

2nd Session

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We meet today in a disturbed and unhappy world. Economic dislocations have caused widespread suffering, and there is apprehension that the world might be plunged into still deeper distress. Looming ominously over the whole situation is the fact that the great Powers, instead of coming closer together, are drifting farther apart. There is tension, suspense and anxiety, and an uneasy awareness that things are perhaps moving towards some new and annihilating disaster for mankind, and that not enough is being done to check this trend and direct our course to a more promising future.

It is against this background that I should like to present India's position. Since we last met, a year ago, a momentous change has taken place in our domestic situation. A comparatively brief phase in our very ancient history - when the fortunes of our people and their political condition were subjected to an alien Power - has been brought to an end.

For India, and indeed for Asia, 15 August, 1947 was a fateful day. It saw the triumph of an experiment unique in history, started by that great soul who may well be called the Father of the Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi. In the past, I have not hesitated to criticize British policy towards my country. But on this occasion, with equal readiness, I desire to place on record before this great Assembly, the warm appreciation of the Indian people for the spirit which moved British statesmen to make a voluntary surrender of authority over India. It cannot be easy for people to divest itself of an empire, and for the sake of an enduring world peace, I would commend this example to those other nations which bear towards their colonies the relationship which existed between the United Kingdom and India until yesterday. In particular, I should like to mention the case of Indonesia, whose

cultural ties with India date back many centuries and whose future is of vital importance to the peace and security of Asia. Indonesia has been fighting valiantly to be free and presents a challenge to the United Nations.

I should not, however, be true to myself, nor would I accurately reflect the sentiments of my people, if I were to withhold from this Assembly the sadness that is in our hearts that freedom has come to us only through division which, in its turn, has led to strife - temporary, we hope - in certain parts of our country.

In what is for us, as for the rest of the world, a time of historic transition, we are beset with a multitude of problems. In many respects they are not dissimilar to the problems that face most countries in the world today; but the circumstances in which we have been called upon to solve them have, inevitably, been conditioned by the policies which prevailed during the period of foreign rule in India.

I mention this lest there should be any misunderstanding as to the magnitude and the special complexity of the tasks to which the new-born Government of free India has so energetically set its hand. Comprehensive schemes of reform, reconstruction and development in every field of our national life are either being worked out or, in some instances, are actually in the process of execution.

The endeavour to raise the standard of living and forge new and free institutions for a people would be no easy matter even in a period of assured peace and general prosperity. It is at least no easier in these troubled times, when hunger, uncertainty and fear stalk through our land as through so many other lands. However, I am glad to have the opportunity today of stating from this rostrum that in spite of the adverse conditions, many of which we have inherited, our Government is forging ahead with the full confidence and support of the people.

I would now like to deal briefly with some problems facing us here. At the present time there is a heated controversy over the unanimity rule in the Security Council. The operation of this rule has the effect, in some cases, of producing a stalemate and inhibiting the implementation of the majority will in the Security Council. Such deadlocks are discouraging and disappointing, and we would therefore advise moderation and restraint in the exercise of what is called the veto. The unrestrained use of this power is to be condemned as much as the abuse of any other power. At the same time, the permanent members of the Council have an obligation to strive to the utmost to widen the area of agreement among its members, both permanent and non-permanent.

In the last analysis, the success of the Security Council and the peace and welfare of the world depend not upon the enforcement of a majority decision taken by the great Powers, but upon the forbearance, tolerance and wisdom with which they seek to achieve and maintain unity among themselves.

It is sometimes said that this is an issue between the great Powers on the one side and the small and medium Powers on the other. While it is convenient to speak of the permanent members of the Council as "great Powers", the tendency to classify countries as great and small is not useful. For instance, I would not like to assign India to any of these categories. We are all great in some respects, and no doubt small in others, but we all have an equal right to consideration in this Assembly in accordance with the principles laid down in the Charter.

