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Conference of Non-aligned States
at Belgrade

2 Sept. 61

Text of the speech delivered by Prime
Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTION

CONFERENCE OF NON-ALIGNED NATIONS AT BELGRADE
TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER NEHRU'S SPEECH

Following is the text of the speech delivered by Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru at the plenary session of the conference of non-aligned nations at Belgrade on September 2, 1961:

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates:

Standing here before this distinguished assembly I feel moved. I think of past decades and I see many faces of old comrades and friends who devoted most of their life in the struggle for freedom, and many of them succeeded and many of them have passed away. I see younger faces too representing their peoples, heads of newly free countries and I see this great movement of freedom from colonial domination led by many of the distinguished delegates here going forward and meeting with success; indeed, proving that in so far as any historical perspective is concerned, the era of classic colonialism is gone and is dead, though, of course, it survives and gives a lot of trouble yet; but essentially it is over.

I think it was a happy and wise thought of the sponsors of this conference to have convened it and it has turned out to be even happier thought because of subsequent developments. I am glad that we are meeting here in this pleasant and friendly city of Belgrade and more specially under the auspices of the Government and especially, the leader, President Tito, of this Government and its people.

I said that it has become an even more important thing that we meet today; it would have been important in any event but it has become more important because of the developments of the last two or three months when strange things have happened in the world and have suddenly drawn our attention to an abyss stretching out before us and below us. I think that the attention

that this conference has attracted in the world it would have attracted anyhow; but the attention is much more today because we meet at this particular crisis in human destiny.

People all over the world are vastly interested to know what we think about this crisis, where our thoughts or actions are going to lead us, what advice we give, what pressures we may exercise in solving this crisis. It is well to remember this because today every thing, what we have contended against and what we are continuing to struggle against - imperialism, colonialism - things which are very important and to which reference has been made repeatedly here, all these things are somewhat over-shadowed by this crisis. For, if war comes, all else for the moment goes. Therefore, it becomes inevitable for us and not only to pay attention to to pay attention to/^{and not only to pay attention to}but to make sure that the dominant note of our thinking and action and what we say and put down is this crisis that confronts humanity. People expect us to do this. Even great powers also watch us and listen to us and are watching for what we shall do, and I am quite sure that vast numbers of individuals in every country are thinking of this even more than ^{the}of/normal subjects that rightly occupy our attention.

NON-ALIGNMENT

We call ourselves a conference of non-aligned countries. Now, the word non-aligned may be differently interpreted, but basically it was used and coined almost with the meaning non-aligned with great power blocs of the world. Non-aligned has a negative meaning, but if you give it a positive connotation it means nations which object to this lining-up for war purposes, military blocs, military alliances and the like. Therefore, we keep away from this and we want to throw our weight, such as it is, in favour of peace. In effect, therefore, when there is crisis involving the possibility of war,

the very fact that we are unaligned should stir us to actions, should stir us to thought, should stir us to feel that now more than ever it is up to us to do whatever we can to prevent such a calamity coming down upon us. So, from every point of view and from the point of view of our inception and being as modern nations, this problem is dominantly before us. I lay stress on this because since we are engaged with many other difficult problems which face us as a whole, which face us as individual countries - for all of us have problems - it is a little dangerous with this particular crisis that we might really repeat, I say so with all respect, all other problems we have before us and put this major problem in the background. That I think would be little short of a tragedy because we would have failed in our purpose, we would have failed to meet the demands made by humanity on us today when it is facing this crisis. And they will say: "Yes, what they say is good, we agree. Now, does it save us now today from the crisis that is the immediate problem? If this does not ~~save~~ and war comes what good will their long speeches and declarations have done?" That will be the answer of humanity.

