

of withstanding the stresses and strains of the long years ahead, of supporting the superstructure of our hopes and aspirations, of embodying our design for a better world through international co-operation within the United Nations..

Whether these principles can be translated into policies and practices, into action for peace, depends in the last analysis on what, for want of a better description we may call "public opinion" -- the fundamental attitudes, sentiments and feelings of men and women everywhere towards our Organization, its failures and its achievements. Governments themselves can do little if there are not these forces behind them.

Public opinion has been called by Montaigne, "a powerful, bold, and unmeasurable party." If it could be so described in the world of the sixteenth century, what would Montaigne have said of its force and influence in our modern world? The size of the public has enormously increased, the power of new mechanical media of information and communication has become colossal, and its effect on our minds and nerves insistent and at times shattering. Space, which once kept the clash of controversies from exercising an immediate impact on opinion, has been annihilated or rather harnessed. Tomorrow's headline now causes trouble today. The emergence of a world public, subjected to all the battering and the cajolery of press, radio, and television, has radically transformed the whole basis not only of the handling of foreign affairs, but of the formation of opinion which determines what will be handled. Today these affairs are no longer the exclusive preserve of hushed foreign offices and top-hatted diplomats. They are not now merely the concern of a few of the people some of the time. They are the direct and personal concern of all the people all the time. When we think of the United Nations in which some 60 countries are now represented with hundreds of millions of men and women of many races and creeds; of communities in every corner of the earth at varying stages of material well-being and technological progress but all eager and alive to the currents of today, we get some idea of the size and complexity of the world public. Inevitably its opinions take many forms and express themselves in many ways. They include not only the thoughtful editorial in the encyclopaedic Sunday editions of North America, or their thinner but equally important counterparts in Europe and other parts of the world. They include also discussion in a village community in Asia; or the petition of a tribal community in the heart of Africa. This is a far cry from the formulation and expression of opinion in the easy, elegant and quiet days of the nineteenth century. But the change is one which has come to stay and which we should accept without reservation, if for no other reason than that of necessity. It is idle to try to make the Niagara River run back over the Falls.

Within the United Nations, and particularly in the General Assembly, we see these new forces of world opinion vigorously at work. In the United Nations, and particularly in the General Assembly, we find their strongest reflection because the United Nations Assembly is above all a world forum. Sometimes we are inspired, sometimes frightened, by what we see and hear. We should not, however, be too distressed because Assembly meetings are often acrimonious and contentious. At times the very violence of the disputes in the United Nations is evidence of the