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INDONESIAN RICE FOR INDIA

RADIO ADDRESS BY MOHAMMAD HATTA (VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA).

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In my talk to you tonight I purpose to touch upon a few points regarding the question of Indonesia's offer of rice to India, and doubtless there will be some among my listeners who will feel constrained to ask: Is it really necessary to devote a radio talk to this subject seeing that the move has the support of the whole country behind it and the matter is no longer a debatable question?

Admittedly that is so for, when Prime Minister Shahrir offered to send rice to India to alleviate the famine conditions in that country, his gesture met the unanimous approval of our people. India's sorry plight touched the deep sensibilities of the Indonesians; not one voice was heard in opposition. On the contrary, the Republican Government was flooded with spontaneous offers from several areas saying that the people were prepared to dispense with a portion of the rice reserved for their own consumption in order to meet part of India's requirements. In a
few weeks the sum total of such spontaneous offers had reached the figure of 200,000 tons, which is two-fifths of the quantity promised by us to India. The amount of rice we have offered to supply India is 500,000 tons of paddy—that is unhusked rice—which is equivalent to more than 250,000 tons of milled rice. Compared to India’s overall needs, the amount we are offering is admittedly not impressive, but on the other hand, small though the quantity may be, our gesture is invested with great significance. Indeed, our action has already resulted in attracting international attention and the eyes of the world are now once more focussed on Indonesia. Such being the case, I am desirous of putting forward to you some aspects of the matter.

Implicit in our offer of rice to India are three factors of prime importance.

Firstly, it furnishes proof of those humanitarian principles which motivate our whole national existence and which found expression when we proclaimed our independence and established our own government—the Republic of Indonesia. The opening words of our Constitution bear witness to our determination to put these principles into practice in our national affairs in line with our solemn pledge before God and man. Let me quote you the actual words of the preamble to the Constitution:

"The establishment of a national Indonesian Government is for nurturing the Indonesian people and their territories; for promoting public welfare; for uplifting the standard of living; and for participation in the founding of a world order, based on independence, eternal peace and social justice. Our national independence is embodied in the constitution of the Indonesian State, set up as a republic with sovereignty vested in the people. We believe in an all-embracing God; in righteous and moral humanity; in the unity of Indonesia. We believe in democracy, wisely guided and led by close contact with the people through consultation, so that there shall result social justice for the whole Indonesian people."

That quotation from the preamble to our Constitution reveals the intense longing of the Indonesian people to achieve, within and without the country, lasting peace and social justice. Those ideals are possible of achievement. But lasting peace in our midst and social justice for our whole country will only result from a welding of all sections of the population into a compact whole.

What does Indonesia stand for? She stands, foursquare behind her duty to God, for the full practice of the humanitarian principles, for national unity, for the sovereignty of the people and for social justice. All these aims and ideals of the Republic are embodied in our basic laws. Articles 33 and 34 of our Constitution guarantee us social security, while Section 2 of Article 27 pledges each citizen—in keeping with the dictates of humanity—a reasonable standard of living and the opportunity for fruitful labour.

So far I have only spoken of what might be called our domestic affairs, but there is also the global aspect of lasting peace and social justice as between the nations of the world. Indonesians, by their own unaided efforts, cannot bring about a change in world conditions; we, however, are fully determined to do our bit to usher in an era of lasting peace and social justice. Consequently it
follows that, irrespective of the individual or the party which has the handling of our foreign affairs, Indonesia's foreign policy is irrevocably committed to lasting peace and social justice among the nations of the world.

The shape of our foreign policy stems from two factors — and not from the personality or idiosyncracies of the individual who fills the post of Foreign Minister. The first of these factors is Indonesia's geographical setting. Washed as our archipelago is by the waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and lying as it does athwart the traffic-lines of Australia and the continental mass of Asia, Indonesia has, from time immemorial been the staging-base for peoples from other lands. Our very situation makes our national existence as a free people depend on our ability to get on well with other races; and only by persevering adherence to the practice of the concept of a policy of peace will be able to manage our affairs without embroiling ourselves in destructive feuds and enmities with foreigners.

The second factor is our long history of colonial enslavement. It has bred in us a strong dislike of capitalism and imperialism. Our long struggle against the colonial exploiters has implanted in us a deep yearning for enduring peace and social justice as the true foundation for the conduct of relations between the various nations of the world. We realise that the freedom of the world is only possible in an international set-up pledged to the twin principles of lasting peace and social justice.

Our struggle against capitalism and imperialism is basically a struggle against the brute force of violence, and the very nature of our battle has automatically developed our humanitarian principles to the highest pitch. As a people who for centuries have borne suffering, we have a clear appreciation of the need for humanitarian principles in all the spheres of our daily existence. Indonesians do not therefore, as a nation, bear the least animosity or hatred towards the people of any race whatsoever because of this deep urge in the Indonesian nature to bring about conditions which will give full scope to the practice of social justice and the humanitarian principles.

