wider responsibility. (We must speak for those whose numbers are large but whose voice is muted. Their claim to a just share of worldly goods, their right to a life of dignity, is indisputable and cannot be resisted. The past will inspire us but it is the needs of the present and the challenge of the future which are the driving force for our united action. We are responsible not to our individual countries alone, but to the peace and prosperity of the whole world.) Let this bind us anew to the ideal of active non-alignment. Let this be the message of Algiers. Like all enduring ideas it is old, yet ever timely and new.