WAR AND PEACE

I therefore, submit that we must look at things in the proper perspective today. First things must come first and nothing is more important or has more priority than this world situation of war and peace. Everything else, however vital to us - and other things are vital to us - has a secondary place. If in this crisis something we do, some action of ours or some words of ours help to some extent to resolve a problem, to remove fear of war, then we have justified ourselves and strengthened ourselves in order to meet all other problems that face us. On the other hand, if we cannot face this matter straightforwardly and clearly in our own minds, then somehow we fail mankind in this crisis; we give no lead. Of course, we stand for anti-colonialism, anti-

imperialism, anti-racialism and all that. All our lives, of most of us present here, have been spent in that and we shall continue the struggle: Nevertheless, the point arises at this particular crisis as to what we are going to do. Pass long resolutions and make brave declarations? That is easy enough; we have done it before and we can do it today too; but what else can we do to meet the crisis because the problem of war and peace has intimate relation to all those other matters we stand for. It is war or fear of war that has led to cold war, it is cold war which has resulted and is resulting in old imperialism and colonialism hanging on wherever these exist because to them it is advantageous.

So what I wish, with all respect, to place before this assembly, is this: That we must make first things first and the first thing today is this fear of war because ever since last war there have been many ups and downs, many crises, many dangerous situations, that have come up. We have got over them somehow or other but the present situation is by far the most dangerous that has arisen in the last fifteen years or so since the last war ended.

It has become commonplace for people in every country to refer to the dangers of modern nuclear warfare. Although we talk about it, I am not so sure that even those who talk about it fully and emotionally realise what this means. We talk about destruction of civilization, destruction of humanity, destruction of human race, if nuclear war comes. Well, if this is so, something much more is required, some greater effort, some greater attempt on our part to do what we can to avoid it. I know that the key to the situation does not lie in the hands of this conference or in those of other congresses or conferences. The key to the situation today lies essentially in the hands of the two great powers - the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Never-

theless, I think that this conference or rather countries that are represented in this conference are not so helpless that they can look on while the world is destroyed and war is declared. I think we can make a difference - possibly we can, I cannot guarantee it - and if so, we should try our utmost to do it and not talk about other subjects even though they are important subjects, while the world goes to its doom. That thing I would beg this assembly to remember. I would beg that in whatever declaration it may make, this should be put foremost and topmost to show that it is the main thing, that other things may be very important but they are secondary. If this is done it will undoubtedly create a far greater impression than would a mere record of various other problems that face us, although they are very important problems. I do not deny this and we should act accordingly but there is time and place to press any subject and today the time and place and occasion are here to take up this question of war and peace and make it our own and show to the world that we stand for peace and that, so far as we can, we shall fight for it - not fight in the sense of guns, but struggle for it in ways open to us. I would like to lay stress on this right at the beginning of the few words that I wish to say to this assembly because while on/one hand I see the power of nations assembled here which is not military power, which is not economic power, but which, nevertheless, is power, call it moral force, call it what you will, - it does make difference obviously what we in our combined wisdom feel and think and what we are prepared to do: on the other hand, a fear creeps in upon my mind that we may not be able to get out of the rut of meeting together, passing long resolutions and making brave declarations and then going home, allowing the world to drift to disaster. That itself will be a tragedy when so much is expected by our people, people whom we represent here and indeed by so many people outside in other countries who may not be represented here but

who are looking up to us.

It is a strange thing that some few years ago six, seven or eight if you like - this business of non-alignment was a rare phenomenon. Few countries here and there asked about it and other countries rather made fun of it or at any rate did not take it seriously. Non-alignment? What is this? You must be on this side or that side, that was the argument. Well, that argument is dead today; nobody dare say that, because the whole course of the history of the last few years has shown a growing opinion spread of this conception of non-alignment. Why is that so? Because it was in tune with the course of events; it was in tune with the thinking of vast numbers of people whether the country concerned was non-aligned or not; it was in tune with it because they hungered passionately for peace and did not like this massing up of vast armies and nuclear bombs on either side. Therefore, their minds turned to those countries who refused to line up with these people. Maybe, some of us did not approach this question with frank minds, this question of war and peace and whatever lies behind this cold war. We had our opinions, we had our inclinations but essentially we were against this business of cold war and all that it implied and massing up of weapons and bombs etc. We talked, everybody talked and still talks about disarmament. As my friend and colleague, President Nkrumah, has said disarmament is the most vital thing. I entirely agree with him. The fact is that while we have talked about disarmament the world has gone on arming more and more. What does all this mean? There is something wrong. Some gap between our thinking and the action the world takes. The basic fact is that the world which has talked of disarmament month after month, year after year, has been arming more and more and it has arrived almost at the final stage when either it disarms or it bursts. There is no choice left today and in this field of manoeuvring the choice is

