

UNITED NATIONS

Press Section
Office of Public Information
United Nations, N.Y.

(FOR USE OF INFORMATION MEDIA -- NOT AN OFFICIAL RECORD)

Note No. 3699
13 October 1971

NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS

The Government of Iran will present to the United Nations tomorrow the replica of a clay tablet inscribed with the "Edict of Cyrus", an ancient declaration of human rights made by Cyrus the Great after the taking of Babylon.

The gift will be accepted by the Secretary-General, U Thant, on behalf of the Organization at a ceremony to be held at 2:45 p.m. tomorrow, 14 October, outside the Economic and Social Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters.

The presentation is to be made by Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, Chairman of the delegation of Iran to the General Assembly. Princess Ashraf was the President of the International Conference on Human Rights, held in 1968 at Teheran, and was also Chairman of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights (1970).

The replica of the "Edict of Cyrus" was made by the British Museum from the original which forms part of the Museum's collection. It is a white clay tablet inscribed with cuneiform letters of the text of the "Edict" in ancient Persian.

Mounted in a display case on a wooden base, designed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the replica is displayed on the right-hand side of the case, with English and French translations of the Edict on the left side. The entire display is five feet six inches high, three feet wide and 13 inches deep.

The presentation of the gift coincides with the week-long celebrations marking the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. The celebrations, which began yesterday in Iran, will culminate in a parade in Persepolis at the tomb of Cyrus the Great on 15 October, to be attended by many heads of State and Government.

Cyrus the Great (circa 600 B.C. to 529 B.C.) founded the Persian Empire, which extended from the Hellespont to the Indies at his death over 2500 years ago. In 1962, which was chronologically the anniversary year, Iran decided to postpone the celebrations to this year.

(more)

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Cyrus the Great overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C. and pronounced the "Edict" to protect the populace of Babylon and other cities.

The English translation of the text of the "Edict", which is considered by Iran to be the first declaration of human rights, reads as follows:

"I am Cyrus, King of the World, Great King, mighty King, King of Babylon, King of the Four Quarters..."

"I, well-disposed, entered Babylon and amidst public jubilation, sat on the royal throne..."

"My numerous troops took over Babylon without molestation. I allowed no one to harass or terrorize the peoples of Sumer or Akkad.

"I concerned myself with the needs of the Babylonians and their sanctuaries to promote their well-being.

"I freed the citizens of Babylon from the yoke of servitude. I restored their dilapidated dwellings and redressed their grievances.

"The cities of Assur and Sus, Agade and Ashurna...and all the holy cities beyond the Tigris, whose sanctuaries lay in ruins for a long time, I restored and their gods, I returned to their places; and all the peoples of these lands I gathered in their own places and restored them to their dwellings."

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FILE COPY

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See - Iran
"Edict of Cyrus"

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Press Release HQ/264
14 October 1971

IRAN PRESENTS REPLICA OF ANCIENT EDICT TO UNITED NATIONS

The Government of Iran presented the United Nations with a replica of the "Edict of Cyrus" in a ceremony held at 2:45 p.m. today in the corridor outside the Economic and Social Council Chamber, where it will be displayed.

The Secretary-General, U Thant, accepted the gift on behalf of the Organization and made a statement (see Press Release SG/SM/1553 and HQ/263). Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, Chairman of the delegation of Iran to the General Assembly, presented the gift and spoke in reply. The President of the General Assembly, Adam Malik, joined them in the ceremony.

The "Edict of Cyrus" is a declaration made by Cyrus the Great concerning the preservation of human rights in occupied cities after his capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said that in creating the ancient Persian Empire twenty-five hundred years ago, Cyrus displayed the wisdom of respecting the civilizations and peoples whom he "unified" under his sway. Since the General Assembly was seized with the question of respect for human rights in armed conflict, the ancient document could not be more timely, he added.

Princess Ashraf said the heritage of Cyrus was the heritage of human understanding, tolerance, courage, compassion and, above all, human liberty.

Cyrus the Great (circa 600 B.C. to 529 B.C.) was the founder of the Persian Empire which, at his death, extended from the Hellespont to the Indies. The celebration in Iran of the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire began on 12 October and will culminate on 15 October in a parade in Persepolis at the tomb of Cyrus the Great.

The replica of the clay tablet on which the cuneiform letters of the "Edict" are inscribed was made by the British Museum from the original which is in its collection. The case in which it is displayed was designed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and contains English and French translations of the ancient Persian text as well as the replica itself.

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Press Release SG/SM/1553

HQ/263

14 October 1971

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY-GENERAL, U THANT, AT PRESENTATION OF GIFT

FROM IRAN TO UNITED NATIONS, 14 OCTOBER

On behalf of the United Nations I have the pleasure and privilege to accept this historic gift. It is a particular pleasure to have its presentation made personally by your Imperial Highness who has been so long involved in Human Rights activities of the United Nations.

Another replica of man's early attempts to establish peace in the world now graces this corridor, the scene of our present-day efforts towards the same end.

In creating the ancient Persian empire twenty-five hundred years ago, Cyrus displayed the wisdom of respecting the civilizations and peoples whom he "unified" under his sway. He conquered discreetly, sparing capitals, leaders and officials. His clemency in victory and his understanding of the wishes of the people under his rule were unprecedented in the annals of the ancient Near East.

As can be deduced from the formal text inscribed on this clay cylinder, Cyrus presented himself to the Babylonians as a liberator. He assumed their throne peacefully, restored their temples and freed their subject populations, thus engendering goodwill and justice all around.

This proclamation reflects Cyrus' desire to establish peace in his vast empire which he wisely understood could best be accomplished by allowing its varied peoples to keep their own customs and beliefs.

Since the General Assembly is currently seized with the question of Respect for Human Rights in Armed Conflict, this ancient document could not be more timely.

Please convey my sincere appreciation and thanks to His Imperial Majesty and the people of Iran.

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Note: See Note to Correspondents No. 3699 of 13 October 1971.