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**PRIME MINISTER**

ADDRESS TO INDIAN PARLIAMENT

BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MALCOLM FRASER, C.H., M.P.

PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA.

27 JANUARY 1979.

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STATEMENT TO INDIAN PARLIAMENT

As the leader of a parliamentary democracy, and as someone with 23 years personal experience as a parliamentarian I am delighted to have this opportunity to address you, the representatives of the largest democracy in the world.

No invitation has been more welcome to me and I would like to express at the outset, and in the clearest terms my admiration for India's commitment to the democratic principle.

It has been sustained in circumstances which have never been easy and have sometimes been dauntingly difficult.

Future historians will surely record as one of the most remarkable facts of the second half of the twentieth century that as democracy faltered and failed in dozens of countries, countries whose problems, while serious enough, could not be mentioned in the same breath as those of India, democracy remained alive and vital here.

It is a tribute to you as leaders, to your institutions, but most of all the people of India. For as a truly great Indian, Mahatma Gandhi, wrote over 50 years ago, "Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people."

This visit gives me the opportunity to deepen my understanding of this remarkable and fascinating country. But it does more than that.

I believe that over the last 30 years neither of our countries, neither Australia nor India, has done enough to fulfil the potential of our relationship.

Do not misunderstand me. That relationship has been amicable and cordial. But for a variety of reasons, legitimate reasons in the context of the time, our principal energies have been otherwise engaged.

You have been largely preoccupied with the affairs of the sub-continent and with playing a leading role in creating and developing the non-aligned movement. Our attention has been centred mainly on South East Asia; we have not adequately turned our attention towards strengthening and deepening the relationship, towards exploring its possibilities.

When your Prime Minister, Mr. Desai, and I met at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in 1977, we both came to the conclusion that the time had come to strengthen the relationship.

When we met again at the Commonwealth Regional Meeting in Sydney a year ago, a meeting which gained much of its weight and authority from Mr. Desai's presence, this conviction was greatly strengthened and we took some preliminary steps to develop the relationship between our two countries.

I trust that my visit will contribute further to the process. Our relationship should be further developed not only because it is in our direct bilateral interest to do so, but because at this time in history there is a crucial role to be played by countries like ours, countries which have learnt the art of compromise through their own institutions, which are not at the extreme end of any spectrum in international affairs and which are committed to moderation and reconciliation.

It is now more important than ever that nations like ours should do our utmost to inject this experience into the conduct of international affairs. To the extent that we understand and can lend support to each other that role will be performed more effectively.

I trust that by the time I have finished speaking it will be clear why I believe this and what I see that role as being. I appreciate that there are many differences between Australia and India. These differences are real enough and there is no need to gloss over them. Yours is one of the great and ancient civilisations of the world.

No country on earth has such a long cultural continuity as India. By comparison Australia is a very young country, one which has created a distinctive cultural identity for itself during the course of this century.

The contrast between us in terms of population is striking. You have a population which is more than twice that of the whole of Africa and which constitutes nearly a third of all the people living in the Third World.

The fact that every year your population increases by a number about equivalent to Australia's total population indicates just how striking that contrast is. The diversity and complexity of your society is staggering. Australian society is also growing in diversity. What began as purely Anglo-saxon has been enriched by European and Asian influences, and by an increasing awareness of what our continent's pre-European civilization has to contribute.

But we recognise that few if any of the world's societies can compare with you in this respect.

Given these social and cultural differences, it naturally follows that the domestic problems which engross our two countries, our political priorities, must also be different.

One could easily extend the list of differences, but instead let me simply concede it and go on to make two crucial qualifying points.

First, while the differences are real enough, their effect has to some extent been compounded by lack of first-hand familiarity. The widely held western view of India as the archetypal "under-developed" country has tended to obscure the fact that you are one of the world's great industrial powers, that you have one of the world's largest scientific and intellectual communities, that, indeed, while still a developing country, in many respects you are one of the world's most highly developed and sophisticated countries, and that this is disguised only by the fact you have to cope with an almost overwhelming population burden.

Similarly, in the past your policy of non-alignment has not always been understood and there has been insufficient appreciation of the needs from which it springs or the purposes it was meant to serve.

Differences of means have sometimes been confused with differences of ends, thus obscuring the fact of a common interest in peace and stability.

In Australia's case, we are sometimes thought of as a typically western country which happens to be eccentrically located at the bottom right-hand corner of Asia. I believe that this is a quite inadequate concept of contemporary Australia.

It is true that many of our central values and institutions are western, in the sense that they were first articulated and shaped in the west; not that the west has patent rights over them. We are fundamentally western in that sense.

But we are western with a difference. A country which originated as a colony, whose own physical geography and environment are so distinctive, whose outlook and perspectives are profoundly affected by its location in the South East Asian region; whose export earnings derive principally from commodities; which is a net importer of capital, cannot be regarded as typically western. Australia is Australia, not an appendage of Europe.

The second and even more important qualification I wish to make is that while the differences between Australia and India are real, there are also very important similarities between us, similarities which are of fundamental political relevance at the present time.

