

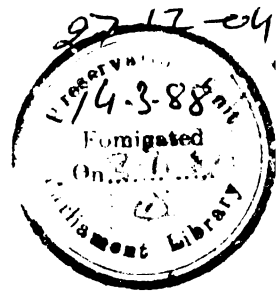
Monday, 11th September, 1939

THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

VOLUME II, 1939

(11th September to 27th September, 1939)

SIXTH SESSION
OF THE
FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE, 1939



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THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

**(OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF
THE FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE)**

VOLUME II—1939

COUNCIL OF STATE.

Monday, 11th September, 1939.

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE CENTRAL LEGISLATURE.**

HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY : Gentlemen, I have in the first place to read to you a Gracious Message to India from His Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor which I have just received, and which I think can most appropriately first be announced in the presence of the Central Legislature :—

“ In these days, when the whole of civilisation is threatened, the widespread attachment of India to the cause in which we have taken up arms has been a source of deep satisfaction to Me. I also value most highly the many and generous offers of assistance made to Me by the Princes and people of India. I am confident that in the struggle upon which I and my peoples have now entered, we can count on sympathy and support from every quarter of the Indian Continent in the face of the common danger. Britain is fighting for no selfish ends but for the maintenance of a principle vital to the future of mankind—the principle that the relations between civilised States must be regulated, not by force, but by reason and law, so that men may live free from the terror of War, to pursue the happiness and the well-being which should be the destiny of mankind. GEORGE R. I.”

We are all of us by now only too familiar with the circumstances in which Germany has attacked her neighbour State. We have seen, even in the week that has elapsed since the outbreak of the war, the spirit in which that war is likely to be waged by Germany's Rulers. We have seen the ruthless onslaught

[His Excellency the Viceroy.]

upon Poland without a declaration of war ; the sinking without warning of the liner " Athenia ", and the loss of life that has followed ; the complete and cynical disregard by the Rulers of the German people of those principles of establishment and the maintenance of which has been the general object of civilised mankind in past years. It is clear beyond any question in the present circumstances that, hateful as the idea of war may be to us, we, and the nations associated with us, are left with no alternative. There is no means of replying to the unprovoked and wanton onslaught that has been made on a peaceful country but by resorting ourselves to force. But, in resorting to force, we can at least do so with confidence as to the purity of our motives, and as to the unselfishness of the considerations which have led us to our decision.

I need not today enlarge on the importance of the issues. You are all of you familiar with them. But I would again emphasize the impossibility which confronts us in face of repeated breaches of faith, breaches of honourable understandings, over the past year and more, of trusting the word of the Rulers of the German people—a point which the Prime Minister forcibly brought out in his recent address to Germany. Nothing could be more damning than the plain recital of the facts. We have been assured time and again that Germany had no further territorial ambition in Europe, and that assurance has been repudiated on every occasion on which it has suited the Rulers of Germany to repudiate it. We have been assured that Germany would respect the Treaty of Locarno ; that she had no designs on the former Czechoslovakia ; that she was concerned only to restore to Germany the Sudeten fringes of Czechoslovakia, and had no designs on the true Czechoslovak centre of that country ; that she did not aim at the incorporation in her territories of the citizens of any non-German nation or race ; that she did not contemplate the annexation of Austria ; that she had no designs on Poland, for many years in the difficult post-war period a trusting friend bound to her by treaties of alliance. That long list does not exhaust the tale of German pledges, publicly given in the most binding and the most sacred fashion. No single one of those pledges has been honoured. Each one of them has been broken with entire disregard for those standards of truth and international morality on the basis of which alone the world can hold together, or hope to progress. And those breaches of faith have been not merely a breach of faith. They have represented a denial of justice ; a refusal to recognize any guiding principle save that of force ; a complete and cynical disregard for the principles that regulate the intercourse of nation with nation ; an anxiety to turn to the fullest advantage the absence of preparedness of those nations who had believed in the sanctity and in the sacredness of the undertakings given on behalf of a great nation by the Rulers of that nation.

