

Brothers and Sisters: As I stand here today I recall how we took a vow to plant the national flag on the Red Fort forty years ago when we were volunteers in the national movement. It was our brave leader, Jawaharlalji, who inspired this idea. We can never forget him. He was one of the greatest leaders of the freedom struggle; and after winning Independence he launched the massive task of India's reconstruction. For seventeen years he worked unceasingly, day and night, to consolidate our freedom.

We all remember the joy and enthusiasm which surged through the country on August, 15, 1947, when we regained our long-lost freedom. For seventeen years, you witnessed every year the unforgettable scene of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru standing at this spot and unfurling the national flag. We cannot forget the dignity and courage with which he led the country. He became a part of our life. Now he is no longer with us. His inspiring voice is mute but he has left us an invaluable heritage which we must preserve. We have to surmount the difficulties that face us and work steadfastly for the happiness and prosperity of our country.

The food problem has become very acute during the last month and a half. The States of U.P., Bihar, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat and a part of Rajasthan are facing food scarcity. I can assure you that we are doing our best to meet this situation. We have rushed foodgrains from surplus States like Punjab, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh and also from imported stocks. Though we are not yet out of the woods, there has been a perceptible improvement. We will have to intensify our efforts during the coming months. We will also have to limit our consumption and help to feed those of our countrymen who are less fortunate than ourselves. We should not store foodgrains in excess of our requirements. I am confident that we will face this problem with courage and far-sightedness. We will have to stop lavish feasts during the coming two or three months. Ministers will not participate in feasts and will not hold any parties. This may not result in much saving of foodgrains but it will have a psychological effect and set a good example before the people.

The basic question to which we have to address ourselves is that of increasing the production of foodgrains. I do not want to go into the details of the steps we are going to take. Broadly, we want to assure a fair price to the producers and procure grain without causing hardship. I am sure we will be able to improve our position considerably within a year or two.

I do not want to minimise the other problems that face us. The prices of everyday necessities like cloth, oil, sugar and matches have risen. This has naturally affected the farmer also. During the last 15 years we have invested Rs. 20,000 crores in our development plans. Unless this huge investment results in a corresponding increase in production, it is bound to lead to inflation and high prices. We will have to devise steps to arrest rising prices. There is no question of going back on our objective of establishing a new revolutionary society but we will have to take firm action to control prices. I am confident that the Government will be able to find a way out of the present economic difficulties.

I want to ensure that essential commodities are available at fair prices during the coming years. I am not very much concerned about the prices of luxury goods but I do want the common man to be able to get food, cloth and articles of everyday use at a fair price. Every shop will have to display a price-list and Government officials will have to enforce it strictly.

We want peace at home and abroad. We have to pay particular attention to our relations with our neighbours. The Chinese invaded our country. Their attitude has not changed. Therefore we cannot change our attitude either. In consonance with the principles laid down by Gandhiji and Jawaharlalji we are always prepared to hold talks, consistent with our dignity and self-respect; but our country is not going to bow down to any threat of force or of an atomic bomb. We are confident of the strength of our people, and are capable of facing every danger. I am happy that President Ayub Khan has expressed friendly sentiments for India. I welcome his plea for amity between India and Pakistan. We also desire amity. Border incidents are not good either for Pakistan or for India. It also does not redound to our credit that we are not able to stop the migration of

lakhs of people from across the border. I hope that we shall be able to hold talks within the next few months and create an atmosphere of goodwill which may lead to a settlement.

We have friendly relations with our neighbours—Burma, Ceylon, Nepal and Afghanistan. Some problems do crop up sometimes. I am happy that the Prime Minister of Ceylon has accepted our invitation to come here during October. I am confident that we will be able to find a solution to the problem of the people of Indian origin in Ceylon. Our Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, is going to Burma, and I hope he will be able to resolve the present difficulties with that country.

Jawaharlalji showed us the path of peace. We will work for world peace with all our strength. We will steer clear of alignment with power blocs and pursue an independent policy. We adhere to the policy of non-alignment, co-existence, disarmament, anti-colonialism and anti-racialism. We are firmly opposed to colonialism and we want to see the end of Portuguese colonialism. We cannot tolerate racial policies, whether in South Africa or elsewhere. We stand for truth and justice, not in an aggressive manner but with dignity and restraint.

We can win respect in the world only if we are strong internally and can banish poverty and unemployment from our country. Above all we need national unity. Communal, provincial and linguistic conflicts weaken the country. Therefore, we have to forge national unity. I appeal to all to work for national unity and usher in a social revolution to make our country strong.

In the ultimate analysis, the strength of the country does not lie in material wealth alone. A country is made strong by people like Gandhi, Jawaharlal and Tagore; by the force of character and moral strength. Therefore, I appeal to our young men to inculcate in themselves discipline and character and work for the unity and advancement of the nation. If our young men and women work in this spirit, I have no doubt that the future of our country will be bright.