

If Not the U.N., What?

Now for our second question: If there were no United Nations, would it make any great difference? What would the world be like today without the U.N.?

President Eisenhower evidently believes it would be a world much more dangerous for the United States. That is the plain implication of his question we have already quoted: "Who knows what could have happened in these past years of strain and struggle if we hadn't had the United Nations?"

Why more dangerous? The answer may become clearer if we look at a few of the things that have happened since the end of World War II and think what might have happened had there been no United Nations.

Do you recall how, after the end of the war, when the other nations had removed their troops, Russia kept its forces in the northern part of Iran? Iran spells oil. It also constitutes a strategic control-spot for the whole Middle East. Iran was far too weak to defend its independence against the Soviet invader. The rest of the world was appalled at the prospect of a rapid Russian conquest.

If Russia had pushed on to seize Iran's oil and its coasts along the Persian gulf and the Arabian sea, other powers probably would have jumped in to forestall her. That would have brought another major war - perhaps another world war - right there. If they had let Russia swallow its Persian neighbor, that would have put the Communists in control of fabulous oil supplies - something Russia badly needs - and the sea route from Europe to the Orient. World communism would have become so strong, from a military and political standpoint, that it would have been far more of a threat than it has been.

But what happened? Iran appealed to the United Nations. The U.N. told Russia that, under the terms of the Charter, it had no business in Iran. In Moscow the Russian leaders weighed what it would mean to have the other nations in the U.N. against them. Within five months, the last Russian soldier was out of Iran. Peace had been preserved in that danger-spot of the Middle East by the operations of the U.N. But if there had been no U.N. for Iran to appeal to...?

Or remember what happened in Indonesia. That story will be told in some detail later in this study. Here it is enough to recall how the Dutch, who had ruled these rich islands in the East Indies for more than 300 years, tried to throttle the demand for independence of the native patriots who, after the defeat of Japan, had proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia.

For a time it looked as though a war for independence could not be avoided. It would have been a bloody war, for there are 70 million in Indonesia and they would have fought by the savage methods which are the only ones available to guerrillas striking from mountain fastnesses and tropical jungles. There would have been massacres of Dutch and retaliatory measures against Indonesians. The islands would have been desolated and Asia's anger against white colonialism incalculably increased.