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STATEMENT BY MR S RAJARATNAM, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS), REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE,
AT THE SEVENTH NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT MEETING IN NEW DELHI
ON 9 MARCH, 1983

It is said that the ancient Mongol Court had a rather disconcerting way of dealing with bearers of unpleasant tidings. The emissary, so we are told, was given a respectful and even attentive hearing after which he was ceremoniously escorted out of the audience chamber by armed guards and then summarily and expeditiously executed. The thinking behind this somewhat unusual conduct was that while stout hearted rulers could be relied upon to maintain their composure and wits in the face of provocatively unpleasant truths these could well prove fatal to their less robustly constituted subjects. Hence the necessity of promptly eradicating the danger at source and thus ensuring that their people were kept in that state of eternal bliss that only creative ignorance could provide.

Madam Chairman, I thought it prudent to mention this possibly apocryphal Mongol folklore before I respond to your invitation that we should discuss freely and frankly the past performance and future prospects of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I think it would be best to state my conclusions first and then get on with my address for the benefit of those interested in the thought processes that led to my possibly disputable conclusions.

I shall state my assessment of the Non-Aligned Movement in three short sentences. Its past is one of which we can be justly proud. Its present condition however does it no credit. And finally if it persists in its present course, its future will be one of shameful oblivion.

These are my conclusions honestly and regretfully arrived at. I could have, as we have been inclined to in the past, indulged in the self-congratulatory pieties that our protocol demands but I think these pieties even if brought up to date no longer fool us and most certainly not our people or outsiders who quite frankly have given up trying to reconcile our admirable ideals with our less admirable conduct.

The peoples of the world will view this Summit as merely a foregathering of leaders whose pronouncements and rhetoric will not put one extra grain of rice into their near empty rice bowls or a roof over their heads or provide jobs to prop up their fading sense of dignity as human beings. Many of our peoples live off soup kitchens provided largely by some wealthy countries who, some members insist, should be castigated for showing up the parsimoniousness of equally well-to-do but extremely talkative countries. And most important of all this Summit, many people believe, will bring no relief to hundreds of thousands of human beings caught in the tragedies and horrors of fratricidal wars largely fought between non-aligned members.

Nor are the great powers, who once took the Non-Aligned Movement seriously enough to denounce non-alignment as impractical and immoral, today concerned with what we say or do. They find our growing impotency and disarray reassuring and if they are at all interested in us, it is how to exploit our disarray to advantage. At least one of the superpowers is interested in the Movement primarily because of its possible usefulness as a battering ram with which to beat down its rivals. I shall elaborate on this aspect in a little while.

Before I go on to expound in some detail the sorry plight in which the Movement now finds itself, let me also assert that if we as members can summon the necessary will, courage and wisdom the Movement can recover the vigour and sense of purpose it manifested in the early days. None of the dismal prospects I shall outline need happen, if we who really believe in non-alignment can summon the necessary sense of resoluteness and of realism.

To be able to do this we must cease pretending that the Movement is brimming over with vitality and purposefulness and face up boldly to certain developments which presage disaster but from which we avert our gaze lest we give offence to others. Once a movement fuels itself with self-delusions it is, Madam Chairman, a terminal case.

The sickness that afflicts the movement has economic and political roots. Both are equally important since they are really two sides of the single coin we call "crisis". For a complete understanding of the crisis both its economic and political aspects should be fully explored.

However having regard to time constraints I shall concentrate only on the political aspects which if not dealt with promptly and boldly could either destroy the movement or, what is more probable, lead to its enslavement by one or the other of the great powers who may find other effective but less honourable uses for it.

With your permission, Madam Chairman, I should like to deal with the threat of the possible enslavement of the movement by one of the superpowers. This threat is neither fanciful nor exaggerated. The destruction or the enslavement of the Non-Aligned Movement had always been the objective of both the superpowers.

It is a fact that when the idea of a Non-Aligned Group was first announced in Bandung in 1955 and then officially launched in Belgrade in 1961 both superpowers angrily denounced the doctrine of non-alignment as impractical and immoral. The real reason why the two superpowers were hostile to the concept was that the creation of a third group of neutral developing nations not only put severe restraints on great power rivalries but also made these rivalries extremely dangerous for them. The two superpowers had always been aware that an armed conflict between nuclear powers was unthinkable because it meant mutual annihilation. Military technology had deprived war of its traditional and only justifiable goal - the winning of wars. In a nuclear war nobody wins. So the great powers had to develop a new technique of waging and winning wars

without the risk of mutual destruction. An obvious way in which great power rivalries could be pursued without unacceptable risks was for both superpowers to elaborate and refine to near perfection the ancient technique of proxy wars.

