

Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)

## **Address in San Francisco at the 20th Anniversary Commemorative Session of the United Nations**

*given on June 25, 1965*

Mr. president, Mr. Secretary General, Your Excellencies, distinguished representatives, Governor Brown, ladies and gentlemen:

On my journey across the continent, I stopped in the State of Missouri, and there I met with the man who made the first such pilgrimage here 20 years ago as the 33d President of the United States--Harry S. Truman.

- 5 Mr. Truman sent to this Assembly his greetings and good wishes on this anniversary commemoration. He asked that I express to you for him--as for myself and for my countrymen--the faith which we of the United States hold firmly in the United Nations and in the ultimate success of its mission among men.

On this historic and happy occasion we have met to celebrate 20 years of achievement and to look together at the work that we face in future meetings. I come to this anniversary not to speak of futility or failure nor of doubt and despair--I  
10 come to raise a voice of confidence in both the future of these United Nations and the fate of the human race.

The movement of history is glacial. On two decades of experience, none can presume to speak with certainty of the direction or the destiny of man's affairs. But this we do know and this we do believe.

Futility and failure are not the truth of this organization brought into being here 20 years ago.

Where, historically, man has moved fitfully from war toward war, in these last two decades man has moved steadily  
15 away from war as either an instrument of national policy or a means of international decision.

Many factors have contributed to this change. But no one single factor has contributed more than the existence and the enterprise of the United Nations itself.

For there can be no doubt that the United Nations has taken root in human need and has established a shape, and a purpose, and a meaning of its Own.

- 20 By providing a forum for the opinions of the world, the United Nations has given them a force and an influence that they have never had before. By shining the light of inquiry and discussion upon very dark and isolated conflicts, it has pressed the nations of the world to conform their courses to the requirements of the United Nations Charter.

And let all remember--and none forget--that now more than 50 times in these an years the United Nations has acted to keep the peace.

- 25 By persuading nations to justify their own conduct before all countries, it has helped, at many times and in many places, to soften the harshness of man to his fellow man.

By confronting the rich with the misery of the poor and the privileged with the despair of the oppressed, it has removed the excuse of ignorance--unmasked the evil of indifference, and has placed an insistent, even though still unfulfilled, responsibility upon the more fortunate of the earth.

- 30 By insisting upon the political dignity of man, it has welcomed 63 nations to take their places alongside the 51 original members--a historical development of dramatic import, achieved mainly through peaceful means.

And by binding countries together in the great declarations of the charter, it has given those principles a strengthened vitality in the conduct of the affairs of man.

- Today then--at this time of anniversary--let us not occupy ourselves with parochial doubts or with passing despair. The  
35 United Nations--after 20 years--does not draw its life from the assembly halls or the committee rooms. It lives in the conscience and the reason of mankind.

The most urgent problem we face is the keeping of the peace.

Today, as I speak, clear and present dangers in southeast Asia cast their shadow across the path of all mankind.

The United Nations must be concerned.

40 The most elementary principle of the United Nations is that neighbors must not attack their neighbors--and that principle today is under challenge.

The processes of peaceful settlement today are blocked by willful aggressors contemptuous of the opinion and the will of mankind. Bilateral diplomacy has yielded no result.

The machinery of the Geneva conference has been paralyzed.

45 Resort to the Security Council has been rejected.

The efforts of the distinguished Secretary General have been rebuffed.

An appeal for unconditional discussion was met with contempt.

A pause in bombing operations was called an insult.

The concern for peace of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers has received little and very disappointing results.

50 Therefore, today I put to this world assembly the facts of aggression, the right of a people to be free from attack, the interest of every member in safety against molestation, the duty of this organization to reduce the dangers to peace, and the unhesitating readiness of the United States of America to find a peaceful solution.

I now call upon this gathering of the nations of the world to use all their influence, individually and collectively, to bring to the tables those who seem determined to make war. We will support your efforts, as we will support effective  
55 action by any agent or agency of these United Nations.

But the agenda of peace is not a single item.

