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WILLIAMSBURG AND THE UNGA SUMMIT

1. RASGOTRA (PUS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY) SUMMONED AMBASSADORS OF THE WILLIAMSBURG SEVEN TO A JOINT MEETING YESTERDAY EVENING. HIS MESSAGE, HE SAID, WAS POLITICAL NOT ECONOMIC. WE WERE ASKED TO PASS ON TO OUR GOVERNMENTS INDIA'S "FERVENT PLEA" THAT THE WILLIAMSBURG MEETING SHOULD GIVE FAVOURABLE CONSIDERATION TO THE NAM PROPOSAL FOR A SUMMIT MEETING AT THE UNGA IN THE AUTUMN. INDIAN AMBASSADORS WERE BEING INSTRUCTED TO MAKE PARALLEL REPRESENTATIONS IN OUR CAPITALS.
2. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE INDIANS ARE BEGINNING TO PANIC ABOUT THE DAMAGE TO MRS GANDHI'S PRESTIGE IF NO ADEQUATE UNGA SUMMIT TAKES PLACE SEMICOLON AND ARE THEREFORE ANXIOUS TO PERSUADE THE WEST THAT THE NAM WILL NOT USE THE OCCASION FOR POLEMICS OR CONFRONTATION.
3. RASGOTRA'S MAIN POINTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:
 - (A) INDIA'S PROVISIONAL IDEA WAS A WEEK-LONG SUMMIT FROM 26 SEPTEMBER, IE THE SECOND WEEK OF THE SESSION. BUT ALTERNATIVES WERE POSSIBLE.
 - (B) INDIA WAS MAKING A SUGGESTION NOT A DEMAND. THE SUMMIT WOULD NOT SOLVE THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS. BUT IT COULD MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST DIALOGUES. THE 1960 SUMMIT HAD HELPED TO MAKE THE SIXTIES A GOOD DECADE FOR ARMS CONTROL. THE SEVENTIES HAD BEEN MUCH MORE BARREN. IT WAS TIME TO TURN THE TIDE IN THE EIGHTIES.
 - (C) DECISIONS WOULD BE BY CONSENSUS, NOT MAJORITY. IT MIGHT BE THAT THE ONLY RESOLUTION EMERGING FROM THE SUMMIT WOULD BE A REAFFIRMATION OF EXISTING UN PRINCIPLES. ANYTHING MORE WOULD COME ABOUT ONLY IF CONSULTATION OVER THE NEXT 2-3 MONTHS REVEALED WIDER AREAS OF AGREEMENT BY ALL PARTIES.
 - (D) THE SUMMIT WOULD NOT NEED AS METICULOUS PREPARATION AS A BILATERAL OR REGINAL ONE. BUT IF THE RESPONSE WAS FAVOURABLE INDIA WOULD BE READY THIS SUMMER TO RUSH TASK FORCES TO THE MAJOR CAPITALS INVOLVED FOR ADVANCE CONSULTATIONS ON ORGANISATION AND SUBSTANCE, AS SHE HAD SUCCESSFULLY DONE WITH ABOUT HALF THE NAM MEMBERSHIP IN ADVANCE OF THE NEW DELHI SUMMIT.
 - (E) THE UN HAD BEEN CHOSEN AS THE SETTING FOR THIS SUMMIT BECAUSE IT BELONGED TO US ALL AND THERE WAS A GENERAL FEELING THAT IT SHOULD BE MADE MORE USE OF. ATTENDANCE WOULD SYMBOLISE, BY ACTION RATHER THAN WORDS, EACH COUNTRY'S COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHARTER.

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(F) ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS EG ON NAMIBIA WOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED. SUCH ISSUES NEED NOT BE ADDRESSED AT ALL. INDIA HAD AN OPEN MIND. EVEN A GENERAL DEBATE COULD BE AVOIDED IF IT WAS NOT WANTED. THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THE SUMMIT WOULD BE SMALL GATHERINGS OF KEY LEADERS, EG UNDER THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S AUSPICES (NOT INDIA'S). AN INNER CAUCUS, EG OF CANCUN POWERS, MIGHT BE ONE ELEMENT. THE ESSENTIAL POINT WOULD BE FOR THE LEADERS TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER'S CHARACTERS AND PREOCCUPATIONS.