getting more and more limited. When each party digs in its toes to particular positions, when each great country, even smaller countries, feel their national honour is involved, it is difficult to move them. When big countries feel that their national honour is involved they risk war, whatever the consequences. That is what we are getting to. It is possible when these rigid attitudes are taken that indication from this conference and all those whom it represents, they are many, and they count in great parts of the world - a positive indication might have some slight effect on these great protagonists who, with their nuclear bombs, threaten each other and incidentally threaten all of us because it is now known very well that the effects of war will not be confined to those great powers or their lives but that other countries which are not in war will also suffer.

Presumably, if war comes, countries represented here will not rush into war, they will remain apart. But what good will it do them to remain apart when they will suffer from it and when the whole world will suffer? Therefore, we have arrived at a position today where there is no choice. Well, to say there is no choice between war and peace sounds rather fatuous. I put it this way: there is no choice left between negotiations for peace or war. If people refuse to negotiate, they must inevitably go to war. There is no choice. They must negotiate and I am amazed and surprised that rigid, proud attitudes are taken up by great countries all being too high and mighty to negotiate for peace. I submit with all humility to them and to others that this is not the right attitude because it is not their pride that is involved in it but the future of the human race. I cannot - and I rather doubt if even this assembly can go into these matters and suggest you must negotiate on these lines or you must come to terms on these lines. I do not think that is possible for us or suitable. We may have our ideas and when time comes

we may even say so, but our indicating these are the lines for your settlement for negotiation instead of helping may hinder, because we are dealing with proud nations and they may react wrongly. Therefore, we cannot really lay down any terms on which they should negotiate. But it is our duty to say that they must negotiate and any party that does not do so does tremendous injury to the human race. I am not talking about basic agreements between rival ideas, rival ideologies and rival attempts to increase the power of a nation. I do not think that by one stroke you can solve all these problems or that anybody can. But at the present juncture one has to see how to lessen these tensions, how at least to remove some of the obstructions to peace, how at least to prevent war coming. If that is done, then other steps will naturally follow.

(more)

DISARMAMENT

I believe firmly that the only possible way ultimately to solve these problems or many of them is by complete disarmament. Yet, it would be absurd for me to say "in the next week or month decide on complete disarmament" because it is not a practicable proposition. Today the situation is such that their fears from each other are leading them towards greater armaments all the time whether you look at one side or the other. Therefore, although I consider disarmament an absolute necessity for peace of the world in future - I think that without disarmament these difficulties, fears and conflicts will continue - nevertheless, one cannot expect suddenly because this conference wants it, disarmament to appear on the scene in full panoply. We should lay stress on disarmament of course, but for the present moment the only thing that we can do is to lay stress on the fact of negotiations with a view to getting over these present fears and dangers. If that is done, the next and third step follows and may be taken.

BERLIN ISSUE

I would venture to say that it is not for us even to lay down what should be done in regard to Germany or Berlin which are the immediate causes of this present tension. There are some things that seem to me obvious. For instance, - others have referred to it too - it seems to me obvious that certain facts of life/are first that there are two independent entities, powers, countries: the Government of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany) and the Government of East Germany (the German Democratic People's Republic). That is a fact of life: it is not a matter of my or anyone else liking or disliking it: it is a fact that has to be recognized. If you ignore facts of life and facts of contemporary politics that means that you are ignoring something which will lead you to wrong results. The second thing (I am expressing

my own opinion for the moment) is that as things are, we find this great city of Berlin divided by what might be called an international frontier. It is a very awkward situation but there it is. But anyhow West Berlin is very closely allied to Western Germany, to western countries and they have had these routes of access to them, and I am glad that Mr. Khrushchev himself has indicated that, that access will not be limited; it will be open to them as it is now. Now, if that is made perfectly clear and guaranteed by all concerned, I should imagine that one of the major fears and major causes of conflict will be removed. I am merely putting this forward to indicate how some of the big things that are troubling people are capable of solution without solving the entire problem. If some things are understood and agreed to definitely, immediately the fear of war in the near future disappears. Other things can be considered later. So I venture to say that the most important thing for the world today is for these great powers directly concerned to meet together and negotiate with the will to peace and not to stand too much on their respective prestige and I think that if this conference throws its weight on that, as I am sure it must be prepared to do, it will be a positive step which we take to help.

