

5th Session

286th Plenary Meeting,

by Sir Benegal N Rau

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Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you, as many others have done before me, on your election to the high office of the President of the Assembly. This is the second year in succession in which this honour has fallen to the representative of an Asian country, and apart from its obvious personal aspect as reflecting the admiration and esteem in which you are held by your colleagues here, it perhaps marks also the growing importance of Asia in world affairs.

Indeed, 1950 has been an important year in the history of Asia. The 26th January 1950 saw the birth of the Indian Republic. A little earlier there was established another republic in South-East Asia; the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, now reconstituted as the Republic of Indonesia, the country with the largest Moslem population in the world. India has had the closest links with Indonesia from remote antiquity and hopes that Indonesia will join us in the near future as a Member of the United Nations. It is a matter of great gratification to my delegation that the Security Council, at its last meeting, accepted,¹ by an almost unanimous vote, the Indian proposal that Indonesia's application for membership should be immediately recommended to the General Assembly; and we have every reason to believe that the General Assembly will soon accept the recommendation with equal sympathy and good will.

Another noticeable feature of 1950 has been the emergence of what I may call new China which, since the beginning of the year, has made several fruitless attempts to obtain representation in the United Nations and its organs.

This is a matter to which, as you all know, the Government of India attaches the greatest importance and my delegation is glad that, although our recent draft resolution [A/1365] on the subject was defeated [277th meeting] by an apparently large majority, the door has nevertheless not been finally closed. Since the question is to be studied further, I need not say more on it just now, but I cannot refrain from correcting a frequent error or half-truth. It has been said in various quarters during the last few days that the Indian draft resolution to which I have alluded was defeated by an overwhelming majority, because only 16 countries voted for it, while 33 voted against it and 10 abstained from voting. It must be pointed out that the adverse votes included that of Nationalist China. Leaving that vote out of account, as being the very vote whose validity was in issue, I find that the total population of the countries which voted against the draft resolution was 412 millions, while the total population of the countries that voted for it was 809 millions; the abstentions accounted for 117 millions. Lest anybody should imagine that the supporters were mainly the communist countries, I have computed separately the population figures of the indisputably non-communist countries that voted for the draft resolution. These add up to 527 millions as compared with 282 millions of the communist countries. Thus, on a population basis and even taking into account only non-communist countries, the draft resolution, far from being defeated by an overwhelming majority, may be said to have been actually carried.

To pass on. From the international point of view, the most

significant event of 1950 has been the Korean conflict and the action taken by the Security Council in that connexion. It has been said that the League of Nations perished because it could not or would not act even in the face of what it considered to be aggression. 1950 has shown, or at least created the hope, that such need not be the fate of the United Nations. I may, incidentally, mention that the Government of India's support or acceptance of the crucial resolutions of the Security Council was discussed at great length at a special session of the Indian Parliament held about the beginning of August. The discussion lasted for several days and took into account not only the facts that were known at the time when the Security Council adopted the resolutions but also the subsequent course of events. Ultimately the Indian Parliament, without a dissenting vote, endorsed the Government of India's support of the decisions of the Security Council. The Prime Minister of India said in the course of the debate:

"Our policy is, first, of course, that aggression has taken place by North Korea over South Korea. That is a wrong act that has to be condemned, that has to be resisted. Secondly, that so far as possible the war should not be spread beyond Korea. And thirdly that we should explore means of ending this war. The future of Korea must be decided entirely by the Koreans themselves."

The future of Korea and of Formosa will be amongst the most important questions for our discussion during the present session. These are former Japanese territories regarding whose disposal there have been certain declarations in the past, but whose actual disposal still remains to be made. It will be remembered that we had a somewhat similar problem to deal with last year-the disposal of certain former Italian colonies. The big four had been unable to agree on this matter and had therefore turned over the problem to the General Assembly. We referred it to one of our Committees which, after some

discussion, referred it to a sub-committee; the sub-committee, after several weeks of work, produced a solution which was ultimately accepted by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly [resolution 289 (IV)] and, in the case of some of the territories, without a dissenting vote even from the big four, which had been unable to agree in the first instance. My delegation hopes that we shall be able to handle with equal success the questions of Korea and Formosa.

Our discussion of the future of Korea which, under a slightly different name, is the first item on the agenda of the First Committee-would be greatly facilitated by an early restoration of peace in that country.

My delegation has always taken an active interest in the peoples of the Non-Self- Governing Territories. The report of the Special Committee² which considered the information on the economic, social and educational conditions in those territories will come up in due course before the General Assembly for our endorsement. At this stage, my delegation will make only one or two general observations.

The information transmitted by the Administering Powers to the Secretary- General is undoubtedly limited by paragraph 'e' of Article 73 of the Charter and does not refer in specific terms to political conditions in these territories. Nevertheless, the General Assembly cannot ignore the implications of Article 73 as a whole, which promises to the peoples of those territories, until they attain a full measure of self- government, that certain vital principles will be recognized in their administration, namely-and here I am using the words of the Charter-that the interests of the peoples are paramount, that they must be afforded just treatment and protection against abuses, and that they must be helped to become self-governing.