(G) THE EAST HAD NOT YET SHOWN ITS HAND ON THE SUMMIT PROPOSAL ANY MORE THAN THE WEST. IT WAS NOT KNOWN WHICH EASTERN LEADERS MIGHT ATTEND. NAM LEADERS WERE UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOUR OF THE SUMMIT BUT NOT ALL OF THEM WOULD IN FACT BE THERE. INDIA HOPED FOR PERHAPS 50-70 HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT IN ALL.

(H) THE SUMMIT WOULD NOT DISCUSS MODALITIES FOR THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE ON MONEY AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE. BUT GENERAL NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC ISSUES WOULD OF COURSE FEATURE.

(I) IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF OUR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN NEW YORK COULD BE INSTRUCTED TO DISCUSS IDEAS ABOUT THE SUMMIT WITH THE INDIANS AND OTHERS THERE. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TOOK A FAVOURABLE ATTITUDE AND HAD RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO MRS GANDHI'S APRIL LETTER ABOUT THE NEW DELHI MESSAGE.

(J) THE PRESENT APPROACH WAS NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH MRS GANDHI'S MORE GENERAL LETTER TO THE WILLIAMSBURG SEVEN, WHICH HAD BEEN DESPATCHED ON 9 MAY (MOST OF US SAID WE WERE NOT AWARE THAT IT HAD YET BEEN RECEIVED).

(K) INDIAN DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY SOME IN THE WEST REGARDED THE NAM AS ANTI-WESTERN (SIC).

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As Prime Minister has said, the presence of Heads of State at New York would be a collective manifestation of political will to grapple with major world problems in a spirit of cooperation:

That it would help reduce international tensions and initiate a process which, we think, will make the political climate more conducive to finding solutions to problems.

2. The role of the United Nations has been seriously eroded in recent years. The UN Secretary General, in his report to the last GA described the world as perilously close to a "A new international anarchy". The proposed gathering at New York would demonstrate the world's confidence and faith in the UN machinery. It will be a symbolic reaffirmation on the part of one and all of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

3. The UN provides an independent stage for exploring, formally and informally, in small and large get-togethers, approaches for solutions to difficult and complex problems. We are aware that there are many differences on major issues, but the Assembly will provide an opportunity for listening to one another's analysis of the world's ills.

4. For the leaders of major powers, it will be a rare opportunity to meet a large cross-section of leaders of the great majority of less powerful and less privileged countries. We think this in itself could start off a process of greater mutual understanding on divisive issues.

5. Several world leaders had assembled at the 1960 session of the General Assembly when tensions were

as great, if not worse than they are now. Despite the fact that there was a good deal of bitterness and mutual recrimination in the general debate that took place then, the meeting provided opportunities for numerous formal and informal contacts. These in turn did give rise to a process of consultations and negotiations which resulted in several useful nuclear arms control measures in the decade of the sixties. The decade of the seventies and the early eighties have been totally barren in this respect, and we think the proposed gathering at New York cou'd set off the reverse trend.

6. It is not our intention to accuse or embarrass any of the great powers at New York. Our purpose is not to raise converversies or level charges but to provide an opportunity for sincere, face-to-face exchanges of perceptions on major issues between world leaders to help clear the air, generate greater tolerance of one another's viewpoint, and induce a mood of willingness to compromise for the common good of humanity. Even though the great majority of countries are unable to contribute much to solutions of problems like Palestine and the nuclear arms race, their views and feelings are important and they should have an opportunity of sharing their anxiety with their more powerful contemporaries.

(7) Our own general thinking is that the Heads of State meeting could commence on September 26 and last for about a week. We have no set pattern in mind for the gathering and we are entirely open in the matter of procedures that should be adopted nor are we thinking in terms of cast-iron agreement or partisan resolutions. Perhaps the Assembly could adopt a brief declaration enshrining a general reaffirmation of commitment to general principles. Such a document could be prepared after extensive prior consultation. But even this is optional and subject to everyone's agreement.

3.

8. Modalities of formal and informal meetings of a general debate if one is considered necessary and other aspects will need to be worked out carefully in consultation with the UN Secretary General. This task could be entrusted to the Permanent Representatives in New York.

(INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION,
23 MAY)