It follows that, only through exercise of the virtues of the humanitarian principles and social justice in our dealing with other races, can we achieve lasting peace and social justice. The entire structure of our foreign policy is founded on the bedrock of respect and affection for the rights of our fellow-man, and it is because we are actuated by the highest motives of humanity that we have stepped forward to give India a helping hand in her distress. Although our historic background is one of want and suffering, we do not feel that the 500,000 tons of rice we are sending to India will appreciably worsen our condition. Far from that, for our will to give has brought us a sense of ease and well-being because we know that we are forging lasting links of understanding between Indians and Indonesians.

The rice we are sending to India is to be exchanged against much-needed commodities such as textiles, agricultural implements and the like. All these articles are needed by our people and will be of much use to them. In spite of this we did not volunteer to send the rice to India for what we could get for it in terms of rationalised economy.
Certainly not, because what was uppermost in our minds was the desire to alleviate India's suffering.

Our humanitarian principles are not confined to India alone but extend to the whole world as that is the very basis of our entire foreign policy — a foreign policy grounded on the faith that only by the practice of these principles and keeping them to the very fore-front can we achieve social justice and lasting peace. International relations based on rationalised economy must give way to economy guided by a sense of human values.

The rice we are sending to India carries with it the fraternal feelings of the Indonesian people. For, as a corollary of our national attachment to the humanitarian principles, is the desire for fraternal relations with other peoples implicit in our foreign policy. Till the nations of the world think and act as one family, irrespective of race and creed, we shall not achieve that social justice and enduring peace I speak of. The great religions of our people are not given to discrimination, and our national movement of the immediate past was headed towards international brotherhood. Our nationalism today would appear to be concerned only with Indonesian domestic politics but that is only a superficial estimate because we are neither chauvinistic nor isolationist. Our national movement does not run within narrow channels; it does not seek the well-being of the Indonesian at the expense of others. We merely seek to claim the right to order our own destiny because only by so doing can we contribute in full measure — whether economically or culturally — to the welfare of the international world. Indonesian nationalism is our key to freedom, and from freedom will come that prosperity which will enable Indonesia, in a spirit of fraternity, to give its utmost to the world.

From its very inception the Indonesian national movement has clearly proved that only through its independence can Indonesia hope to establish fraternal relations with other countries. Only among equals can fraternal relations be ensured; such a state can seldom be achieved between master and slave. Indonesia's present policy, then, is just a continuation of our old ideal of brotherhood with all races.

Our friendship with India, with whom we have had the most cordial relations from the very early days of our history, is in a special category. India has enriched our culture enormously; she has over centuries maintained economic relations with us; and in the field of politics we have been able to learn much from the galant fight she has put up against British imperialism. It was from the non-cooperation movement of India that we learned and applied so successfully those principles which fanned the flame of our patriotism to white heat. There were differences, of course, in the practical application of the principles of non-cooperation in the two countries. In India it had overtones of religion; with us it was purely a political instrument which established the line of demarcation between oppressor and oppressed. But both India and we have been opposed to capitalism and imperialism and there was much common ground in the nature of our common struggle. As a result there has sprung up a strong spiritual bond between us and the Indians, rendered doubly stronger by the deep friendship that exists between the national leaders of both countries.

Since our recent proclamation of independence,
we have kept up a ceaseless struggle to win international recognition of our freedom, and it is no little help that we have received from India in this direction. The Indian press has championed Indonesian freedom in full measure while the Indian public has pressed the British Government for the withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia. Processions and parades staged by the Indian people have unmistakably demonstrated their sympathy with Indonesian freedom, and flag weeks have been held during which our red-and-white national standard flew over the length and breadth of India. Just as in Australia, dockworkers in India too have boycotted Dutch ships wanting to carry weapons and ammunition to Indonesia.

The signs and portents of present history show that India's own freedom is near at hand. And soon a Free India linked in ties of the closest friendship with a Free Indonesia will set an example to the whole world in how nations should live in friendship and understanding. These ideals have been the mainspring of action in both countries in the past and will be the basis of action in the future. In addition, both Indonesia and India have long had community of interest which augurs well for the future.

The third factor bound up in our offer of rice to India is the political aspect, which automatically becomes part and parcel of the transaction. The Dutch claim jurisdiction over Indonesia and as evidence of this fact they have set up a number of administrative offices in Jakarta. All this is a house of cards and Dutch jurisdiction is merely on paper. Our rice offer has punctured the bubble of Dutch pretensions, and the Dutch are absolutely at their wit's end. The Dutch sit by powerless while we make an offer of rice to lighten the burden of India's famine. What does it establish? It shows that the Republic of Indonesia is a going concern, that we have a land which we rule and an efficient administration which attends to the duties of the government. In one fell blow we have delivered the coup de grace to Dutch claims that our Republic is in a state of collapse and that our people are going about with empty stomachs.