As I began by acknowledging, we are two countries committed to democracy, situated on the rim of the same ocean, and in a world where functioning democracies are the exception rather than the rule.

Neither India nor Australia lays claims on any other country. Both believe in moderation and conciliation rather than confrontation, as a means to resolve differences between countries.

Both have a stake in peace and stability, in a part of the world where neither can be taken for granted. If one considers the Indian Ocean, for example, it is apparent that different as they are, both our approaches are concerned to prevent that Ocean from becoming a region of instability and great power rivalry.

Your approach seeks to do this by creating a zone of peace, ours by maintaining a balance at the lowest possible level.

Perhaps one could sum up the difference by saying that your approach would be the one more certain to bring about the desired result if it succeeded, while ours is the one more likely to be achievable in the short or medium term.

In any case, what I wish to stress is that we share the same basic objective. We are both working towards reducing tension and devising means for controlling conflict situations more effectively. We both strive to achieve an effective means of global arms control and disarmament.

We know that the arms race threatens the survival of humanity and that it is a crippling handicap on economic development everywhere. We both recognise that disarmament cannot be left to the superpowers, that it requires a concerted effort by the nations of the world. We both want the nuclear weapons states to stop testing nuclear weapons in all environments, and Australia looks forward to working with India on the Committee for Disarmament.

I submit that in the world in which we are living, the importance of the similarities between us far outweighs that of our differences. That world is one in which the possibility of a deepening rift between developed and developing countries, and of a serious political deterioration in regions of interest to both India and Australia, is real.

In the early part of this decade, a sustained and unprecedented period of growth in the world economy came to an end. Whether this is temporary or permanent remains to be seen, and will depend essentially on the quality of statesmanship available over the next year or two.

In the developed western world, this has been followed by a period of high inflation, high unemployment and low growth. In the developing countries, there have been two significant developments. First, a strong and co-ordinated demand for changes in the international economic system. And secondly, rapid, against-the-trend growth on the part of a small but significant group of developing countries, many of them Asian.

The interaction of these developments is of profound importance for the future of the international order in every sense - economic, political and strategic.

There is a real danger that, beset by their own economic problems, under strong domestic political pressures and to some extent divided among themselves, the developed countries will react negatively and in a protectionist spirit to the needs of the Third World. Indeed, there are disturbing indications that this is already happening.

There is evidence in some quarters in the west of a disinclination to look with discrimination and sympathy at the claims of developing countries to see which proposals may offer the prospect of ensuring increased production and overall wealth for both groups of countries.

There is even clearer evidence of a resort to protectionist measures - some quite open, others more covert - against those developing countries which are successfully expanding their manufacturing export sectors. If this approach were to prevail, the result would be disastrous.

By demonstrating to the developing countries that there was little sympathy for their problems and a negative response to their efforts to work within the western system of trade it would strengthen the hand of those who have an interest in confrontation and inflexibility. Who could then say with strength that they were wrong? The result would be increasing alienation, instability and adventurism.

It is essential, therefore, that this approach should not prevail. We must have policies based on a recognition of interdependence, of the fact that in crucial respects the future of the developed and developing worlds are inevitably linked, and that co-operation between them is essential.

These economic issues do not stand apart from other aspects of international relations. The days when they could be thought of in a separate compartment are gone. They have to be considered as part of the totality of relations, interacting closely with political, social and strategic questions.

There is profound truth in Pandit Nehru's assertion that: "There can be no security or real peace if vast numbers of people in various parts of the world live in poverty and misery. Nor can there be a balanced economy for the world as a whole if the underdeveloped parts continue to upset that balance and drag down even the more prosperous nations".

Just as economic development and prosperity are vital for peace, so peace is vital to economic development. As recent events in a number of regions of importance to India and Australia have brought home, the conditions for peace still elude the world.

In South-East Asia, the end of the Vietnam War brought hopes that this troubled region might at last enjoy some peace and stability. The progress made by ASEAN and the quite remarkable economic growth achieved by some of its members, strengthened these hopes.

There were signs of a possible rapprochement between the ASEAN countries and Vietnam. Many believed that economic and development issues, not power politics, would now dominate the affairs of the region. Recent events have cast a dark shadow over such hopes.

A renewed intrusion of great power politics, the escalation of violence, the apparent determination to press the advantage of military superiority, make it seem that the last few years represented not a fundamental change, but a short breathing space.

In the Middle East, a region of particular importance to India, which has over a million of her people working there, the situation has assumed a fluidity which, given the region's geo-political sensitivity, is very dangerous.

The turmoil and uncertainty in many countries in the area, combined with the interests which we all share mean that any miscalculation by the superpowers could have grave consequences.

We have recently had a graphic reminder in Iran that rapid growth does not itself guarantee stability, that it can in fact result in cultural and political dislocations which are seriously destabilising.

In Southern Africa blatant racialism, which constitutes a basic affront to human dignity, has created a situation which already involves bloodshed and misery and which, unless speedily resolved, is almost certain to result in a major political crisis. This is the world in which we are living.