I shall have more to say on proxy wars in a little while because an understanding of them is crucial to the future of our Movement.

The reason why the two superpowers denounced and tried to destroy the Non-Aligned Movement was that it drastically reduced the available pool of potential proxies. The fewer the number of proxies through whom to wage great power conflicts, the greater the probabilities of direct conflict between superpowers.

But as the membership of the Non-Aligned Movement gradually expanded from about 25 at Belgrade to its present membership of over 100 the objective of destroying the movement became an increasingly unattainable goal - and it occurred to the great powers a wasteful one as well. Why not, instead, capture it from within and in one fell swoop the victor would have corralled some 100 or more potential proxies. I believe that sometime in the seventies the great powers ceased denouncing the movement as immoral and instead showered it with guarded praise simply because the objective was to capture it alive from within.

To cut a long story short the United States lost the take over bid primarily because, I suspect, the Americans are not unlike their more experienced and dedicated Soviet rivals particularly good at political conspiracy. This may be because unlike Soviet conspirators, American conspirators tend to talk too much. In totalitarian systems, we are told, even citizens who do not normally conspire tend to be secretive and uncommunicative while in Western democracies even conspiracy has to be open. So in the seventies the Soviets were particularly careful to make the necessary genuflections before the Non-Aligned altar. In fact Soviet professions of esteem and even awe before the Non-Aligned Movement assumed embarrassing dimensions. If there was censure it was more in the spirit of a fond husband rebuking his spouse for casting covetous glances in the direction of obscenely affluent capitalist-imperialist rivals.

But the high regard the Soviets outwardly manifested for the movement was in fact akin to the gesture of an atheistic politician in a Catholic country taking care to ostentatiously and noisily kiss the Pope's ring.

The fulsome praise and regard the Soviets have shown does not stem from a genuine respect for and belief in non-alignment but springs from an understandable concern to preserve the good name of an establishment they intended to take over.

What authority have I for asserting that the Soviets do not in fact believe in non-alignment and that they contemplate, if they can, its hi-jacking.

My authorities are impeccable. They are Pravda and the Soviet journal New Times. Even Soviet conspirators can occasionally talk too much.

Let me quote an extract from a Pravda editorial of February 8, 1961. The Pravda is not a frivolous or a privately owned paper reflecting the idiosyncratic views of its irrelevant proprietors. It is an establishment paper reflecting the considered views and aims of a powerful Soviet ruling class.

This is what it says:

"Sanctimonious ideas have been imposed on the non-aligned countries such as that the non-aligned movement should keep an equal distance from the two opposing social systems - imperialism and socialism - and that instead of opposing imperialism and colonialism, resistance to the policy of alignment should be given top consideration."

The Soviet leaders clearly regard non-alignment as "sanctimonious" delusion. They also claim that this bit of "sanctimony" was imposed. Since, as far as I know, the belief in non-alignment preceded the formation of the Movement itself, I do not see how non-alignment could have been imposed on it, unless it was self-imposed.

A New Times article which appeared two days earlier made even more interesting disclosures as to the inner thinking of the Soviet establishment about the Non-Alignment Movement and how the Soviet leaders proposed to harness it to serve their foreign policy interests.

After describing as "untenable" the non-aligned doctrine of keeping an equal distance between "the Warsaw Pact Organisation and Nato" it disclosed how this "sanctimonious" idea of non-involvement in great power rivalries was being rectified from within the movement. It revealed that "those countries taking the progressive direction are the true motor of the non-aligned movement Though they are a small number they are playing an important role."

I think, Madam Chairman, we are getting closer to one of the major sources of the disarray within the Movement which sorely troubled you, as it does many of us and which you requested we should explore frankly and sincerely.

The two journals which faithfully mirror the thinking of Soviet leaders and one of which provides guidelines for Soviet disciples abroad throw light on certain trends within the movement which might have escaped the notice of some of us.

Both journals make clear the following facts.

Fact Number One: The Soviet Union considers non-alignment a "sanctimonious" self-delusion.

Fact Number Two: That resistance by some of us (fortunately at present the vast majority) to alignment with the Soviet Union is a bit of political tomfoolery that should be corrected.