These principles are meant to apply to every aspect of the administration, with no qualifications other than that due respect should be shown to the cultures of the peoples concerned and to their political aspirations.

The General Assembly must on every possible occasion encourage the fullest collaboration between the administering Powers and its various specialized agencies in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The under-developed regions of the world are in urgent need of a great deal of assistance. Poverty, disease, ignorance and hunger are widespread in these regions, and the promotion of constructive measures of development-is an immediate necessity. In many parts of the world today-and especially in Asia and Africa, where millions of people owe allegiance to foreign Powers-situations are developing of increasing seriousness and danger. These people have in many territories become acutely conscious both of their economic and social backwardness and of their political dependence. It is in circumstances such as these that revolutionary doctrines spread and take root with extraordinary swiftness.

For the furtherance of international peace and security, which finds a prominent place among the principles to which Administering Powers have pledged themselves under their conceptions of the relationship between themselves and Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the spirit of the times.

Reference has been made to Kashmir as one of the larger spots in Asia. Sir Owen Dixon, the United Nations mediator, has recently submitted his report to the Security Council¹³ and I need not say

much on the subject here. My delegation hopes that the Council will duly note the view which Sir Owen Dixon himself was prepared to adopt: that, when the Kashmir frontier was crossed on 20 October 1947 by hostile elements and again when units of the regular Pakistan forces moved into the territory of the State in May 1948, these were violations of international law.

One of the greatest evils in the world today is racial discrimination, and many countries therefore forbid it by law. It is amazing that at this juncture any Member of the United Nations should embark upon it as a deliberate policy sanctioned and enforced by the law. Such a policy will ultimately lead to inter-continental race conflicts and is therefore a menace to the peace of the world. The plea of domestic jurisdiction will not excuse it any more than the plea of the sanctity of the home can justify the storing of dynamite.

Several delegations have already pointed out that the Security Council was able to act as it did in June and July last only because of an accidental combination of circumstances which may not recur, and certain suggestions have been placed before us designed to create or set in motion alternative machinery for the purpose of dealing with future situations of the same kind.

These suggestions merit and will receive our most careful consideration in due course; for the moment I should like to call attention to something more fundamental than questions of machinery. At the root of all the conflicts inside and outside the United Nations is a pervading fear of aggression. Let me quote a great British historian, Arnold Toynbee, who, in August 1947, wrote:

"In the West we have a notion that Russia is the aggressor, as indeed she has all the appearance of being when looked at through Western eyes . . . To Russian eyes appearances are just the contrary."4

The writer goes on to discuss the historical reasons for this mutual fear of aggression, reasons into which we need not enter here. What does concern us immediately is whether we can do anything towards removing the fear which undoubtedly exists on both sides; for, so long as it exists on either side, however irrational it may be, we cannot escape from the vicious spiral of arming and counter-arming. We may be sure that the people of no part of the world, whether in the West or in the East or in the Far East or anywhere else, want war, and yet they feel compelled to spend vast sums of money on preparations for defence against aggression. Can we do nothing to dissipate this constant and wasteful dread of war?

I speak with great diffidence, but the subject is so important that I cannot refrain from making a suggestion or two. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France are all present, or could easily be, in New York. Could they not meet-with or without others-and discuss or re-discuss at least the most outstanding matters of disagreement between them? Could they not have something corresponding to one of those special periodic meetings of the Security Council which are prescribed in Article 28, paragraph 2 of the Charter?

Perhaps such discussions have not been very fruitful in the past; they may fail again; but the attempt is worth making. Even if nothing else came of them, the Ministers could at least reaffirm jointly what each of their countries has already affirmed separately in signing the Charter, namely, that they would settle

all their international disputes by peaceful means, and the psychological effect upon an anxious world would be far from negligible.

But this need not be only step; other steps could follow. For example, there might be an exchange of goodwill missions, whether official or unofficial, between the countries concerned. And then, as the result, further steps might suggest themselves, until the whole atmosphere was cleansed. Once the fear of war is reduced to a minimum -for no one imagines that it can be completely removed-we can devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the tasks of peace.

I believe that at present the entire expenditure of the United Nations in a normal year is less than the annual interest-I repeat, the annual interest-on the cost of the equipment needed for the production of a single atomic bomb. This will give some idea of the colossal waste which the fear of war entails, apart from the destructiveness of war itself. There is so much human misery in the world-often preventable, but sometimes due to natural calamities that cannot be prevented, as in large parts of India today- and so much that the United Nations with an expanded budget can do to mitigate it, that I have ventured to make these suggestions.

My delegation will study with special interest the resolutions of which the Yugoslav delegation has given notice [282nd meeting]. One of them is in line with a suggestion which my delegation recently made in the Security Council in connexion with the Korean conflict.⁵

I should like to end on a note of tempered hope in the words of a

celebrated biologist:

"War is not inevitable to man. His aggressiveness can be canalized into other outlets; his political machinery can be designed to make war less likely. These things can be done; but to do them will require a great deal of hard thinking and hard work".