No hungry people can afford to part with half a million tons of rice, nor would any government dare to make such an offer in face of a starving populace. Is it reasonable that any government would sow the seeds of revolt and threaten its own existence for a purely Phrygian political victory? Does not our offer show that the spectre of famine which threatens India does not exist in Indonesia under our Republic? If any shortages exist in Indonesia they are only in those regions in which the Dutch soldiery is stationed, for the story in such areas is one of homes, shops and buildings looted by the Dutch, of innocent people put in danger of their lives, and of a complete lack of security for persons and for property.

With God's grace we shall be enjoying bumper crops this harvest. In 1944 we struck an all-time low of 6,800,000 tons of rice — our yield in 1941 was 9,000,000 tons — but since then there has been a gradual upward trend. For some unaccountable reason we are still able to draw on our 1945 harvest. That was clearly evident, for instance in Basuki Province where — harvesting began this year — the rice-mills were glutted with the surplus of last year's produce. Milled and unmilled rice were
stocked up in mountainous heaps. Since the proclamation of our independence our fields have produced more and we estimate this year's harvest at 9,000,000 tons. No wonder then that the farmers are constrained to say: "Now that the Japanese have gone our rice plants flourish and our fields yield much more". The real reason is not far to seek. The farmer has put his whole heart into his work, conscious of the fact that the Japanese are no longer here forcibly to deprive him of his crops. An additional reason is the better monsoon falls we have enjoyed.

By and large our peasantry are used to living on 200 grams of rice per head per day because they supplement their bulk food with cassava, tubers, maize and the like. These supplementary foods they can now obtain in greater profusion since the Japanese converted waste land and tea, coffee and other estates into food-producing areas. By lowering their rice consumption by 4,000,000 tons a year, Indonesian peasants will be able easily to spare 500,000 tons of rice for India.

These figures I have quoted can be supported by figures issued by the Dutch themselves, and the net conclusion is that there is no danger whatsoever of our people suffering from famine. Let it not be forgotten that in the years of Dutch rule Java had a surplus of exports over imports totalling 130,000 tons. No wonder the Dutch are not at all pleased by our present rice position, for it demonstrates that a free people are better producers than colonial serfs.

Our dispatch of rice to India is beyond question a slap in the face for the Dutch who claim — and are unable to enforce — their paper sovereignty over Indonesia. The Indonesian Republic holds de facto sovereignty and that is why it is in a position to send rice to India.

When India accepted our offer of rice, the Dutch launched a strong protest to the British but the British, themselves responsible for seeing that India has adequate food supplies, were not in a position to reject our offer. With the UNO organisation working overtime to find a solution to the world's food problems, it was just impossible for interested parties to reject Indonesia's offer on the score of politics.

Our offer of rice to India has strengthened us politically in the international sphere. Faced with that inescapable fact the Dutch have adopted a policy of fooling themselves — in the manner of the proverbial ostrich — by declaring that "The Netherlands East Indies Government is sending rice to India". I need not comment on this piece of Dutch stupidity because facts cannot be hidden and the whole world knows that the rice offer is from the Republic of Indonesia. The Dutch have suffered a severe diplomatic setback and they are still smarting under it.

What hurts the Dutch much more is that our rice will bring in return much-needed commodities such as textiles, agricultural implements and the like. News from India says that ships to collect our rice have already left India and now are headed for selected ports in Republican Indonesia; another news item declares that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has forwarded 200 cases of clothing for us. All these goods will come in Indian ships. Gone are the Dutch dreams of blockading us and causing economic chaos because those Indian ships will pierce the Dutch blockade and bring us the goods we desire in exchange for the rice we are supplying.
If the Dutch had exhibited a little of those humanitarian principles I spoke about earlier in my talk, they need not have made themselves the laughing-stock of the political world. A commonsense way out of the embarrassment would have been for the Dutch to face facts and applaud the dispatch of our rice to India. The protests launched by the Dutch and their attempts to interfere with our offer have only made them the object of world contempt. But the Dutch always were a small people with a narrow outlook, and that is the cause of their political disasters.

You can see for yourself that it is indeed a resounding political victory that we have gained. But there is still much more to be done. The time has now come for us to get the rice ready for loading on to Indian ships. It will need every ounce of our organising ability to collect the rice from the fields and transport it to the appointed ports. Therefore let all of us as one man pull together to get the rice to the ports; and then we must set about dividing the incoming goods equitably among those who are entitled to them.
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