

*Prime Minister
Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's
Address
to
The Nation*

August 14, 1973

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Prime Minister
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Islamabad,
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S. Muzaffar Ali Shah
&
Akhbar Hussain
Abbasi.

My countrymen, brothers and sisters,
Assalam-o-Allakum :

After serving you as your President for twenty months, I feel it a privilege to address you tonight as the first elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. I am addressing not merely the people of Pakistan in general but also all classes of people, members of all parties or groups ; I am addressing Baluchis and Punjabis, Pathans and Sindhis and our Muhajir brethren ; I am speaking to the peasants and workers, the students and teachers, the journalists and civil servants, the employers and the employees, the young and the old, that constitute our nation. Today is a day of historic significance to all.

Today we bid good-bye, finally and for all time, to the palace revolutions and military coups which plagued Pakistan for nearly two decades. It is my hope that we will also bid good-bye to the venom and violence which pervert our politics and make it a study in pathology.

In adopting and enforcing a constitution with the unanimous agreement of all parties, we have prescribed for ourselves a certain mode of political life. We have agreed that decisions will be made either by consensus or according to the view of the majority. We have resolved to institute free dialogue and debate within the framework of national integrity. We have determined that we shall remove all regional disparities which were the legacy of prolonged misrule and which denied to the populous their full share and participation in national life. Finally, we have decided that political change will henceforth be peaceful and succession of governments orderly.

I put the question to each of you, my countrymen, whatever be your political persuasion : Have you fully assimilated this new decision about how we shall henceforth lead our corporate life ? If you have,

then the question arises : Are you prepared, here and now, to root out the habits and practices which are inimical to democracy ? It is your realisation of the imperatives of a democratic system that alone can safeguard the Constitution. If this realization is genuinely felt, as it must be, then I have not the slightest doubt that all the rant and rancour which pollutes the political atmosphere of the country like toxic fumes will be dispelled. I have no doubt then that we will soon settle into a new way of life characterised by a tolerance and maturity that we have not shown so far. We can pursue our respective political paths with zest but we all have to respect the rules for preserving the nation's integrity and the peacefulness of its political life. Let all voices be raised in defence of all view-points but let there not be a pandemonium. Democracy works within a discipline. If we break the discipline, we subvert the democracy. I am often distressed by the observation that we in Pakistan appear to want one without the other. Our experience of a quarter of a century should convince us that such a quest is insane.

Tonight, I appeal to you, my countrymen, my brothers and sisters, to give thought to these elementary necessities. We cannot realize democracy if a political minority refuses to recognize its position as a minority. We cannot sustain democracy if one group or party is not content with its role in the opposition and will not agree to wait until future elections. We cannot preserve democracy if we allow extra parliamentary individuals or groups to plot the seizure of power with soldiers and civil servants. And we cannot safeguard either our institutions or our national existence if we countenance any separatist tendencies. In evolving and implementing our constitution, we have pledged to *Allah* and to ourselves that we shall not permit intrigues subversive of government, that we shall not allow destructive trends to take root and that we will use every ounce of our energy towards the establishment of the climate in which alone democracy can flourish. We have pledged, each and every one of us, that we will man the defences against chaos or disintegration. If we dishonour the pledge, we condemn ourselves before both God and man.

I cannot but speak candidly to the people of Pakistan, even when other people are also listening. I ask : Do we show evidence of the

political maturity which is essential to sustaining our existence in this harsh and brutal age ? Let me give you a recent example. Your President was invited to a State visit by the President of the United States of America. It so happened that just before the commencement of the visit, President Nixon was hospitalized. This naturally led to the visit being postponed. In any country, a development of this nature would have evoked little comment except an expression of regret at the host's illness. But what happened in Pakistan ? Here, speculation was let loose ; a mystery was suspected where none existed and many a politician void with many an editorial writer in not only putting his foot into his mouth but insisting on keeping it there. I ask you, my brothers and sisters, does it not offend your pride, does it not outrage your sense of nationalism, that you lend your ear to such insane and asinine comments ?

I am often told that this is a question of credibility. But credibility is not a one-way affair. It assumes a rationality on the other side, a receptivity to facts. Nothing in the world, no gimmicks or strategems, no pleas or urgings, can persuade a man to accept established facts if he has shut his eyes to them. A society exists in a foreign country which still refuses to believe that the earth is round or that it revolves round the sun. Does it mean that science has failed to establish its credibility ? No kind of credibility can overcome a person's stubborn refusal to believe. The kind of society which I mentioned a moment ago is multiplied several times in our political sphere. If we tell some of our people that our relations with such-and-such power are so-and-so, they begin to imagine that the opposite must be the case. In the face of such untrammelled imagination, facts, I confess, are a poor armour.