Around the world there are many disputes that are filled with dangers--

--many tensions that are taut with peril,

--many arms races that are fraught with folly among small nations as well as large. And the first purpose of the United  
60 Nations is peace-keeping. The first work of all members now, then, just must be peacemaking. For this organization exists to resolve quarrels outside the confines of its headquarters--and not to prolong quarrels within.

Where there are disputes, let us try to find the means to resolve them--through whatever machinery is available or is possible.

Where the United Nations requires readily available peace forces in hours and days--and not in weeks or months--let  
65 all pledge to provide those forces. And my country is ready.

On another front of our common endeavors, I think nothing is more urgent than the effort to diminish danger by bringing the armaments of the world under increasing control. Nations rich and poor are burdened down by excessive and competitive and frightening arms. So let us all urgently commit ourselves to the rational reduction of those arms burdens. We of the United States would hope that others will join with us in coming to our next negotiations with  
70 proposals for effective attack upon these deadly dangers to mankind.

And after peace, high on the agenda of man is devotion to the dignity and to the worth of the human person--and the promotions of better standards of life in larger freedom for all of the human race.

We in this country are committing ourselves to great tasks in our own Great Society. We are committed to narrow the gap between promise and performance, between equality in law and equality in fact, between opportunity for the  
75 numerous well-to-do and the still too numerous poor, between education for the successful and education for all of the people.

It is no longer a community or a nation or a continent but a whole generation of mankind for whom our promises must

be kept--and kept within the next two decades.

If those promises are not kept, it will be less and less possible to keep them for any.

80 And that is why--on this anniversary--I would call upon all member nations to rededicate themselves to wage together an international war on poverty.

So let us then together:

--raise the goal for technical aid and investment through the United Nations.

--increase our food, and health, and education programs to make a serious and a successful attack upon hunger, and  
85 disease, and ignorance--the ancient enemies of all mankind.

Let us in all our lands--including this land--face forthrightly the multiplying problems of our multiplying populations and seek the answers to this most profound challenge to the future of all the world. Let us act on the fact that less than \$5 invested in population control is worth \$100 invested in economic growth.

For our wars together on the poverty and privation, the hunger and sickness, the despair and the futility of mankind,  
90 let us mark this International Cooperation Year by joining together in an alliance for man.

The promise of the future lies in what science, the ever more productive industrial machine, the ever more productive fertile and usable land, the computer, the miracle drug, and the man in space all spread before us. The promise of the future lies in what the religions and the philosophies, the cultures, and the wisdoms of 5,000 years of civilization have finally distilled and confided to us--the promise of the abundant life and the brotherhood of man.

95 The heritage that we share together is a fragile heritage.

A world war would certainly destroy it. Pride and arrogance could destroy it. Neglect and indifference could destroy it. It could be destroyed by narrow nationalism or ideological intolerance--or rabid extremism of either the left or the right.

So we must find the way as a community of nations, as a United Nations, to keep the peace among and between all of  
100 us. We must restrain by joint and effective action any who place their ambitions or their dogmas or their prestige above the peace of all the world. And we just must find a way to do that. It is the most profound and the most urgent imperative of the time in which we live.

So I say to you as my personal belief, and the belief I think of the great American majority, that the world must finish once and for all the myth of inequality of races and peoples, with the scandal of discrimination, with the shocking  
105 violation of human rights and the cynical violation of political rights. We must stop preaching hatred, we must stop bringing up entire new generations to preserve and to carry out the lethal fantasies of the old generation, stop believing that the gun or the bomb can solve all problems or that a revolution is of any value if it closes doors and limits choices instead of opening both as wide as possible.

As far back as we can look--until the light of history fades into the dusk of legend--such aspirations of man have been  
110 submerged and swallowed by the violence and the weakness of man at his worst.

Generations have come and gone, and generations have tried and failed.

Will we succeed?

I do not know.

But I dare to be hopeful and confident.

115 And I do know this: whether we look for the judgment to God, or to history or to mankind, this is the age, and we are the men, and this is the place to give reality to our commitments under the United Nations Charter. For what was for other generations just a hope is for this generation a simple necessity.

Thank you very much.

(1814 words)

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