UNITED NATIONS

Take again the United Nations. As far as I remember, when the United Nations was formed, one of its early articles said it was formed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. That was the main purpose of the United Nations - to save humanity from the scourge of war. Here is a situation arising which threatens war very definitely. What will the United Nations do about it? I remember I was in Geneva in 1938 in summer or autumn and the League of Nations was meeting there when the whole of Europe was tense

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It is a strange thing that some few years ago six, seven or eight if you like - this business of non-alignment was a rare phenomenon. Few countries here and there asked about it and other countries rather made fun of it or at any rate did not take it seriously. Non-alignment? What is this? You must be on this side or that side, that was the argument. Well, that argument is dead today; nobody dare say that, because the whole course of the history of the last few years has shown a growing opinion spread of this conception of non-alignment. Why is that so? Because it was in tune with the course of events; it was in tune with the thinking of vast numbers of people whether the country concerned was non-aligned or not; it was in tune with it because they hungered passionately for peace and did not like this massing up of vast armies and nuclear bombs on either side. Therefore, their minds turned to those countries who refused to line up with these people. Maybe, some of us did not approach this question with frank minds, this question of war and peace and whatever lies behind this cold war. We had our opinions, we had our inclinations but essentially we were against this business of cold war and all that it implied and massing up of weapons and bombs etc. We talked, everybody talked and still talks about disarmament. As my friend and colleague, President Nkrumah, has said disarmament is the most vital thing. I entirely agree with him. The fact is that while we have talked about disarmament the world has gone on arming more and more. What does all this mean? There is something wrong. Some gap between our thinking and the action the world takes. The basic fact is that the world which has talked of disarmament month after month, year after year, has been arming more and more and it has arrived almost at the final stage when either it disarms or it bursts. There is no choice left today and in this field of manoeuvring the choice is

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with the fear of war. War came a year later, but even in 1938 it was tense because Hitler was marching this way and that way all over Europe. He went to Czechoslovakia and held it and he went to some other place, advancing all the time. There was this fear of war lying all over Europe but the League of Nations in Geneva was discussing at that time, I think, opium traffic. Very important, opium traffic, undoubtedly, but something else was more important than opium traffic and that was war. War came a year later. It was postponed only: it came in 1939. Now, I do not want the United Nations to function as the League of Nations did. I do not think it will but I merely mention this. What can the United Nations do? The whole framework of the United Nations since it was formed fifteen years ago was the recognition of balance of power in the world. That is why they had certain permanent members in the Security Council, vetoing etc. - all that business. Now, of course the world has changed since then considerably and there are many more members and this requires a change in the structure etc of the United Nations. That is true; nevertheless, the United Nations cannot easily ignore the balance of power in the world. It has to keep that in view. Anyhow, the point is that it is the duty of the United Nations to consider this matter and try its utmost to solve it. The United Nations meets from time to time for special causes, special discussions. I would have suggested, if it was not meeting as it is I think in about two weeks time (or less) its meeting quickly to consider these matters. I am not suggesting the United Nations should sit down and consider Germany, Berlin, and all that. No. I say it should meet to consider the situation which might lead to war and take such steps in its united wisdom as it can. Fortunately, it is meeting. I should say one of the earliest things it should do is to deal with this problem. All other problems are secondary: it should postpone them or put them lower down on its agenda. Now, I feel strongly that this matter requires

our urgent attention and urgent attention of every government and every organization in the world. Since it so happens by accident - or that circumstances have so dealt with us - that we in this conference are meeting at this time of grave crisis, we should seize hold of it in so far as we can. I recognize that we cannot issue mandates, I think we are an important conference. I think we represent countries which individually and certainly jointly represent something important and valuable in the world and our voice counts to some extent. That is true. At the same time, we must not overestimate our own importance. After all, we do not control the strings of the world, not only in a military sense but in other senses also. If our mandate ran it would be easy enough - we would issue a mandate. But we know that our mandate does not run all over the place. So we must realize that. We must realize both our actual and our potential strength that we have and also the lack of strength that we have. Both have to be considered together, then we should decide what to do. So I am venturing to suggest not any specific course of action but rather mental outlook that should govern us in approaching this problem; that we should think of this as the most vital and important problem of the day and everything else as being secondary, however important it is. We can deal with other things more effectively and more strongly after we have dealt with this. Otherwise, no other problem remains; they are submerged in the terrible disaster of war. That is the main point I should like to place before this assembly.

