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GENERAL SURVEY

Nine years ago, when the United Nations Charter was drafted at San Francisco, it was hoped that the new organization might be saved from the weakness and failure of its predecessor, the League of Nations, by the frank acceptance of political realities which entrusted the principal responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security to the five great powers, acting as permanent members of the Security Council and through a Military Staff Committee which was to advise and assist the Security Council on all questions relating to its military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security. The realities have proved to be other than they seemed in 1945. The unity of purpose among the designated great powers, which was a major premise of the Charter, has proved to be a vain hope. Furthermore, the political situation in China, one of those powers, has radically altered. Nevertheless, though the division of the world into two major power groupings has continued and has so far defeated our expectations that the lessons of two world wars would smooth the path to the achievement of world peace and the full release of man's intellectual, spiritual and material powers to fruitful and constructive uses, the United Nations has not diminished in importance. Rather, so long as its purposes remain our purposes and so long as it continues to afford the best, indeed the only near-universal, forum for multilateral discussion and negotiation, the need to retain and safeguard its position increases rather than lessens. This may be made as a general statement without overlooking its failures, without minimizing the vital role of regional security organizations or without denying the usefulness in some cases of a more limited and specialized approach to certain international problems. The fact remains, and should be restated at this time, when some international issues for special reasons have had to be faced outside the formal framework of the organization, that the United Nations remains our blueprint for building the mansion of peace, and our best hope for realizing the purposes and principles of its Charter.

In discussing the recent negotiated settlements in Indochina, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has reported: "To understand and persist in all reasonable attempts to bring the hostilities to an end by negotiation and to prevent them recurring or spreading was fully consistent with the most basic purposes of the Members as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations." This is the spirit which underlies the acceptance by Canada of heavy obligations in connection with the supervision of the armistice settlements in Indochina. In assuming these obligations we are acting with full consciousness of the responsibilities of United Nations membership. This does not prevent us from regretting, however, that these arrangements were not worked out under the ægis of the United Nations.