Now that the decision is taken, now that it is clear that no course other than armed resistance will enable us, and the countries allied with us, to preserve the principles for which we fight, I would make only one appeal today. My appeal is one for unity. In the Message which I have just read His Imperial Majesty has told us of the deep satisfaction caused to him, by, in his own words, " the widespread attachment of India to the cause in which we have taken up

arms". Our task must be to vindicate the principles at stake, to work together in the closest unity for the furthering of our common object. Nothing could be more significant than the unanimity of approach of all in India—the Princes, the leaders of the great political parties, the ordinary man and woman ; or than the contributions, whether in offers of personal service, of men, of money, that have already reached me from the Princes and the people of India. There could be no more striking evidence of the depth of the appeal of the issues now before us. I am confident that however difficult may be the days that lie ahead of us, (and the teaching of history shows us clearly the folly of assuming in a struggle of the magnitude of the present that victory will be easy, or that the course of the campaign, whatever it may be, will be unchequered) India will speak and act as one, and that her contribution will be worthy of her ancient name.

Gentlemen, in circumstances such as those in which we are met together today you will not expect me to deal with the matters of more ordinary interest which in the normal course would have figured in my address to the Central Legislature. I am certain that I shall be voicing the wishes of all of you if I confine my remarks today to the war and to the issues that directly concern or arise out of war. But I feel that it is only proper that I should express my own confidence that, whatever may be the tasks that, as the campaign develops, may fall to the lot of our Defence Forces, whether by sea, by land, or in the air, the response will be one worthy of those glorious traditions the fame and renown of which are world-wide. They are already, as you know, represented overseas, and our fighting forces can claim to be assisting, at the very outset of the war, in holding posts of vast and critical importance.

To the civil population of the country, and to the civil services, whether at the centre or in the provinces, I would say that past experience has shown the spirit in which we may anticipate their answer to the new call which is being made upon them, and to the new tasks which they have to undertake. These are anxious and difficult times, in which heavy burdens, personal as well as general, must necessarily weigh upon all of us whoever and wherever we may be. I am certain that those burdens will be sustained in a manner worthy of our past.

Before I conclude my remarks to you today there are two matters, both of them arising out of the present situation, on which I would say a word. The first is the acceptance by His Majesty's Government and the Government of India of the conclusions of Lord Chatfield's Committee as expressed in the recently published Despatch. That decision marks an epoch in the history of Indian defence. The grave problems which confronted us in the matter of defence consequent on changes in the international situation and the development of modern armaments are now in a fair way to solution. They have been the constant concern of my advisers, and particularly of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, for many months past. The result of the deliberations which have taken place is, on a broad view, satisfactory in the highest degree. In particular I am glad to think not only that the improvements so essential at the present stage of the world's history should be so far advanced, but that, thanks to the most generous measure of help which has been extended

[His Excellency the Viceroy.]

to us, the necessity of laying heavy additional burdens on the Indian taxpayer has been avoided. The profound significance of the decisions that have been taken lies in the fact that India,—so largely an agricultural country, which could never, save at the cost of a complete disregard of other calls, have hoped to make available the vast sums of money necessary for re-equipment and modernization,—has, thanks to the gift which she has received from His Majesty's Government, been placed in the same position in relation to the modernization of her army as the great industrial nations of the world.

I will add only one word more, in regard to our federal preparations. Those preparations, as you are aware, are well advanced, and great labour has been lavished on them in the last three years. Federation remains as before the objective of His Majesty's Government; but you will understand, Gentlemen, without any elaborate exposition on my part, the compulsion of the present international situation, and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in suspense the work in connection with preparations for federation, while retaining federation as our objective.

Had we met in more normal times, there would have been many other matters to mention to you today,—the position of Indians overseas; the various developments of interest and importance which are under consideration in civil administration; the working of provincial autonomy and of the reformed constitution. But, as I have already suggested, I feel certain that at a time when the struggle which is raging elsewhere is uppermost in our thoughts, this is a moment in which that emergency, and matters directly associated with that emergency, must be of predominant and, in a sense, of almost exclusive importance. Our trust must be that, under Providence, the forces of right and of justice will triumph, and that we may be able to take up again those interrupted activities on which we have been engaged for the furtherance of the constructive work of peace, and of the progress and the prosperity of India. (Applause.)
