

Non Aligned

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

by

His Excellency J. R. JAYEWARDENE

President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

at

The Ministerial Meeting of the

Co-ordinating Bureau of

Non-Aligned Countries

June 6, 1979

Colombo, Sri Lanka

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES AND
FRIENDS,**

I consider it a privilege to be able to inaugurate this Ministerial Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned countries, preparatory to the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned countries in Havana in September 1979.

It is interesting to remember that the first idea of a meeting of Afro-Asian nations, which later led to the first meeting of Non-Aligned nations, originated in Colombo at the Colombo Powers Conference held here in April/May 1954.

U Nu of Burma ; Sir John Kotalawela of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) ; Jawaharlal Nehru of India ; Mohamed Ali of Pakistan ; and Ali Sastroamidjojo of Indonesia, attended as the Prime Ministers of their respective countries.

As Leader of the House of Representatives, together with Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, the Leader of the Senate, I was one of the members of the Ceylon Delegation,

Among other decisions we unanimously declared our faith in democracy and democratic institutions, and our unshakable determination to resist interference in the affairs of our countries. We also discussed the desirability of holding a conference of Afro-Asian Nations and favoured a proposal that the Prime Minister of Indonesia might explore the possibility of such a conference.

It was at the Colombo Conference that Jawaharlal Nehru in his opening address on the 28th April 1954 said, "*The main problem in the World was the continuing problem of the 'Cold War' between two blocs of big powerful countries. Most of the countries represented at the Conference had attempted to follow a policy of non-alignment with these great power blocs and to live their own lives according to their notions without dictation or compulsion from abroad*".

As far as I am aware, this was the first public occasion and conference where the word "Non-Aligned" was used.

The Colombo Powers met again at Bogor, in Indonesia, in December 1954. The main object of the meeting was to consider matters concerning an Afro-Asian Conference

first suggested at the meeting in Colombo in April. The purpose of the Afro-Asian Conference was—

- (a) To promote goodwill and co-operation among the nations of Asia and Africa ; to explore and advance their mutual as well as common interests and to establish and further friendliness and neighbourly relations.
- (b) To consider social, economic, and cultural problems and relations of the countries represented.
- (c) To consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples—for example, problems affecting national sovereignty and of racialism and colonialism.
- (d) To view the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the World of today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of World peace and co-operation.

The following 25 countries were to be invited : Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Central African Federation, People's Republic of China, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast, Persia, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syria, Siam, Turkey, North and South Vietnam, and the Yemen.

This Afro-Asian Conference met in Bandung, Indonesia, from the 18th to 25th April 1955. It was attended by delegates from 29 countries

with a total population of about 1,400 million people. An astonishing range and diversity of race and opinion was represented at the Bandung Conference. The variety of religions and doctrines included, as was observed by Dr. Soekarno in his opening address, "Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Marhaenism, Socialism, Capitalism and Communism". This was the first major conference of the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa.

This diverse assembly had certain bonds which bound them together. The spirit of independence and nationalism, and the common feeling of anti-colonialism. The whole of Africa and the whole of Asia, except Japan, had been under the rule or dominance of the Western Powers. They were now free. They felt that they were not adequately recognised by the rest of the world as an independent force in international affairs. Throughout their declarations, firstly at Colombo, and later at Bogor and at Bandung, they were not only talking of economic development but trying to stretch their hands out to be able to take a leading part in the shaping of world events. They also feared that the powerful nations may again seek to dominate them, if not territorially, but in some other ways.

The speeches made by some of the delegates showed the fear some of them had of the use of atomic weapons in the possession of the USA and USSR at that time, and the possibility that the World could gang up behind one or other of these countries. There were also many countries which had not aligned themselves to one bloc or another and refused to be camp followers of one or more of the Bigger Powers.

In addition to adopting several resolutions on International Affairs, political, economic, social, etc., the Bandung Conference also recommended that the five sponsoring countries consisting of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan consider the convening of the next meeting of the Conference, in consultation with the participating countries.

Six years later in September 1961 and on a broader geographical basis, a group of countries now calling themselves Non-Aligned countries met at Belgrade. This was the first Conference of Heads of State or Government of this Movement. Thus the idea conceived in Colombo in 1954 ; nurtured in Bandung in 1955 ; was born in Belgrade in 1961.

This was a time during which the Cold War polarised the World into two antagonistic blocs. Non-Alignment with either of the two Super Powers constituted and still constitutes the fundamental tenet of the group.