Fact Number Three: Towards this end there is within the movement a 'motor' which has been programmed to take it in a 'progressive' direction - that is towards a redefining alliance with the Soviet Union.

Fact Number Four: The motor, at the moment, is small but nevertheless we are assured by the New Times it is playing an "important role".

In other words, Madam Chairman, we are witnesses to our own slow motion hijacking and if we do not wake up to this fact and do something to abort it then the ship of non-alignment and all those who sail in it may wake up one day to find that they have docked in a Soviet port.

In picking on the Soviet Union, I am not exonerating the other superpower from entertaining equally hostile attitudes and ambitions towards the movement. But as of now I see no evidence of a United States bid to hijack the Movement. As far as I know nobody has been bold enough or mad enough to float the counter idea of the United States as the "natural ally" of the Non-Aligned Movement.

How, it may be asked, can a minority take over a movement of 101 members, the vast majority of whom are against the movement aligning itself with any great power? History has shown repeatedly that a determined minority can take over the reins from an acquiescent majority. I am not saying it will happen. All I am saying is that it could happen.

In two instances in recent times this minority has thwarted the wishes of the majority in the Movement.

The first instance related to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Non-Alignment Movement has so far been more evasive than even the United Nations in its judgement of the armed intervention by a super-power in the affairs of a member of this Movement. It is a tribute to the incredible horse-power the small motor implanted within the Non-Aligned Movement could generate. So the New Times was not indulging in idle boasting when it claimed that a minority was the "true motor" of our Movement.

The other instance relates to Kampuchea. I do not propose to deal at length with the problem of Kampuchea except to point out that what some members insist on treating as the so-called Havana decision, if left unreversed, could pave the way for a smooth and trouble free hijacking of the movement by a minority on behalf of its benefactor.

The technique employed in Havana was incredibly smooth, swift and simple. One member, in this instance the outraged aggressor, raised objection to the presence at the Sixth Summit of its victim, Democratic Kampuchea, which before the invasion had not only attended all non-aligned meetings but its leader, the unloveable Poi Pot, had been the recipient of many valedictory fraternal greetings from the aggressor.

The aggressor, incidentally, is a believer in the doctrine that the Soviet Union is the "natural ally" of non-alignment.

The victim unfortunately for it was of a contrary persuasion.

In the face of this predictable objection the host government, without seeking a consensus from members, obliged by declaring the seat vacant.

The host government, coincidentally, also subscribes to the thesis that the Soviet Union is the "natural ally" of non-alignment.

The evicted member was not called upon to show cause why he should not be flung out presumably because the chairman decided that an objection in itself was sufficient proof of the unworthiness of the objectee to be a member.

So with one swift blow a victim who did not have the foresight to belong to what the New Times described as the progressive camp was conveniently disposed of.

There is no hope on earth of Democratic Kampuchea ever regaining its seat simply because according to the previous chairman though a consensus is not required for unseating it is indispensable for reseating of a member.

So if the Havana decision is given the status of a precedent then a determined minority with the aid of co-operative hosts could purge the Movement of troublesome unbelievers and, as New Times and

Pravda demand, steer the Non-Aligned Movement in an aligned direction. There would be no need to purge the Movement of all believers in non-alignment. Enough of them should remain to give the captured movement respectability, provided they remain an acquiescent majority.

Once the Non-Aligned Movement has been captured new vistas open for proliferation of proxy wars fought to the last Third World soldier.

Admittedly proxy wars are rarely engineered by great powers. They merely convert wars which rise spontaneously and independently into proxy wars. Today any and all conflicts between small nations can be and will be converted into proxy wars. It is my belief that the Third World War will not be a cataclysmic, single encounter between the great powers. The probabilities of that happening are very small because the great nuclear powers know that such a clash would entail mutual annihilation.

Third World War will in fact be a protracted series of proxy wars fought by small nations with arms sold or supplied as gifts on behalf of great powers.

If this is correct then the Third World War has already begun. It began long ago. It has been estimated that since 1945 some 135 wars of varying intensity and duration have been fought. They involved more than 85 countries and are responsible for casualties that far exceeded those of World War II. All these wars without exception have been fought outside the Western world and outside the major industrial countries. In fact the European nations have for the first time in their violent history seen nearly four decades pass without one European war.

