

17.12.63

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. LYNDON B. JOHNSON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency the President of the United States of America. I request the Chief of Protocol to be good enough to escort Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson, the President of the United States of America, into the Assembly Hall.

The President of the United States of America was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to be good enough to address the General Assembly.

Mr. JOHNSON (President of the United States of America): Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates to the United Nations, ladies and gentlemen:

We meet in a time of mourning, but in a moment of rededication.

My nation has lost a great leader. This Organization has lost a great friend. World peace has lost a great champion.

But John F. Kennedy was the author of new hope for mankind -- hope which was shared by a whole new generation of leaders, in every continent -- and we must not let grief turn us away from that hope. He never quarreled with the past, he always looked to the future -- and our task now is to work for the kind of future in which he so strongly believed.

I have come here today to make it unmistakably clear that the assassin's bullet which took his life did not alter his nation's purpose. We are more than ever opposed to the doctrines of hate and violence, in our own land and around the world. We are more than ever committed to the rule of law, in our own land and around the world. We believe more than ever in the rights

of man -- all men of every colour -- in our own land and around the world. And more than ever we support the United Nations as the best instrument yet devised to promote the peace of the world and to promote the well-being of mankind.

I can tell you today -- as I told you in 1958, when I came as Majority Leader of the United States Senate to the First Committee of this great tribunal -- that the full power and partnership of the United States is committed to our joint effort to eliminate war and the threat of war, aggression and the danger of violence, and to lift from all people everywhere the blight of disease and poverty and illiteracy.

Like all human institutions, the United Nations has not achieved the highest of hopes that some had held at its birth. Our understanding of how to live with one another is still far behind our knowledge of how to destroy one another.

But as our problems have grown, this Organization has grown, in numbers, in authority and prestige, and its Member nations have grown with it, in responsibility and in maturity. We have seen too much success to become obsessed with failure. The peace-keeping machinery of the United Nations has worked, in the Congo, in the Middle East and elsewhere. The great transition from colonial rule to independence has been largely accomplished. The Decade of Development has successfully begun. The world arms race has been slowed. The struggle for human rights has been gaining new force. And a start has been made in furthering mankind's common interest in outer space -- in scientific exploration, in communications, in weather forecasting, in banning the stationing of nuclear weapons, and in establishing principles of law.

I know that vast problems remain -- conflicts between great Powers, conflicts between small neighbours, disagreements over disarmament, persistence of ancient wrongs in the area of human rights, residual problems of colonialism, and all the rest. But men and nations working apart created these problems, and men and nations working together must solve them. They can solve them with the help of this Organization when all Members make it a workshop for constructive action and not a forum for abuse, when all Members seek its help in settling their own disputes as well as the disputes of others, when all Members meet their financial obligations to it, and when all Members recognize that no nation and no party and no single system can control the future of man.

When I entered the Congress of the United States twenty-seven years ago, it was my very great privilege to work closely with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a member of Congress, I worked with him to bring about a profound but peaceful revolution. That peaceful revolution brought help and hope to the one-third of the nation that was then "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished". We helped our working men and women obtain more jobs and we helped them obtain better wages. We helped our farmers to buy and improve their own land, conserve their soil and water and electrify their farms. We harnessed the power of the great rivers, as in the Tennessee Valley and the Lower Colorado. We encouraged the growth of co-operatives and trade unions. We curbed the excesses of private speculation. We built homes in the place of city slums. And we extended the rights of freedom to all of our citizens.

(President Johnson)

Now, on the world scale, the time has come, as it came to America thirty years ago, for a new era of hope -- hope and progress for that one-third of mankind that is still beset by hunger, poverty and disease.

In my travels on behalf of my country and of President Kennedy, I have seen too much of misery and despair in Africa, in Asia and in Latin America. I have seen too often the ravages of hunger and tapeworm and tuberculosis, and the scabs and the scars on too many children who have too little health and no hope. I think that you and I and our countries and this Organization can -- and must -- do something about these conditions. I am not speaking here of a new way of life to be imposed by any single nation. I am speaking of a higher standard of living to be inspired by these United Nations. It will not be achieved through some hopeful resolution in this Assembly, but through a peaceful revolution in the world -- through a recommitment of all of our Members, rich and poor, strong and weak, whatever their location or their ideology, to the basic principles of human welfare and human dignity.

In this effort the United States will do its full share. In addition to bilateral aid, we have with great satisfaction assisted in recent years in the emergence and the improvement of international developmental institutions, both within and without this Organization. We favour the steady improvement of collective machinery for helping the less-developed nations build modern societies. We favour an international aid programme that is international in practice as well as in purpose. Every nation must do its share. All United Nations Members can do better; we can act more often together, we can build together a much better world.

The greatest of human problems -- and the greatest of our common tasks -- is to keep the peace and to save the future. All that we have built in the wealth of nations and all that we plan to do toward a better life for all will be in vain if our feet should slip or our vision falter, and our hopes end in another world-wide war.

If there is one commitment more than any other that I would like to leave with you today, it is my unswerving commitment to the keeping and to the strengthening of the peace. Peace is a journey of a thousand miles, and it must be taken one step at a time.

(President Johnson)

We know what we want:

The United States of America wants to see the cold war end; we want to see it end once and for all.

The United States wants to prevent the dissemination of nuclear weapons to nations not now possessing them.

The United States wants to press on with arms control and reduction.

The United States wants to co-operate with all the Members of this Organization to conquer everywhere the ancient enemies of mankind -- hunger and disease and ignorance.

The United States wants sanity and security, and peace for all, and above all.

President Kennedy, I am sure, would regard as his best memorial the fact that in his three years as President the world became a little safer and the way ahead became a little brighter. To the protection and the enlargement of this new hope for peace I pledge my country and its Government.

(President Johnson)

My friends and fellow citizens of the world: soon you will return to your homelands. I hope you will take with you my gratitude for your generosity in hearing me so late in this session. I hope you will convey to your countrymen the gratitude of all Americans for the companionship of sorrow which you shared with us in your messages of the last few weeks. And I hope you will tell them that the United States of America, sobered by tragedy, united in sorrow, renewed in spirit, faces the New Year determined that world peace, civil rights and human welfare become not an illusion but a reality.

Man's age-old hopes remain our goal: that this world, under God, can be safe for diversity and free from hostility and a better place for our children and for all generations in the years to come. Therefore any man and any nation that seeks peace and hates war, and is willing to fight the good fight against hunger and disease and ignorance and misery, will find the United States of America by their side, willing to walk with them every step of the way.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to express our thanks to the President of the United States for the important statement he has just made. I beg representatives to remain in their places while I escort the President of the United States from the hall.

President Johnson was escorted from the General Assembly hall.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to announce that President Johnson will receive the heads of delegations and the permanent representatives in the southwest corridor next to the General Assembly hall immediately after this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.