My central theme is that in such a world there is a vital role for actors who are not dogmatic; who are not set on confrontation; whose behaviour reflects more than short-term and narrow self-interest. There is a need for such actors in the developed world, in the developing world and in a variety of regional settings. If they do not appear and assert themselves vigorously, the prospects are bleak.

It seems to me that both India and Australia are eminently capable of performing such a role as forces of co-operation, moderation and toleration, and countering those of confrontation, dogmatism and bigotry. Indeed, in a real sense India has been performing that role since she achieved independence.

As I understand it, the notions of mediation, of opening rather than closing of doors, of reconciliation and compromise, constitute important elements in the wider concept of non-alignment.

Within the non-aligned movement itself you have provided much of the statesmanship required to hold together and to find constructive compromises between groups with different views. India has acquired great moral authority, based on its readiness to take a disinterested but principled view of a wide range of issues.

Closer to home, Australia has watched with appreciation the constructive role India has taken in initiating a new era of hope and co-operation in the sub-continent. Your good neighbour policy has led to greater self-confidence and an easing of tension and uncertainty.

The same spirit is evident in your efforts to begin a new phase in your relations with China; moves which have an important bearing on the future peace and stability of the Asia/Pacific region.

As far as Australia is concerned, during the last three years my Government has consistently acted on the belief that both an enlightened understanding of our own interests and the interest of international peace and stability require that we make a constructive and co-operative response to the needs of developing countries.

We have played a leading part among the OECD countries in supporting the common fund proposal and in contributing to make it a practicable, workable arrangement. On this issue we took an independent initiative at a time when rigidity on both sides threatened a stalemate which would have had serious ramifications.

We have strongly resisted the retreat towards protectionism on the part of some western countries. We recognise, of course, that the immediate removal of all barriers would be impossibly disrupting and we do not for a moment propose it.

What we firmly believe is that the trend must be away from, not towards, protectionism.

We have taken every opportunity to extend the dialogue between the developed and developing countries and to make it as genuine a meeting of minds as possible.

Only a few weeks ago I was in Jamaica to attend a discussion of current economic problems between seven heads of Government from developing and developed countries. It proved to be an eminently worthwhile meeting, informal and unstructured, free from dogma and rhetoric.

We have condemned the racialist regimes in southern Africa in the strongest terms and have used what influence we have to get those Governments to change their repugnant, dangerous and self-destructive policies.

Nearer home, we have always supported ASEAN as a practical example of regional co-operation, and we have established with ASEAN an extensive system of consultation and co-operation.

We based our policy towards Vietnam on the need to encourage her to integrate herself into the region and devote her formidable energies towards internal reconstruction and development. Recent events have forced us to reconsider, but for the longer term we have not abandoned that hope. We have taken more refugees from Vietnam per head of population than has any other country in the world.

Thirty years ago, soon after the foundation of your Republic, India and Australia acted together to provide their good offices in the conflict which was then being waged in Indonesia.



It was one of the earliest diplomatic initiatives of the new India and of an Australia emerging from its own dependence. The fact that two significant countries within the region acted in this way was not without effect.

Australia and India are countries which prefer to dissolve rather than erect barriers in international relations. This approach lay at the basis of the Commonwealth's successful emergence as a diverse association of independent nations bringing together like and unlike.

The Commonwealth's ability to adapt to new needs and to new circumstances has ensured not just its survival but its continuing relevance.

The present Commonwealth is relevant to the needs of the world today in a way the old Commonwealth could never have been.

The Heads of Government Regional Meeting at Sydney again demonstrated that the Commonwealth was capable of developing important new forms of co-operation. The approach of both our countries to international affairs can fairly be described as one of principled moderation. Moderation, that is, which derives not from indifference or lack of conviction, but is a positive, active force derived from the democratic experience of compromise and from an awareness of the importance of interdependence.

There is not an over-abundance of such moderation in the world today, yet it is badly needed; and it badly needs to speak out.

In too many situations it is the moderates who are in the majority but it is the extremists who prevail. We are not far from that situation which Yeats described where "The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

It is in speaking out with the civilised voice of moderation that I see a role for your country and mine. India speaks for moderation with moral force as a founder and leader of non-alignment.

We seek to speak for moderation from different origins. We are aligned. But the very fact that nations - aligned and non-aligned - are concerned to find reasonable solutions will strengthen the cause of moderation.

If the non-aligned alone spoke for moderation the cause of reason would be seriously weakened. By speaking out for moderation from our different positions it will be reinforced.

We cannot leave everything to the great powers, nor the sheer weight of numbers either. We need to draw on our experience of compromise and express our conviction of the reality of interdependence.

Let our passion be for moderation; let our strength be in the cause of reason. Let our determination be for the breaking down of barriers between people. Let that be our role.

But more than that it is a duty, an obligation,

It can be fulfilled more effectively to the extent that we strengthen our relationship.

I hope my visit to India can serve some part of that purpose.

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