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Can The United Nations Succeed?

Tomorrow marks the eighth anniversary of the coming into force of the United Nations Charter. For one-half of my life now, I have followed at close hand the two valiant attempts to find a formula for lasting peace -- first through the League of Nations and now through the United Nations which arose, Phoenix-like, out of the ashes of the Second World War.

It is fashionable to say that the League of Nations failed. The truth is that the League did not fail -- its member nations failed to make it work. Because the world cannot risk the consequence of further failure, it is imperative that we determine to make the United Nations work. The success or failure of the United Nations depends not on diplomats alone but on John Doe. For this reason, organizations like the United Nations Association in Canada can play an important part in encouraging an active and intelligent interest in its work.

In this jet-propelled era of atomic power and hydrogen bombs, with its sometimes overwhelming pressures and anxieties, a great many people are wondering whether the United Nations is worthwhile. Some are asking whether it can survive. Some are even asking whether it should survive. Not only private citizens, but some of the influential newspapers and writers in Great Britain and the United States and, to a much lesser extent, in Canada are questioning the value of the United Nations as an agency for peace and security in a world troubled by a continuing cold war and divided into two armed groups.

My own view can be simply stated. I believe that, if the United Nations or some such world agency cannot succeed, then peace, in the long term, is impossible.

To put it bluntly, the United Nations must survive, if for no other reason than that it is the only remaining point of contact between the free world and the Communist world. We all recognize how imperfect are our communications with one another, but how much worse would it be if there were no United Nations and no common meeting place between the rival camps in the present ideological struggle?

And here I want to stress that the fundamental cleavage between East and West is a great deal more than a disagreement on economic theory or even on political philosophy. The real danger of what we call Russian Communism is not that it advocates the abolition of private property, or even rule by dictatorship, but that it denies the essential spirituality of man.

In Communism's campaign of imperialist aggression there are two distinct threats to freedom as we know it. First, the free world is faced with imperialist aggression in the purely physical sense of seizing territories by force or by treachery, as the lengthening record of its conquests shows. The second and more subtle threat is the assault on our ethical and spiritual values which it would replace with the hollow hopes of dialectical materialism.

United Nations Record

It is now a little more than eight years since San Francisco's Golden Gate seemed to open for all nations on the splendid vision of a world without war. Since then, the gates to the future have narrowed, the horizons have been darkened by world dissension, but can we honestly say that the United Nations has failed?

It is easy to see the failures, the frustrations, the futilities; it is, unfortunately, just as easy to overlook the successes, the solid achievements, the positive accomplishments of the United Nations. We should never forget that, while this bold adventure in united world action is only eight years old, the massive problems with which the U.N. must come to grips are almost as old as human life.

Setting aside extravagant and unwarranted expectations, there remains a solid core of accomplishment in the present and a real possibility of progress in the future. The organization has not yet fulfilled all of its potentialities and it will be a long time before it does so. But the adaptability it has shown during these difficult years is one of the surest guarantees of its capacity for further development.

In the United Nations we are going through on the international level the same kind of growing pains that accompanied the establishment of the rule of law on the national level. There was a time in the life of communities and nations when the only redress from wrongdoing was in punitive action on the part of the injured party himself. Gradually, as society became more complex and interdependent, formal protection of the group interest was provided through the gradual evolution of a system of law and order.

It would obviously be quite unreasonable to expect that, in the short space of eight years, the United Nations should be able to establish beyond question the supremacy of the law in the complex realm of world relations. And yet, when history looks back on this period, I believe it will be recognized as a turning point in human affairs. What sort of world would we have had today if we had not developed this agency for collective action, imperfect though it was bound to be?

The record is clear. Because of the existence of the United Nations, some outbreaks of violence have been avoided altogether; others have been brought to a speedy end; still others have been kept from growing into wider conflicts. Because of the impelling moral force this organization has mobilized, almost every dangerous situation of the past eight years has been presented sooner or later to the United Nations.

The United Nations has dealt with a variety of problems using a variety of techniques. It was the United Nations that brought an end to large-scale hostilities in Palestine. It was the United Nations that effected a cease-fire in Kashmir and brought the dispute between India and Pakistan within a framework of negotiation. It was the United Nations that created the independent state of Indonesia and, in so doing, not only halted a serious war but assisted a rich and ancient civilization in taking its place in the family of nations. It was the United Nations that finally solved the problem of the disposition of the Italian colonies which had not been resolved in the peace conference. Above all, it was the United Nations that achieved an armistice in Korea.

Korea -- The U.N.'s Greatest Test

In August 1950, when the Security Council was arguing the Korean question, a visitor to Lake Success asked the U.S. delegate, Mr. Warren Austin, how he could sit and listen to so much talk and wrangling.

"Madame", said the ambassador, "it is better for aged diplomats to get ulcers than for young men to get shot." This little incident illustrates why the United Nations has concentrated so much of its energy on finding a solution to the complex Korean question and why the delegates of the member nations have been prepared to face the repeated disappointments and frustrations of interminable debate.

We recognized from the beginning of this conflict that the fighting in Korea involved tragic loss of life and destruction to property in that unhappy land and carried with it the grave risk that the conflict might be widened and extended. In our efforts to find a formula for peace, we were aware of the supreme debt the world will always owe to the dead of many lands who fought and died in the United Nations cause. We therefore undertook our work of peace-making in the shadow of the sorrow and loss of those in Canada and other countries who had been bereaved.

