

Modern History Sourcebook:

Anwar el Sadat:

Afro-Asian Solidarity and the World Mission of the Peoples of Africa and Asia, 1957

Address Delivered by Mr. Anwar el Sadat at the First Afro-Asian people's Solidarity Conference, December 26, 1957

More than two years ago twenty nine governments of independent states convened together at the Bandung Conference to declare to the world at large that the tide of history has changed its course, and that Asia and Africa, which hitherto have been common play ground, where trespassers went by unheeded or a forest in which foreign beasts of prey roamed at leisure, have now become free world powers, majestic and serene, with a decisive role in shaping the future of the whole family of Nations. The Conference of Bandung was likewise convened to stress to the peoples of Africa and Asia the great importance of solidarity and the great weight they would have on the trend of world affairs when united.

Today this people's Conference of ours meets, partly in honour of the spirit of Bandung and as a reminder of the principles and ideals it stands for, and partly to push it a step forward. Because our Conference is a Conference of peoples, it has been able to muster, not only the countries recognized by International Law as independent units, but also those peoples whose status is a foregone conclusion, a historical fact, and a reality endorsed by the whole of mankind, in addition to peoples who are still trodden under the heel of imperialism in one form or another. But our Conference takes the interest of these very peoples to heart. They are the diseased organs in the body of Asia and Africa: consequently they stand in dire need of the greatest of care and attention. A body cannot continue to exist with half of its structure safe and sound while the other half is diseased and decayed. . . .

The idea of Afro-Asian Solidarity did not emanate out of naught, so as to be born and see daylight at Bandung all of a sudden. But before materializing as an historical event, it was an impression and an innate volition instinctively developing in the mind of the colonized and the exploited-the human being whom imperialism had reduced to a typefied specimen of a subjugated specie and bondsman recognisable in every colonized country. Indeed the idea of solidarity was deeply rooted in the hearts of those subjected peoples, continually aspiring through diverse national movements to smash the fetters of bondage and redeem their salvation. In the course of time these national movements were destined to meet, to consolidate and to react with one another, purposefully in some instances, but unconsciously and spontaneously in the majority of cases.

It is evident therefore, that the Bandung Conference was not a haphazard event, but rather a natural psychological factor which led to the awakening of the peoples of Africa and Asia and roused them from their slumber to solve the problem of their very existence and survival, and to resume the struggle for the recovery of their liberty and freedom. This awakening would have been devoid of any historical significance had it not marked a point of departure towards a new progressive future, the fundamental broad lines of which have been laid down by the Bandung Conference. It is up to the Peoples' Cairo Conference to reap from it, to the fullest extent, the benefits of the positive results which have blossomed in the political, economic, social and cultural fields alike. It is here that we shall necessarily be confronted by a number of difficult problems, but to find adequate solutions to these problems is not an impossible task, if we succeed in overcoming the first difficulty from the outset. It is a problem which comes within our own selves. It is the problem of sound and unbiased judgment. . . .No doubt each country has its own particular problems for which she is more competent than any one else to gauge the nature of the difficulties they represent; but at the same time, there is not a shadow of a doubt also that it is within the power of each of us to extend a helping hand to his brother in time of need, in an endeavour to assist in solving his problems, be it only in the form of a genuine, friendly counsel or an expert advice. Thus it becomes evident that it is the duty of each of us to foster a double interest-an interest in his own problems, and an interest in the problems of others.

In addition, there are problems which present a common interest to us all. They react on us, and reflect on all of us one and the same homogeneous picture. Consequently, our particular national problems, and the problems common to us all, must of necessity go along, side by side. . . .These are not the only responsibilities we have to shoulder in our Conference; for in addition to the host of responsibilities we have towards our diverse specific countries, there are others we have towards our two Continents, Africa and Asia. Besides, we have definite responsibilities towards the whole of mankind as an entire, indivisible unit.

We cannot live peacefully in a world threatened by the shadow of war. We can no longer enjoy the products of our hands and the fruits of our labour in a world where plunder prevails and flourishes. We can no longer build and reconstruct in a world which manufactures weapons for destruction and devastation. We can no longer raise the standard of living of our peoples and stamp out diseases and epidemics in a world where nations vie with each other for the production of lethal weapons of massacre and annihilation. Gone for ever is the era where the future of war and peace was decided upon in a few European capitals, because today we happen to be strong enough to make the decision ourselves in that respect.

Our weight in the international balance has now become preponderant. only think of the colossal number of our people, our natural resources, the vastness of the area covered by our respective countries, and our strategic positions. You will surely come to the conclusion that the outbreak of war is impossible so long as we insist on peace,

especially if we do not content ourselves with a mere negative attitude, but assume one of positiveness in favour of Peace. This transition from the negative to the positive is a fundamental basis worthy of our adoption.

Here in Egypt we, for instance, believe in the principle of neutrality and non-alignment. Many of our friends in Asia and Africa share this belief. We are confident that by adopting this attitude, we eliminate the shadow of war and limit the area of conflict between the two belligerent blocks, thus creating a vast region for Peace, imposing its existence and its atmosphere day after day, until it prevails over the whole world. But this neutrality in which we believe, though it defines the principle of abstaining from entering into international blocks, yet it also means that we shall spare no positive effort in reconciling these belligerent blocks. . . . It is the very principle which has been stressed by the President Gamal Abdul Nasser in his speech at Port Said on the anniversary of its liberation, when he said:

Today in Port Said we turn to the whole world demanding the corroboration of the fundamental principles of justice, which is the right to self-determination. We look from Port Said towards the whole world and demand that every colonized State should be granted its independence, and the right to govern itself. . . .

In the name of Egypt, I address a message to the world at large, for the preservation of Peace, and the abolition of war; for the removal of world tension, and the cessation of the cold war of nerves. We have seen war at Port Said. We have been hit by it, and faced its ravages and woes. But a World War, once it breaks out with its nuclear weapons and hydrogen bombs, will unquestionably annihilate mankind and destroy for ever our existing civilization. As a section of humanity, which has been treacherously attacked by imperialistic States, we demand that atomic experiments should be abolished, and that manufacture and use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. We further press for disarmament in the interests of World Peace.

The People of Egypt who are sparing no effort for the establishment of universal justice, equity, liberty and peace, welcome you as messengers of justice, equity, liberty and peace.

Source: from *The First Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference, 26 December 1957 to January 1, 1958*, 2nd edition (Cairo: The Permanent Secretariat of the Organization for Afro-Asian People's Solidarity, 1958), pp. 7-12.

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