This brings me to the subject of our external relations. Pakistan has to cope with many difficulties internally and I concede that alternatives may exist to a policy adopted in respect of any one of them. But there is one area of our national concern in which no alternative exists to the policy we have adopted. There is simply no range of choices. That is the area of our external affairs. In seeking a detente with those neighbours of ours that have been hostile to us in the past, in working for greater cooperation with those with whom

we have fraternal affiliations and in proclaiming that we shall cultivate friendly relations with each great power without antagonizing another, we have taken due stock of both our limitations and our strengths. What is there in the propositions implicit in this policy that needs to be the subject of controversy and that should evoke endless innuendos and insinuations? Yet is it not astonishing that even this field, in which we are guided by axiomatic propositions, becomes among us a free-for-all? Does it not denote irresponsibility of a juvenile kind? You know, and I know that we have no secret pacts, made no clandestine understandings, entered into no commitments which are not made public. Yet wild things are being said about our relations even with our close Muslim neighbours. What does this indicate except a total lack of a sense of proportion? How can your Government pursue foreign relations in this merciless age if it is consistently sniped at from within the country?

I give you another example. A *coup* took place and there was a change of government inside our neighbouring country, Afghanistan. It was an internal affair of that country and we would no more wish to interfere in it than we would let Afghanistan interfere in ours. We, therefore, took the only rational course open to us in recognising the new government in Kabul, conveying our friendly sentiments to it and assuring it of our cooperation in schemes and projects of mutual benefit. At the same time, we have made it clear that, if, despite our efforts, our relations with Afghanistan should deteriorate, we are fully capable of meeting the situation. Now, in a healthy environment, this should have put quietus to all kinds of speculations which, if unchecked, pose the danger of hampering our dialogue with the concerned government. But did it? I cannot but be saddened by the thought that we in Pakistan have not yet learnt to take things in our stride. I appeal to my brothers and sisters to address themselves to the question as to why they either become a prey to endless fears or harbour fantastic hopes. An alarmist view is as harmful as a view based on wishful thinking. Why is it that we oscillate between the two extremes? One moment we imagine ourselves to be able to march to Delhi; the next we despair even of our resistance to an enemy. What has happened to our manliness? What has happened to the fortitude

of our sturdy folk if the opinion makers present a manic-depressive spectacle ? Oppose the government, if you must, but I urge you not to degrade the quality of your humanness.

Then there is the example of the issue of Bangladesh. Happily, the National Assembly has adopted a resolution empowering the government to extend *de jure* recognition to Bangladesh at the appropriate time. But whisperings still continue and graffit can be seen on the walls against the acceptance of a reality. What courage lies there in the refusal to face realities ? I ask those who pose as the champions of Pakistan : Have you no recourse except to an ostrich-like attitude ? Must you work yourselves into a frenzy over an issue when a rational judgement can solve the problem ? Why do you forget that other people are moved by as powerful passions as you yourselves ?

I have given these examples of an attitude which cannot be allowed to persist if we wish to attain our full national stature. Basically, it is a symptom of insecurity. But let us ask ourselves : What basis is there to such insecurity ? Our problems may still be manifold but there are nations that face far bigger ones. Our own neighbour, India, is beset with complex problems right now, and there have been eruptions of a greater turbulence there than is our lot. Yet, I am sure, the opinion makers there realize instinctively that such phases occur in a nation's life, that there are ups and downs and that no riots, no clashes between the army and the police, will make the edifice of the state to crumble. You endure such turbulence and you let the situation find a new equilibrium. Such is the instinct of any member of a maturely evolved state. But, here in Pakistan, why is it that the faintest quivering shakes our faith in our future ? There is no cure to insecurity if one wishes to cling to it.

The opposition that exists in Pakistan today is, I am afraid, propelled by one or more of the attitudes which I have mentioned. They seem to lack faith either in democracy or in the nation's future. In national affairs, whether external or internal, the first rule is that opposition must be so conducted that it does not weaken the framework of the state

nor so discredit the machinery of the government as to make it a bad inheritance for a successor administration. After all, what is the purpose of opposition? The purpose is to bring about either a change of policy or a change of government. But if no viable alternative policies are proposed and if the very machinery of the government is sought to be subverted, then the opposition pursues a course which is not opposition to the party in power but opposition to government as such and to the nation as a whole. Then opposition becomes a moral turpitude. Then, it leads to chaos. Whatever its political system, no country in the world can afford to let such cruel wrongs persist. Pakistan is no exception.