NUCLEAR TESTS

Now, Sir, may I add here that this danger of war comes nearer and nearer, has been enhanced and has become nearer to us perhaps by the recent decision of the Soviet Government to start nuclear tests.. Now, I am not in a position and I suppose no one else here is in a position to know all the facts

which underline these decisions - all military considerations, political, non-political considerations whatever they may be - but one thing I know; that this decision makes the situation much more dangerous. That is obvious to me; therefore, I regret it deeply because it may well lead to other countries also starting this and then apart from the danger inherent in nuclear tests - that is, radioactive substances falling and all that - all this brings us to the very verge and precipice of war. That is what I deeply regret. It has become even more urgent that this process of negotiation should begin without any delay, without thinking of who is going to ask whom first. The person who asks first will deserve credit; not the person who shrinks from asking others.

OTHER PROBLEMS

I should just like to refer, briefly, I hope, to some of our other problems. Many of the countries represented here have only recently become free or independent. They have tremendous problems and above all the problem of making good and to advance their own people economically, socially etc. Because we must recognize that most of these countries are underdeveloped - nearly all. We must recognize that they are socially and economically backward countries and it is not an easy matter to get rid of this inheritance of backwardness and underdevelopment. It requires clear thinking. It requires action. It requires tremendous amount of hard work and all of us have to face that. I think that it is right and proper that other countries, affluent countries, rich countries, should help in this process. They should do it. They have, to some extent, done it. I think they should do more of it but whatever they may do, the ultimate burden will lie on the people of our own countries. If it did not, if by some miracle or somebody else's help we stood up, well, we would fall down again. When you stand up you do not stand long

when you do not have strength. Ultimately, the burden is on us. So it is no good expecting others to do all of our work. Therefore, this great problem faces each one of our countries and in facing it we have to think of this modern world which has not only changed greatly but which is changing from day to day: this world of atomic energy and jet and space travel, new forces being let loose and tremendous value and importance of science today. We have to think of that. We cannot just imitate somebody else and put a little machine here, machine there, and think we are making progress. We have to catch up with the modern world and with science and technology keeping our own values intact, I hope. All these problems can overwhelm us. Why I am venturing to refer to obvious things is that really in considering our other problems we may keep these basic things in view. There are other countries, some represented here, others whom we know very well, which are struggling for their freedom from grasping colonialism or imperialism which will not go.

There is Algeria which has paid fantastic price in human life and suffering in its struggle for freedom and yet which has not so far succeeded in achieving it. Naturally, everyone present here is wholly desirous of Algeria becoming independent and I earnestly hope that this will be so. Here is Tunisia with its recent extraordinary experience and I am referring particularly to Bizerta. Why Bizerta? Because Bizerta is a foreign base and the very idea of a foreign base in a country seems quite extraordinary to me. It is bad enough to have bases any way, but that a country should put its foreign base in another country seems quite extraordinary to me. How can that be tolerated by anybody? I do not understand how anyone can provide for a base in a country which opposes that base purely from the practical point of view. There are these problems of Africa, Congo, and, may I say, I am glad to learn that possibly by tomorrow we shall have here in this Assembly the Prime

Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Congo Republic, Mr. Aduala and Mr. Gizenga. There is Angola, the horror of Angola. I do not know how many of the delegates present here have had occasion to read detailed accounts of what has happened in Angola, because Angola has been a closed book. But something is happening in Angola - not only in Angola but round about - which really was a kind of horror which one hardly associates with the modern world - massacres, genocide and so on. Of course, our minds go out and we want not only to sympathise, we want to do what we can to put an end to this. Yet, we cannot do very much as a rule although sometimes we may do a little. All these problems face us. Then there is the situation in East Africa where conditions are better of course and to some extent some countries have been promised independence such as Tanganyika, I believe, by December, and other countries I hope also. There is the situation in Central Africa - Rhodesias - where the picture is not good; there is trouble. And further south in South Africa you have the supreme symbol of racial arrogance, racial discrimination, apartheid and all that which is an intolerable position to be accepted by any of us. And this is imposed upon South West Africa in challenge to the United Nations' decisions.