With the exception of the wars in Korea, Vietnam and now in Afghanistan all the wars since 1945 have been between Third World countries. The wounded, the dead, the sick and the refugees are all from the Third World. As of now there are some 29 recent and on going disputes ranging from confrontations which could degenerate into wars to armed conflicts between Third World countries. The percentage increase in arms expenditure is rising faster in Third

World countries than in developed countries. All these wars are fought with weapons bought largely from half a dozen or so industrial nations which manufacture these sophisticated weapons. Most of the arms sold are weapons which had become obsolete and which in a more peaceful world the major powers would have thrown into the sea or allowed to rust away in military dumps.

Let us frankly face up to the fact that most Third World countries today live not in fear, as current mythology has it, of a return of Western imperialism but in fear of Third World neighbours, near and far away, with military ambitions. Rectification of real and imagined frontiers, the resurrection of vanished empires whether actual or invented, the righting of ancient wrongs and the avenging of still more ancient defeats, the lust for loot and domination over weaker peoples or simply the need to distract the populace from growing domestic discontents are among the many and varied causes which fuel Third World Wars and which provide opportunities for great powers to launch proxy wars.

Though the Third World is by and large poor it spent US\$90 billion on arms in 1981. Some of it was for normal defence purposes but steep increase in arms expenditure was largely prompted by fear of Third World aggressions launched either on their own behalf or on behalf of their financiers.

So if the Non-Aligned Movement is to maintain its integrity and fulfil the great role the founding fathers assigned to it then one of our major responsibilities is to consider ways and means of preventing proliferation of armed conflicts in the Third World. Prevention of such wars is clearly not an easy task but the alternative is our eventual enslavement as proxies for great powers. Once you become a proxy you become a willing or unwilling mercenary. You fight your wars on borrowed strength. Without a steady flow of extremely sophisticated and increasingly expensive weapons from great powers the proxy is bereft of strength to carry on his war. The great power can regulate the course of war; increase or decrease its intensity and prolong or terminate it at will by controlling the flow of arms.

The converse is also true. Without Third World conflicts, there can be no proxies for great powers to recruit and manipulate. There can be no great power conflicts either.

But clearly every Third World country must be assured of security. I have no easy answer as to how this can be achieved cheaply and without our being trapped into becoming great power proxies.

One possibly controversial solution is for those Third World countries genuinely concerned only with their defence to call upon great powers to collectively guarantee their security and territorial integrity. This is not as far fetched as it may seem because both the United States as well as the Soviet Union had at various times proposed such collective security arrangements but unfortunately always in the context of great power rivalry. There has even been bilateral defence arrangements such as that between the United States and Japan and Treaties of Friendship and Co-operation between the Soviet Union and individual countries, both Communist and non-Communist. I see many practical and political difficulties but it is a solution worth exploring.

The alternative is to attempt military self-sufficiency which for poor Third World countries is in practice unattainable and the attempt to achieve it must mean economic ruin and the start of a disastrous arms race in the Third World. Military technology is changing so fast and becoming so expensive and sophisticated that keeping up-to-date by ceaseless purchase of even obsolete second and third generation weapons must mean economic ruin for the overwhelming majority of Third World countries.

The question of peace in the Third World is primarily a matter for Third World countries to resolve. But not wholly. We need the co-operation and support of the great powers who can by virtue of their wealth, power and monopoly of military technology magnify Third World conflicts into ruinous proxy wars or abort them into brief relatively harmless encounters.

I would suggest the following guidelines for our Movement:

(a) In any aggression the aggressor must be presumed to be guilty unless he can prove beyond all reasonable doubt that he had justification for his warlike act. This is not always the case in our Movement.

(b) In the case of such an aggression our verdict on it must not be coloured by some gratifying back-door deal made with the aggressor or his wealthy patron or both.

(c) We should start off with the proposition that the legal frontiers of any country are those that obtained when the member was admitted into the United Nations and that any attempt to rectify them by force of arms merits automatic censure.

(d) No member of this organisation is justified committing aggression just because it feels an irresistible impulse to liberate other people from real or imaginary oppression, barbarities or from presumed neo-colonialism. These are matters best left to the people of that country.

(e) The clear repudiation by this Movement that any superpower is the natural ally of non-alignment.

The guidelines could be lengthened but if our movement could adhere strictly to these five then a start towards peace would have been made.

The proposals I have put forward, I will concede, are possibly impractical and naive. But the day one of us becomes the victim of aggression on that day the practicality and relevance of these guidelines would become self-evident truths - but a revelation too late if not enshrined as fundamental laws of our Movement.

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