

ARGENTINA

Two types of problems affect our world as a whole: the crisis in the political order and the crisis in the international economic order.

We are witnessing today the extent to which strategic purposes tend almost exclusively to define relations between States. On the basis of these strategic ideas, a new phase in the nuclear arms race has begun, one that makes the boundary between peace and war very much more precarious and frail. I am speaking of the boundary between the life and the death of mankind. This is a tragic prospect, for which the strongest hold each other responsible, while the majority of the countries of the international community are made to stand idly by....

Sometimes, everything seems to indicate that our role is limited to making demands, or possibly to denouncing this state of affairs. None the less, we shall continue our anguished clamour, because we know that our voice must be raised unceasingly in defence of peace. That is why I ratified the 22 May 1984 declaration, together with the Heads of State or Government of Greece, India, Mexico, Tanzania and Sweden. In that declaration we stated that we share the conviction that there must not be another world war and that the advance towards global suicide must be restrained and halted. The world cannot oscillate between a devastating nuclear war and peace. We must work together to influence present and future events.

International Debt

In sum, I believe that there are two things which threaten peace. On the one hand there is the arms race and the direct strategic confrontation between the big Powers, and on the other hand there is the instability, injustice and poverty in the South. There is very little we can do about the first, but the second involves us directly

I have stated that one of the characteristics of the present day is that international relations are increasingly relations among Powers rather than relations among societies. But I must say too that another disturbing fact of our day is that the economic order is increasingly becoming an exclusively financial order.

(The President of Argentina, Mr. Raul Alfonsin, addressed the 39th General Assembly of the United Nations on 24 September, 1984. This is an English version, edited from the full text supplied by Mr. H. A. Martinez-Castro, Counsellor, the Argentine Embassy, Canberra)

In Latin America, in 1983, the per capita gross national product was 10 per cent below the level of 1980. We have slipped backward six years, since we had already reached that level in 1977.

The result of this greatly affects the welfare of our peoples, a result which is also due to the deterioration of our earnings brought about by the decline in the terms of foreign exchange.

The crisis of our foreign debt lies precisely in this deterioration of our economies, which are hindered from utilizing their productive potential and in the reduction of employment and welfare. Last year, this debt meant, in terms of interest alone, the allocation of almost a third of the exports from the region.

Forgotten now are the international commitments agreed to during the first and second development decades - launched by the United Nations - which obligated the most advanced countries to transfer 1 per cent of their national product to the developing countries.

Paradoxically, these commitments are reversed today. The developing countries are now the ones that must transfer part of their national product to the developed countries. It is not an annual 1 per cent, but an annual 3 per cent and sometimes more.

Owing to this overwhelming reality and to the attempt to restore rationality and good sense in the financial order, we in Latin America have proposed dialogue as a necessity - a dialogue between the richer countries and our countries, a practical dialogue about one of the questions that most upsets the financial order and stability of our countries: the question of the foreign debt. We believe that this debt not only affects the debtor countries, but, because of its political impact, also directly involves the creditors.

We think that if everything depended on the manner in which the problem was being dealt with at present, we would not find a permanent and safe solution. This is a subject that no longer has anything to do with the problem as it was in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, the solutions proposed are still the same. Only a joint political will can now give rise to new solutions for a problem that is no longer traditional.

Today, the question of debt is inextricably linked to the political and social destiny of our countries and, since it affects the whole region, it jeopardizes global stability in Latin America.

The meetings in Quito, Cartagena and Mar del Plata this year have been the best expression of the seriousness of the situation. They also translated our caution and moderation that led to a call for a dialogue with the creditor countries. We hope that there will be a positive response to this call. Dialogue is not confrontation, as some people have alleged. Rather, confrontation arises

when dialogue is precluded. I believe that both political logic and experience show this.

Perhaps on the basis of this concrete subject the aspiration of the North-South dialogue may materialize. It has been formulated many times, but up to now practical results could not be achieved.

Beagle Channel and the Malvinas

This call for peace by the Argentine democracy is valid because we acted decisively for its preservation in the events in which we participated directly.

In one of those disputes - between us and the Republic of Chile - my country took resolute steps. In the framework of the mediation of His Holiness John Paul II, whose assistance we highly value and appreciate, my Government showed its firm will to find an equitable solution that would put an end to a century-old conflict.

What we can present to the international community are words of peace translated into peaceful actions through dialogue and negotiations.

In the other conflict, the one which continues between us and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas, South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands, our negotiating will and decision have encountered intransigence.

For almost 150 years, a portion of Argentine territory has been subjected to the colonial régime imposed by the United Kingdom. This unjust and illegal situation, which Argentina has never accepted, permanently affects our national life.

The mission of recovering the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands for our heritage is a mandate that has been transmitted by successive generations of Argentines up to our day and this process will continue until the attainment of its objective. There should be no doubt about this, as this is a cause with which my people identifies deeply. We have international law on our side. The failure to understand it in this way is tantamount to ignoring one of the most important facts of the problem that exists between my country and the occupying Power.

It is a national cause, but it is also a Latin American cause inasmuch as Latin America has come forth in solidarity to defend a national integrity that it considers its own. Latin America now also views with alarm the presence of a military force equipped with the most sophisticated armaments in the South Atlantic, threatening the interests and stability of the entire area and constituting a dangerous intrusion of the East-West conflict into the region.

Argentina is firmly committed to seeking the restitution of the Malvinas Islands only through peaceful means. This my Government has stated, and it will fulfil this aim. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind about this. Our concept of democracy, which my country has now fortunately recovered, has two facets: a domestic one and one that looks outward. The first one is related to the full exercise of the Constitution, with the concomitant limitations upon the exercise of State powers and respect for human rights. The second one, as I have already mentioned, involves relations with other countries.

This outward projection of the democratic way of life translates into a behaviour that is civilized and law-abiding, and may be summed up as respect for the prevalence of legal rules in relations among States.

The United Nations Charter, a true constitution of the international community, imposes on Member States the obligation to solve their disputes by peaceful means. Consistent with this legal duty, my Government has taken steps towards attaining the maximum flexibility allowed by national rights and has sought to reinstate negotiations with the United Kingdom to solve this conflict. Naturally, we also seek the normalization of the friendly relations which Argentina has traditionally had with that country. But that cannot be achieved if, from the very beginning of the attempts at normalization, we lack the certainty that a mechanism will be established to allow negotiation on the sovereignty dispute, which represents the main obstacle on the path leading to that normalization

Unfortunately, judging by recent bilateral contacts that culminated in the Berne meeting under the auspices of Switzerland and Brazil, up to now we seem to be left with nothing but the intention, clearly stated by the United Kingdom, to postpone sine die the fulfilment of the urgent demand of the General Assembly for the parties to sit down at the negotiating table. Together with my gratitude to Brazil and Switzerland and to the Secretary-General for their laudable efforts, I wish to express my ardent desire for that demand of the General Assembly to be carried out as soon as possible for the sake of law and justice.

Central America

In our opinion, the proposals and actions of the Contadora Group, expressly supported by the General Assembly, offer a suitable alternative to achieve the sought-after peaceful solution to this very painful conflict for all of Latin America