

Extracts from the opening address by President Sukarno at the Asian-African Journalists' Conference, Bandung, 24 April 1963

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Asian-African Press,

Sisters and Brothers in the Struggle to Build a New World:

In welcoming you to Indonesia, allow me, please to say glad I am that this Conference of Asian-African Journalists is taking place.

First Asian-African Conference

Eight years ago, the Asian-African countries held the first inter-continental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind. That Conference gathered to see where our nations stood, to see what we could do in the world.

Today, the journalists of Asia and Africa assemble here to see where our press stands, to see what our press can do.

Indeed, I am proud and happy to welcome you here. Your gathering signals yet another grand effort in our great struggle. And the passage of the years is marked by increasing gains - year by year achievements grow, year by year men come even nearer to the goal we strive for: a new world, free from colonialism-imperialism in all their forms and manifestations, a new world free from exploitation de l'homme par l'homme, a new world of abiding peace, of friendship among nations and of social justice for us all. The world is truly being transformed before our eyes. And the nations of Asia and Africa are in the forefront of the struggle to build the world anew.

Look back a while - look back to the opening of the First Asian-African Conference just eight years and six days ago today:

That Conference met under a cloud of dis-belief from the West at large, a cloud of dis-belief that the peoples of Asia and Africa with their wide diversity could ever successfully confer, could ever successfully agree. 'The backward people from the undeveloped countries of Asia and Africa' - so the world of the West held us to be.

But we met in that First Asian-African Conference under the banner of our own hopes, and in the strength of our own convictions. It was a Conference between Governments, with top Ministers attending. We wrestled with our problems.

There were disagreements and there were long, long arguments. But there was agreement too and long, long discussion. And the Conference succeeded. Successfully,

it stated that Asia- Africa stood on the side opposing colonialism-imperialism and working for the cause of national independence.

Successfully, it outlined various principles for the promotion of world peace and co-operation. Successfully, it gave birth to a new spirit of solidarity and to a stronger sense of common objective amongst the Asian-African nations. Our hopes of it were justified.

That was eight years ago - one windu as we Indonesians say, one octave of years. A short time! Yet a long time: for the winds of change wax strong. No longer do they blow as the gentle breeze of evolution. The winds of change today blow as the mighty gale of revolution, and the air of the world is filled with their rushing.

Yes! The world is filled with revolution, the world is filled with transformation and change. And that First Asian- African Conference had much to do with hastening the pace of change. It had much to do with changing men's ideas. I said of that Conference at the time:

"... it is a body of enlightened, tolerant opinion that seeks to impress on the world that all men and all countries have their place under the sun - to impress on the world that it is possible to live together, meet together, speak to each other, without losing one's individual identity; and yet to contribute to the general understanding of matters of common concern, and to develop a true consciousness of the interdependence of men and nations for their well-being and survival on earth." And I said of that Conference then:

"... we cannot, we dare not, confine our interests to the affairs of our own continents. The States of the world today depend one upon the other and no nation can be an island to itself. Splendid isolation may once have been possible; it is so no longer.

The affairs of all the world are our affairs, and our future depends upon the solutions found to all international problems, however far or distant they may seem."

In many quarters, those were deemed bold words then!

Asia and Africa to show that all nations can live together? Asia and Africa to contribute to general understanding? Asia and Africa to take the affairs of all the world as their affairs? We were considered almost insolent for such suggestions!

Yet see what happened: the success of that First Asian- African Conference proved that diversity was not a barrier to agreement, that mutual respect for different attitudes could bring a new approach to problems shared. The success of that Conference lifted the spirits of the colonised peoples through- out the world and strengthened them in their struggle for national release and national fulfilment.

The success of that Conference sealed a sense of Asian-African solidarity, a

feeling of common experiences shared, an aspiration for a new world, a world based upon justice, peace and prosperity for all.

We do not boast. Our success was far from perfect. There still are areas of disagreement between us which we have not solved. Our solidarity has not always been so flawless that we do not need to nurture it. That is true.