Let me make it clear that, when I talk of the Opposition, I am mindful of the fact that the Pakistan People's Party may itself be in opposition some day. We would not be democrats if we ever ruled out such a possibility. I am no great Khan that I should entertain dreams of ruling Pakistan in perpetuity. I cannot, therefore, deny to the Opposition any rights which I myself might claim one day. But, I repeat, the Opposition forfeits its legitimacy if, instead of being a pillar of the structure of government, it takes upon itself the role of dismantling it. If the parties opposed to us choose the path of dialogue and accommodation, I have always shown myself to be ready to meet them more than half way. But if they choose confrontation, then I make a promise to them that we shall face them at all levels and on all fronts. Just because there exist some areas of discontent, as there do in any administrations, let no one imagine that the Pakistan People's Party has become a minority outside the legislature. Let no one entertain the thought that it will run away from the battle or disintegrate under hostile pressures.

The Pakistan People's Party has been in power for a little more than a year and a half. This is too short a period to make it humanly possible for any group of men to redeem all the pledges which have been made to the electorate. We are still a long way from providing the equality of economic opportunity that we promised to the nation. We are still grappling with knotty problems involved in ensuring the supply

of food, shelter and clothing to the poor. I am often awed by the thought of the enormous effort which is still required in order to restore his dignity to the common man. It is an uphill task. There are no instant solutions, no magic wands. Only long painstaking effort can lead us to the summit which we want to reach. No one is more conscious than I of the shortcomings in our performance. No one is more pained than I at the sight of the numerous obstacles in our way. Yet I am sure that, given some tranquillity, given a relaxation in the political climate, given a modicum of rationality in our political dialogue, we will achieve the full realization of our economic and social goals. This, my countrymen, demands patience. It requires perseverance and a robust faith in our future. It demands cooperation from all sections of the population. It imposes the necessity of eschewing utopian dreams.

But while I speak of the shortfalls in our achievements, I would be less than honest if I did not remind you that, within this short period, the Government run by the Pakistan People's Party and its associates has given a new direction to our political life. It has rescued the nation from the morass into which it had sunk after the disaster of 1971. Is it, I ask, a small achievement that we have belied the dire predictions of those who averred that, after the loss of its eastern part, Pakistan would disintegrate? Should one belittle the fact that, unlike most other victims of foreign invasion, Pakistan secured the withdrawal of the invading armies not long after the cessation of hostilities? Can one shut one's eyes to the fact that our economic recovery has been more rapid than was the case after wars in much more developed societies? Are we not entitled to a measure of pride that we finally solved the problem of provincial autonomy which had baffled constitution-making throughout our existence?

I gladly concede that the primary credit for this achievement goes to the industry and resilience of our people. But a people's spirit needs to be mobilized by its government. No minority government could have so energised the people of Pakistan. No regime isolated from the masses could have demonstrated, as we have done, that the country was not laid low by the catastrophe which visited it not long ago. The very

fact that the calamitous events of 1971 now look remote shows how far we have travelled on the road to recovery. It has been a people's odyssey, the entire nation's effort, but it is the Party which has furnished the guidance and inspiration.

At such a historic turn which our nation's affairs have had to take under the compulsion of events, a confrontation between its various political elements can only be ruinous. Patriotism is meaningless if the perils faced by the nation are ignored. Let me refer here to the problem which is uppermost in my mind. This is the problem of prices. On other occasions, I will talk about the measures already taken by the Government or those which we will be adopted in due course to check this rising spiral. Today, I will refer only to those aspects of this problem which point to some basic truths about our national life. It is true that this is not a problem peculiar to our country. It is not Pakistan alone which has been caught in the grip of the worst inflation known to the international community. The phenomenon is world-wide. Even the most affluent countries are overwhelmed by this problem. The less privileged like Pakistan and its neighbours cannot but suffer more grievously. Yet the fact remains that the price situation in Pakistan is not only an effect of the operation of the laws of supply and demand. It is the social evils of smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and price manipulating that make the problem lethal and give it a dimension which is not amenable to mere economic management. No government in the world can check such social evils without the cooperation of all sections of the people. The alternative is to wipe out all human laws and adopt the most draconian measures. If you do not want the Government to suspend civil liberties, if you do not like it to employ whipping and hanging in punishment of the smugglers and hoarders, then the only course is for the people themselves to fight the perpetrators of these wrongs and to isolate and expose them. Can such resistance be built if the different political parties or elements do not unite in a war against the exploiters? And how can this real united front be established if each action of the Government, taken after the most careful deliberations is criticised and ridiculed? Opinions may differ about the adequacy of this or that action. But there can be no controversy about the necessity of making an assault on the problem. If a certain

action is considered inadequate, a fuller one can be proposed. But if the action is derided just because it is action by a certain Government, then the only result is that the problem becomes more intractable and the very anti-social forces which are at its root are strengthened and encouraged.