So all these problems crowd upon us and we have to face them of course. For the moment, however, I would repeat that whatever we may do about other problems - and we should do whatever we can - the problem dominating the issue today is that of this danger of war. The danger of war depends on many factors but essentially on two major countries, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. It will do us no good, I think, if we start condemning this country or that country. It is not a very easy thing to do anyhow; it has complicated the set of circumstances. But apart from being easy or difficult, if we are to be peacemakers and if we want to help in the cause of peace, it does not help to start by condemnations. We want to win over and to influence and

induce them to follow the path of peace, and if we denounce countries then we cannot influence them whatever else we can do. We cannot win them over. Times demand, therefore, that we should approach these countries and other countries in a friendly way, in a way to win them over and not merely to denounce them and irritate them and make it even more difficult for them to follow the path we indicate to them. Let us look at this world today. It is a strange world, perhaps the most fundamental fact of the world being coming out of these new mighty forces. I am referring to atomic energy, space travel and all that which is the basic factor of the modern world. We have to think in terms of that and not get lost in terms of the world which is past and in slogans that no longer apply. But this is the world that we live in. When the power of the new kind comes all your imperialism and all your old style colonialism will vanish and will go. I have no doubt. And yet this new power may well dominate over us and dominate certainly the underdeveloped, backward countries because the sin of backwardness has to pay penalty by somebody pushing you about. We cannot afford to be backward. Therefore, we have to build in our own countries societies of free men, societies where freedom is real - because I think freedom is essential, that freedom will give us strength - prosperous societies where standards of living are rising. These are for us essential basic problems to be thought out in terms of today, in terms of the modern world, space travel, jet travel, atomic energy, not in terms of long ago. When you think in these terms war becomes even greater folly and anachronism - than ever. If we cannot prevent war then for the moment all our other problems are sunk, we cannot deal with them. But if we can prevent war we can go ahead on our other problems, help to liberate parts of the world under colonial and other imperial rule and more especially build up our own free societies, prosperous societies, welfare states in our respective countries because that is to be our positive work.

Merely getting angry with some other country achieves nothing although one does get angry and cannot help it. It is positive constructive work we do that gives us strength to make our countries free. That is positive work we have to do. But we cannot do any of this unless there is no war. If war comes all is doomed. Therefore, I venture to submit to this Assembly that we must lay the greatest stress on this major danger of today. Not only is this incumbent on us but if we do this we shall be in line with ^{the} thinking of millions and millions of people. Strength comes ultimately from being in line with popular thinking. The fact that we are non-aligned has received strength from the fact that millions of people are not aligned, they do not want war, that is why we get indirect strength from this. Today this is the problem of practically the entire population of the world. Let us put ourselves in line with it and deal with it as well as we can realising fully of course that our capacity is limited. We must not imagine that we can order about great countries or as small countries to do as we like. Our capacity is limited but we have certain capacity, certain strength call it what you like, moral strength or other strength, - let us use it properly, rightly, without force but with courtesy and with friendly approach so that we may influence those who have power of war and peace in their hands, and thus thus try, if not to prevent war for all time, at any rate to push it away so that in the meantime the world may learn better use of cooperation. Then, ultimately, the world may put an end to war itself.

I will repeat that I think that essentially we can never succeed unless there is disarmament on the biggest scale. Therefore, disarmament is a vital matter but even that is rather out of reach today because how can we talk of disarmament when we are told that we are going to have nuclear tests today and tomorrow and now we are told that all these great countries are becoming more and more heavily

armed? I have ventured to express some of the ideas in my mind. I have not dealt with various items on the agenda because I feel that the first item overshadows all else. Others should be dealt with no doubt and I hope that when this matter comes up and some kind of resolution or declaration or statement is being issued attention will be paid to this question of world peace being put not only foremost but so that it catches every person's attention and so that it does not get lost in the morass of detail and thus lose all significance and importance.