But who can deny the increase in newly independent states? Look at the membership of the United Nations - 50 when it began; over 100 today. Look at the participants in the First Asian-African Conference: 29 countries; and look at the participants in this Conference of Asian-African Journalists today: 65 countries : sixty-five! These figures tell the tale!

Achievements of Asian-African Solidarity

And who can deny that Asian-African solidarity has concrete gains to its credit? And who can deny the lessening in tension between the two great blocs because Asia-Africa have shown that agreement is possible between opposing systems?

And who can deny that the Asian-African states in general do not want to join either of the two great blocs, thus to participate in the cold war struggle?

For Indonesia herself, Asian-African solidarity has meant a great deal in the case of West Irian, that last part of Indonesian territory to be released from Dutch colonial control - a territory that, I hope, many of you will see formally transferred to the government of the Republic of Indonesia, just one week from today. West Irian!

I do not have to ask if you know where this is; I do not have to ask if you know the story of this unfortunate territory; I do not have to ask you - you are Asian and African journalists; you are part of the anti-colonial struggle; West Irian was your struggle just as it was ours! Here is Asian- African solidarity at work!

Then there was Algeria. I well remember the sitting of the Non-aligned Countries' Conference in Belgrade some twenty months ago. We greeted the delegate from Algeria, one after the other official recognition was accorded by government after government - and Algeria was not then entirely free! There is not one of us who did not rejoice when the protracted torture ceased, and Algeria won the freedom that should never have been taken from her. These are but a few of the examples it would take too long to mention all the other states that have achieved their independence thanks to Asian-African solidarity.

It was the Asian-African group in the United Nations that secured the adoption of Resolution 1514 (XV) known as the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

This was an achievement, securing the adoption of this Resolution! This was an achievement that could never have been reached without solidarity! Indeed, I believe

that the winning of independence at so fast a rate during these last few years is also a consequence of Asian-African solidarity! Long may we keep our solidarity! Let us promote it, let us tend it and nurture it, to ensure that it will ever be sound and strong! our solidarity will long be needed still!

Yes, our solidarity is still needed, for our struggle does not end with the winning of mere political independence, and our solidarity will help us in the next stage of our struggle.

Struggle for National Independence has not Ceased

This is not to say that the struggle for national independence has ceased. That, of course, is not true: men and women still languish under colonial chains, sometimes in the form of classical colonialism, sometimes in other forms. The United Nations' Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples is truly a necessity. But we may not deceive ourselves into thinking that the history of the world will end when the last nation has won political independence!

The elimination of the physical occupation by the colonialists is just the first stage of national independence in this age. Willy-nilly, we must go further and eliminate all kinds of exploitation, direct or indirect, mental or material.

Let us look around us. What do we see? The vast continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America are still involved in turbulence. Why is this? This is part of a process of struggle to burst asunder the chains of suppression and exploitation that linger even after we have achieved political independence for our nations, obstructing our growth.

To release ourselves from the spiritual and mental bondage of the colonial past, and then to explore and exploit our personality, our potentials and those of our nation - these are the essentials of nationhood in the modern age. It is the search for these things as the basis for new nationhood that is the cause of this upheaval in our continents, an upheaval which constitutes a confrontation between the New Emerging Forces and that Old Established Order which thrived upon the exploitation of its fellow men.

This upheaval, this process of growth is to be seen in the Latin American countries, as we see it in Cuba; it is to be seen in many countries of Africa, as we see it in Ghana, Guinea, and the United Arab Republic: it is to be seen in many countries in Asia, including here in Indonesia. It is also in this context that we interpret the struggle of the people of North Kalimantan, rejecting the formation of Malaysia as at present envisaged, trying instead to ensure that they achieve full national independence.

This is a process of growth that every nation has to go through, sooner or later. Some of us, conscious of the course of human history, blessed with opportunity, capacity

and vision, have immediately embarked upon this unavoidable second stage of nation building. Others, lacking the opportunity or capacity, are looking for a breathing space. Some of us appear satisfied with the replacement of the colonial administration by nationals of our own, even if that national government does not command the economic and military forces that hold the power. There is no need to try to force this lagging last group to follow a right course; before so long the social forces in their own countries will bring them to a rude awakening through the eruption of a new revolution. It is indeed an objective fact that national independence alone is not enough.