The history of the Non-Aligned Movement is the history of the evolution of an important aspect of international relations during the last twenty-five years. It began as an alternative to the military alliances of the Super Powers. It now represents the most comprehensive political coalition outside these alliances. Eighty-six countries and two organisations today identify themselves with this Movement, beginning with 25 members at the Belgrade Summit in 1961 ; 47 members at the Cairo Summit in 1964 ; 53 members at the Lusaka Summit in 1970 ; 75 members at the Algiers Summit in 1973 ; and 86 members at the Colombo Summit in 1976. The observers and guests have also increased from 3 at Belgrade to 19 observers and 7 guests at Colombo.

This is an opportune moment for reflection. As the Non-Aligned Movement approaches another Summit meeting, we have to consider the resolutions and declarations which will guide our Movement over the next few years. Debates within the Movement are dynamic and vibrant. That dynamism must be preceded by a thoughtful examination of where we are today ; whither we are going ; and how we are trying to get there.

It is argued that the bi-polar World does not exist any longer and that Non-Alignment as a middle course between two contending power blocs is no longer relevant. The end of bi-polarity as the dominant feature of international relations

makes Non-Alignment to my mind even more relevant than before, because the existence of different centres of power makes it all the more necessary that the Non-Aligned countries pursue evenhanded relationships with all of them, without getting drawn into any of their conflicts.

Some of the new centres of power are economic, not political. Our countries must deal with them, while pursuing our own interests, and without turning ourselves into economic appendages of any particular economic power. Other centres of power continue to remain political. We have to deal with them, too, carefully avoiding the risk of potential alignment in the context of rivalry between powers. How to achieve this state of balance is something that your deliberations will have to take into account.

Your agenda shows that many of the issues that worried us in the past have been solved, some exist in different forms and some remain unresolved. That should not deter us. History proves to us that in affairs between nations there are no quick answers to difficult problems. We in Asia have always believed that time is a dimension that has to be taken into account as a vital element of any discussion or negotiation.

It will take time to resolve the problems that you discuss. But time alone will not suffice. There must be determination too—determination

in terms of commitment to achieve specific goals and objectives ; determination in terms of the desire and sincerity to remain united and strong.

Your presence here gives continuity to a historic tradition of important meetings being held, and far-reaching decisions being taken, in our capital.

In 1951 the Colombo Plan was born here.

The decision to draw the emergent nations of Asia and Africa that had newly regained their freedom to a Conference was taken here in 1954.

The word "Non-Aligned" as far as I am aware was first used here.

The Fifth Summit Meeting of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned countries was held here in 1976.

The proposal to make the Indian Ocean a Zone of Peace and the creation of a World Disarmament Authority, both now under consideration by the U.N. are Sri Lanka's initiatives.

Today we meet to prepare for the Havana Summit Conference.

Several international organisations have also met here to plan strategies aimed at improving relations among peoples, and among governments in what has turned out to be a rather trying

age. Colombo has thus earned a reputation as an international "conference city" and Sri Lanka as a Non-Aligned and neutral nation. For that reason alone your presence here is appropriate and welcome.

Sri Lanka has therefore a commitment to the policy of Non-Alignment and has contributed to the growth of the Movement. Non-Alignment runs like a golden thread through the fabric of our country's Foreign Policy, though changes may take place in the quality, colour and shape of that fabric from time to time. At no stage has our country deviated from that policy. At no stage I make bold to say, will it do so in the future.

The post-Second World War years have brought about substantial changes in the living conditions of people in the less developed nations. In Sri Lanka, for instance, there has been a steady rise in standards of health, in literacy and, overall, in the physical quality of life. Similar achievements have been recorded in many other countries. Yet, millions of people in the Third World go to bed hungry every night. Is there no hope for them? That is the question which the Non-Aligned Movement should ponder because the prosperity and health of every citizen is what we must seek to establish in all our countries.

Technicians and other experts see these situations against a background of statistics and theories. We must look at them differently. We are talking about people not figures. Governments, of whatever persuasion, are formed to so organise society that human suffering is at least reduced if not eliminated. This is an exacting task. It is also a vital task. It is a task involving a combination of many factors from social policy to international trade. If we remain united, and if we use that unity to turn men's minds away from destruction and domination towards creativity and friendship, then there is some hope that in our lifetime we will at least lay the foundation for a better tomorrow.

