

Professor J.C. Holt has written of Magna Carta: "The barons did not talk of free men out of loftiness of purpose, or make concessions to knights and burgesses out of generosity. They did so because the political situation required it and because the structure of English society and government allowed them to do no other."

It is my submission that now, 760 years after the event at Runnymede, the changes that must be incorporated into the international system can be justified in similar language: "The political situation requires it; the structure of world society and institutions allows us to do no other".

We have, at this moment in time, an opportunity to recognize and arrest the inertia that threatens to plunge all too many societies into a vast labyrinth of confusion and despair. The first step in that process is acceptance of two facts: the interrelationship of all countries, and the interconnection of all phenomena. The acceptance, in brief, of what each of the world's cultures has been proclaiming for centuries -- that we are all brothers.

Only recently has evidence emerged establishing beyond doubt that this brotherhood exists in the realm of actuality as well as in the realm of theology. The evidence is a product of human accomplishment. Man's past successes in removing so many of the great barriers of distance and time and mystery have created a world far different from that known in previous centuries, or in previous decades. It is different because those old barriers hindered more than migration. They defined the natural limitations of conquering armies, of famine and plague, of catastrophes, both natural and man-made.

Today those barriers are gone. There are no bulwarks behind which we can retreat in order to stave off or avoid calamity from abroad. And if there are any who believe otherwise, they are fools. Nations that are told that they can exist and flourish independent of the world are being misinformed. Leaders and opinion-makers who claim the existence of simple solutions to sweeping issues have forfeited their claim to office, be it in Whitehall or Fleet Street or Russell Square. Citizens who accept uncritically such siren songs are not discharging their responsibility as free men and women in democratic societies.

We are one on this earth. Each has the power to injure all others. Each of us must assume the responsibility that that implies. And each must understand that the nature of that injury is not ephemeral and it is not transient. It can be real and it can be

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