These are the three chief elements of the Revolution of Mankind; the struggle for abiding peace, the struggle for social justice and the struggle for national independence .

The struggle against colonialism-imperialism, the struggle for national independence is now waged within the framework of this Revolution of Mankind, a Revolution constituting the confrontation between the New Emerging Forces and the Old Established Order. And thus, a new factor has appeared in the struggle of the Asian-African peoples : we must remember that our struggle is but part of a struggle that goes further than the attainment of national independence alone!

Sisters and Brothers, I am well aware that these words of mine are not the product of conventional thinking. They have nothing to do with the conventional idea that if we wait until we are 'mature', the colonial powers will bestow independence upon us as a gift. They do not conform to the conventional idea that all we need after independence is technical skills, capital and machinery with which to develop nationhood.

We admit that there are nations which have achieved independence without 'struggle, without bloodshed, without warfare - without even spending a single night in jail. But let us be aware that they have achieved their independence because of the fierce struggles, because of the great sacrifices of their fellow human beings and their brother nations. Without these struggles and without these sacrifices, independence for these countries would have remained a dream for centuries without end.

It is because of my unconventional thinking that I am so reviled and so belittled by a section of the world press.

But I am quite unrepentant about taking this line. I am proud to make humble contribution to the building of a new world and the creating of a new society for men.

This, then, is how matters stand for us today at this opening of the Asian-African Journalists' Conference. What have we to do? With your permission I shall continue to speak first of what I believe we all must do, we the Asian- African peoples in general.

Reflection, however, shows that this is more complicated than it sounds. There are, in fact, two requirements here: One, the vision, the understanding of conditions, and all

the different kinds of technical skill needed to ensure that those laws and regulations really do lead towards rounding out and giving content to political independence. And, two, the will and the ability to overcome the opposition that inevitably will be aroused both at home and abroad, by the curtailment or elimination of especially economic interests which conflict with, or impair the nation's independence.

The Need for Basic Concepts

Neither of these two things is at all easy, as the history of the newly-independent countries, including Indonesia, shows. Far more essential, however, is the question of the basic concepts produced by the society as a foundation for its activities. It is these basic concepts that will ensure that these activities do gradually round out and perfect the independence already gained. No matter what errors of judgement, no matter what mistakes are made through lack of skill in the meantime, these basic concepts will ensure the correct direction, if only they are sound, if only they are in harmony with the Revolution of Mankind, if only they express the genius of the nation.

This question of basic concepts is not only essential, it is, perhaps one of the most difficult to determine and it is certainly a question that must be given priority over many others. Many of the most pressing post-independence difficulties confronting our newly-independent nations hinge on this question.

I do not need, I think, to continue with my illustration I see from your faces that I speak of patterns of behaviour all too familiar already. Here, too, sound concepts will give a foundation for eradication of these remaining shreds of colonialism and of the feudalism that was often kept deliberately alive as an under-structure, the better to prop up that colonial regime. We must fight the remnants of these old regimes that linger in men's minds.

We must fight the attitudes of paternalism, of the inherent superiority of elites, we must fight the conservatism that those regimes engendered. We must fight the dogmatism of pet theories, of fixed ideologies and of narrow creeds.

We must fight the 'intolerance of race and of everything that we ourselves are not.'

For our part, we are not conducting this struggle to build the world anew with nuclear weapons or other instruments of force and destruction. *No*: We use mental, social and economic weapons. And our fundamental strength lies in our concepts and ideas. This is the reason why the press is of such vast importance in the Asian-African world.

The Asian-African press must disseminate those concepts and ideas! The Asian-African press, the pen of the struggle for national independence, must become the pen - that pen that is mightier than the sword - in the struggle of the Revolution of Mankind to build a new order in the world.