It has to be tomorrow of peace. That is why we must strive as Non-Aligned countries for such goals as Disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes. A better tomorrow must also be a tomorrow of economic justice, within our countries as well as in international relations. We must endeavour to bring about a successful completion of negotiations, such as those set in motion at UNCTAD, whose objective is not charity but justice. Above all, we must ceaselessly remember that our primary aim is to enrich the various aspects of human activity which add up to the sum total of human life, avoiding violence of speech and action but seeking by peaceful means to achieve prosperity for those whose need is greater.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES
AND FRIENDS,

I spoke to you as the Chairman of the Fifth Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries. I speak to you now and welcome you on behalf of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka. I hope you will have the opportunity during your stay to get better acquainted with Sri Lanka and its people. They will give you a warm welcome.

I wish to speak to you a few words about my own country, and in doing so my thanks and our thanks are due to the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Hon. A. C. S. Hameed, for the patience, care and dedication with which he has performed the tasks entrusted to him of presiding over the meetings of the Non-Aligned Countries.

There are political, philosophical and geographical reasons for Sri Lanka's adherence to a policy of Non-Alignment throughout its period as an independent nation. Freedom came to us soon after the Second World War had ended. The Big Powers seemed ready to embark on a new type of confrontation, which has since come to be known as the Cold War. A new nation, just learning the art of standing on its own, cannot afford the "luxury" of any form of war. Thus, while in the earliest phase of independence we looked to our friends abroad for assurances of support in the event of our having to defend ourselves

against any external threat, we scrupulously avoided alignment with one power bloc or another. Friendship with all and the enemy of none was our policy and it so remains.

Almost all the great religions of the world are found in our Island home. Of these, Buddhism has played a dominant part in shaping our destiny, and continues to occupy a position of veneration and influence throughout the country. Buddhism has been a source of personal inspiration to me, as it has been to the majority of the people of Sri Lanka. It is historically demonstrable that Buddhism is the only world religion over which no wars have been fought, and whose followers have not felt the urge or the need to impose their beliefs on others. That gives our policy of Non-Alignment a firm philosophical base which, in turn, affects the nature of our policy, making it unshakable under any circumstances and under all forms of pressure.

Geographically we are lucky that the Indian Ocean surrounds us on all sides and makes us an emerald isle set in a silver sea ; it protects us and helps us in various other ways.

We adopted a new Constitution last year which combines the Presidential form of Government and the Parliamentary system of Government. The President who is the Head of the State and the Head of the Government is

elected once in every six years by the whole country. He chooses his Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers from the Members of Parliament and presides over their deliberations. They constitute the Executive authority of the State.

The Parliament is elected once in every six years by universal franchise but the elections are not contemporaneous with the Presidential elections. It is the supreme legislative authority. It considers and has to approve all laws and by-laws.

The Judiciary once appointed, some by the President and others by the Judicial Services Commission, functions as an independent authority. The rights of minorities ; religious, racial and social, are included among the fundamental rights and are justiciable. So are the other fundamental rights, such as Freedom of Speech, Writing, Assembly and the Right to Vote.

Emergency powers cannot be assumed by the Government without the sanction of the Legislature. After three months of such assumption a two-thirds majority in the Parliament is necessary to continue it. Any decision to extend the term of office of the President, or the life of Parliament, beyond six years must be approved by a Referendum. The sovereignty of the people is thus preserved.

It is a Constitution that seeks to combine the best features of Freedom and Justice contained in the British, American and French Constitutional systems.

The Parliamentary and Local Government elections are conducted according to the system of Proportional Representation. Local Government elections were held recently after 11 years, under this system.

The right to practise the religion of one's choice is guaranteed under the Constitution. Every citizen is treated alike irrespective of his race, religion or social status. The Cabinet of Ministers today has been chosen and functions on that basis.

We have enjoyed Universal franchise since 1931. Men and women over 18 years now have the right to vote. General elections on that basis have been held since then and governments changed by the vote on several occasions. We are accustomed to the ballot and not the bullet to change Presidents, Prime Ministers, Governments and elected Members.

You are therefore in a land which can call itself one of the Free and Deomcratic Nations of the World.

We are also Socialist. Sixty per cent of our means of production, distribution and exchange are owned by the State on behalf of the people. They will remain so and we hope under more efficient and honest management than in the past.

It is because of the Democratic Freedoms we enjoy, and the Socialist system and philosophy of equal opportunity for education, jobs, health and housing which prevail, that we called our country, "*The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka*".

You have a heavy agenda before you. I express the hope that your deliberations will be guided by the thought that righteousness must ultimately triumph. Keep for ever in mind the futility of force and the sanctity of life. May the thoughts I have left with you today lead you along the Path that culminates in right livelihood and right understanding for us all.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT PRINTING,
SRI LANKA