This brings me to a question of grave importance with which we are confront in this Assembly. What if the Assembly's recommendations .made only after exhaustive and prolonged consideration and debate, are ignored and treated with disrespect by Member States, especially by those to whom a recommendation is specifically directed? I shall have more to say on this subject later, but it is necessary at this point to call your attention to the fact that the South African Government has taken no action to give effect to the principles underlying the

resolution we adopted here last year.¹

A denial that discrimination has been practised against Indians in South Africa is not, I submit, a serious or convincing reply to the General Assembly. The correspondence recently published between the Prime Ministers of the two dominions reveals India's anxiety to reach a fair and honourable settlement of this issue. It concerns, if I may say so before this Assembly, not only the relations between two dominions. Unresolved, it may spread misrepresentation and conflict over a much wider sphere, because of its basically racial character. I believe that this is not the only case where a Member State has disregarded the clearly expressed will of this Assembly. It will therefore be necessary for us to consider and determine the means that may be open to us to ensure that the Assembly's decisions on such matters of importance are treated with respect.

The Indian delegation also feels concerned about what appears to us to be an excessive eagerness on the part of some Member States to invoke the domestic jurisdiction clause of the Charter (Article 2, paragraph 7) whenever a certain type of question is raised.

We have no desire whatever, nor have we the power, to dispute the sovereignty of a Member State, or to attempt to interfere, through the medium of the United Nations or in any other manner, in their internal affairs. We in India know only too well what such interference can mean, and we would resent and resist it as firmly as any other country. It must be recognised, however, that every international question may be regarded as having a national aspect, and we cannot afford to permit a Member State to evade its obligations and thus reduce the value of the Charter.

I have only touched on some of the more important questions that occur to us when we consider the functioning of the United Nations during the past year. I am not wholly satisfied—indeed, none of us, I believe, is wholly satisfied—with the work we have accomplished and the results we have achieved. Millions of humble folk in all countries are alarmed and

bewildered, unable to comprehend fully those mighty forces which are driving the great Powers into unfriendly groupings, carrying with them by some sort of magnetic pull numbers of other States as well.

We, in India, for our part, are aware of no compulsion to identify ourselves wholly, or to associate ourselves systematically, with either or any of the different groups. On the contrary, we consider it of paramount importance that the distance between them should be narrowed down. We believe that our conduct should conduce to that end, and that there are standards and principles and ideals that transcend merely national interests, that transcend the exigencies of the kind of power politics that has proved so calamitous in the past.

Accordingly, we shall offer our support to, or withhold it from, the proposals submitted to us, solely in the light of our judgment of the merits of the case in question. We stand for peace, and will devote our resources and energy towards the abolition of all causes which lead to war. To those nations that work with this aim, we shall gladly offer our full co-operation. The Indian delegation feels that what is important today is not to set about revising the Charter, or to divert our energies and devise complicated ingenious amendments. The important thing today is that we should all observe faithfully the spirit and the letter of the Charter, its principles and procedures, not only when it is convenient to us, not only when it helps us to pursue aims and policies which may have no connection with the Charter, but at all times and in relation to all problems and difficulties.

If we are not prepared to implement the Charter in this spirit, I fear that no modification or revision, no addition or abrogation of a phrase here and an article there, will greatly improve the position. It may well have the opposite effect.

Machinery, new or old, by itself, will not save us if we are not truly and sincerely determined to remove war as a means of settling difference.

It has now become almost a platitude to say that a clash of ideologies underlies the rift that is so noticeable in the world today. We, who come from the East, who are intimately familiar with the dire want, the poverty and suffering and starvation that prevail there, may be forgiven for thinking that ideology is less important than practice. We cannot eat an ideology; we cannot brandish an ideology, and feel that we are clothed and housed. Food, clothing, shelter, education, medical services-these are the things we need. We know that we can only obtain them by our joint efforts as a people, and with the help and co-operation of those who are more fortunately circumstance than ourselves. The conflict of ideology, or whatever it may be, that is plunging the world into gloom and tension, seems so sadly irrelevant to these great human problems; problems that vitally affect a half, and perhaps more than a half, of the world's population.

Our Organization, the United Nations, has no "ism" of its own; it embraces all "isms" and ideologies; it embraces all civilisations of the West and of the East; its principles cannot be said to derive exclusively from either or any of the contending doctrines. That is why, in this most critical time, and notwithstanding the discouraging factors, we continue to place our faith in it.

We are indeed more firmly convinced than ever that the only way to avert a catastrophe, the only road to peace and freedom and well-being for us all, is through our steadfast and wholehearted, co-operation, at whatever inconvenience, within the framework of the United Nations and in the spirit of the Charter.

On behalf of my Government, once again I give you the pledge of our fullest co-operation and our determination to do all that lies within our power, to see that the establishment of the United Nations shall, in future, mark the beginning of a new and less unhappy chapter in human history.