On this historic occasion when our nation has reached a milestone, I would, therefore, urge on all patriotic political parties to separate those areas which demand united support to the Government in power from those which can admit partisan controversy. The two are separable. The defence of our political independence and national integrity, the preservation of civilian supremacy, the maintenance of our foreign relations, the attack on social evils and the fighting of subversion are those areas where the interests of the government in power are identical with those of the country. Any attempt to thwart the Government in the pursuit of national aims in these fields amounts to thwarting the nation as a whole. This still leaves out large areas where differences can be freely ventilated and no one need call another a traitor. However, even a discussion of these differences there will be futility if it has the odour of fire and brimstone and if it tries to supply in threats what it lacks in argument. It is only by remembering this that we, whether in Government or in Opposition, can fulfil the duty that we have assumed before the entire nation.

I would, in this context, turn to our national press. No one would be happier than I to see the fullness of freedom being enjoyed by the press in Pakistan. No one would more gladly welcome the removal of all controls and constraints. But what I said about the responsibility of the political opposition parties applies even more forcefully to the mass media of information. They too have to assimilate the disciplines of democracy. They too are charged with the task of safeguarding the nation's integrity. They too have to respect the limits within which alone political discourse can be meaningful and lead to constructive results. If they distort the news, if they resort to endless invective and diatribe, if they encourage the forces of subversion and chaos, then it is they themselves who postpone the arrival of the day when our press would be as free as that in any advanced society. My Government

is keenly aware of the problems and frustrations faced by our journalists at the present time. I can assure them that it gives us no happiness when, in the higher national interests, we have to take legal measures against any organ of the press. Foreign observers who are acquainted with Pakistan report their being impressed by the freedom of expression which prevails here. They compare it to the silence of the graveyard which ruled over the country through the long years of dictatorship. Some of our own newspaper men may not share the impression. But I shall remind them that their newly-won liberties are not to be regarded as a green light to destroy the fruits of the people's struggle for democracy, for civilian rule and for consolidating national integrity.

I now turn to a section of the population which is, in some ways, closest to my heart. These are our students. They are the custodians of the nation's future. It is they who will guard the new Pakistan. I appeal to the older generation not to ruin a whole new generation of this country. Can any one deny that there has been an appalling decline in our academic standards? Let us not forget that we live in an internationally competitive age. One can only shudder at the prospect if the future Pakistani cannot enter a contest of proficiency or intellect against his foreign counterpart. This does not mean that I have become one of those who enjoin the students not to enter politics. On the contrary, I would like our students to cultivate a greater political consciousness than they evince at present. A student who is politically aware will not imprison himself in the dogma gifted to him by a politician. He will seek that his intellectual horizons be wider than those of the older generations. If he is true to his vocation, if he keeps in mind the Pakistan of the future, then it will follow that he will despise the frenzies, abhor the cliches, disdain the hates and prejudices which are the stock-in-trade of reactionary politicians. An enlightened participation by students in the nation's political life cannot be incompatible with the pursuit of their studies. Our students have often been exploited by the older generations. Let them resolve that they will not offer themselves to such exploitation in the future.

I next turn to workers. We have never made any secret of the fact that the People's Party owes its position to the support of working

classes, whether urban or rural. The guarding of their interests is our priority. It is for this reason that some of the measures which we took soon after I formed government related to assuring a better deal to the worker. I know there are people in the country who go to the length of charging that my Government encourages class hatred and seeks to promote untenable labour-management relations. Such accusations do not, in the slightest measure, distract us from our concern with the conditions of labour in this country. But, as the problem of prices has forcibly reminded us, we can take no insurance on our future if we do not increase production. Should our production stagnate or decline, the people as a whole will suffer and the workers will suffer most of all. We, therefore, urge the workers not to be deceived by those who pretend to be their well-wishers and not to let industrial peace be destroyed.

My fellow countrymen : Tonight, after I have assumed the responsibility of a new office, it would have been tempting for me to tailor to the occasion some new announcements pertaining to our national affairs, domestic or foreign. But I do not believe in such cosmetics. I do not like to embark on measures in order only to decorate a national occasion. We have witnessed a smooth passage from one constitutional system to another. But there is a continuity in administration and our concerns and approaches cannot undergo a sudden mutation. It is for this reason that I have thought it necessary to dwell, not on any specific problem or problems, but to the all-pervasive question of how we can best organize our political life and how the various political elements—the parties, the press, the students and the workers—can best contribute to such organization.

Looking back on the twenty months which have elapsed since the People's Party formed the Government, I am filled with many thoughts about what was done and what more could have been done. But the thought which rises foremost in my mind is that of the sustenance which I have received from the people of Pakistan. Above all the din and clamour of contentious politics, above all the broadsides flung at us by charlatans masquerading as heroes the steadying message of

support from the people at large has continually reached me and given me replenishment. This support is my sole weapon, my ultimate shield. I offer to you all my gratitude for it and I pray to *Allah* that He give to Pakistan the guidance which He grants to those whom He wills to save.

Sayad Muzaffar Hussain