The success of the collective action against aggression in Korea was made possible because of the agreement of an overwhelming majority of the U.N. member nations to support the decision to resist aggression and the determination of 16 of these nations to back up their decision with the lives of their soldiers. Korea demonstrated more clearly than ever before that peace and security are hard-won things.

Korea has put a price tag on peace!

Canada's role in Korea has been an honourable one. Our country contributed to the Unified Command the fourth largest number of armed forces, including those of South Korea itself. Our cash contribution to Korean relief and

rehabilitation ranked third among the member nations. In the difficult negotiations that finally led to an armistice, our delegation supported the Indian resolution from the first because it provided an opportunity to overcome with honour the impasse that had been reached on this issue in the negotiations at Panmunjom. Canada has throughout viewed the Korean problem in a United Nations frame of reference and our role has been that of a country with a responsible appreciation of the duties of U.N. membership.

Today great uncertainties still attach to the forthcoming political conference provided for under the terms of the Korean armistice agreement. We should not, however, allow our pre-occupation with the problems ahead to obscure the significance of the achievement marked by the armistice itself. Let me recall the words I used in speaking to the Political Committee of the General Assembly at the historic special meeting of the United Nations called this August:

"The United Nations forces have done all they were ever asked to do by force of arms. It has been the first major application of the principle of collective security by an international organization, and it has been successful. We are thereby marking certainly one of the greatest achievements in human history. Had the United Nations failed to act, or had it acted and failed, not only would a brave and ancient people have lost their freedom but the United Nations itself would, I fear, already have become the dead husk of another great idea unrealized, not for lack of resolutions but of resolution."

The Principle of Collective Security

Collective security, as exemplified by the united resistance to aggression in Korea, is fundamental to the U.N. Charter. If the members of the League of Nations had accepted their obligations in this respect and, if, as Sir Winston Churchill recently observed, the United States had been an active member, there would never have been a Second World War.

To come back to the collective security principle, it was the hope of the founders of the United Nations that conciliation and negotiation would serve to prevent conflict between nations from developing into open war. Realism, however, dictated the view that occasions might arise when peace could only be preserved through the use of force. The mere threat to employ force is not a sufficient deterrent to aggression, as Korea has clearly shown.

The United Nations met its responsibility promptly and squarely when the North Korean aggression occurred. In determining to take collective action against the aggressor, the nations concerned accepted the fact that aggression in one part of the world constitutes a threat to every other part. Failure to face up to this issue would have made a mockery of the whole collective security principle and would have been an open invitation to international lawlessness. While it may be necessary at times to balance our collective security obligations against the limited resources at our disposal, no act of aggression can be allowed to go unnoticed.

Had there been an early success in the fighting, as seemed likely before the intervention of the Chinese Communists, collective security and the United Nations itself would have gained an easy popularity. The prolonged fighting and the tragic casualty lists had a correspondingly depressing effect on a war-weary world. The lesson is clear. Collective security can work to halt aggression but, like any effort to stop wrong-doing, its costs may be high.

The response of the sixteen member nations who sent troops to Korea to fight together under the United Nations banner demonstrated for the first time that collective military action could be mounted by an alliance whose members sought only to preserve the peace. Surely this is a lesson that will by now have been well learned by those Communist countries which seek to impose their will by force of arms.

Because it became clear that the abuse of the veto power in the Security Council imperilled the ability of the United Nations to implement the collective security provisions of the Charter, certain countries felt impelled to make more limited collective defence arrangements of their own. Thus was born the idea of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO is quite consistent with the terms of Article 52 of the U.N. Charter and its formulation should not be interpreted in any way as an abandonment of the United Nations. We need not choose between NATO and the U.N. for, in our search for peace, we need the protection of both.

Other Areas of Achievement

Collective security is but one chapter in the United Nations story. If time permitted, I would say something of the rapid progress made by the United Nations and its affiliated agencies over the past eight years in the vast fields of economic and social betterment.

The whole idea of world co-operation and all the time and money it has cost could be amply justified in what has been done, under United Nations auspices, to improve the lot of peoples in the under-developed areas of the world. Canada and like-minded nations have shown their determination to help their neighbours by the establishment within the United Nations of the World Health Organization -- to mention only one of its many specialized agencies -- and by our participation in humanitarian projects like the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme and the Commonwealth Colombo Plan.

And here I might say that our representative at the United Nations has indicated that, providing the total contributions are sufficient to warrant a worthwhile programme, the Canadian Government is prepared to ask Parliament for a substantial increase in the 1954 Canadian contribution to the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme.

Another important area of United Nations activity stems from the rising tide of nationalism, notably in Asia and the overseas dependencies of European states. Modern history has witnessed the emergence of a whole new list of independent states -- Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Burma, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Israel, Indonesia and Libya. In the case of certain of these, the United Nations has played its part in creating conditions that have enabled them to proceed along the road towards self-government.

Canadians -- as citizens of a nation which itself has emerged from colonial status in comparatively recent times -- have a special appreciation of the national ambitions that motivate dependent peoples. However, while we are in sympathy with these natural aspirations, we recognize from our own experience the danger in these matters of premature action. The United Nations must also seek at all times to balance the legitimate aspirations of dependent peoples against the desirability and the necessity of not impinging on the domestic jurisdiction of the parent states. One of the most vital services the United Nations can perform in this age of transition is to help direct the explosive forces of nationalism along orderly and non-violent paths.

Strengthening Our International Machinery

For me, for every delegate who is sent to speak for his fellow-citizens, there can be no doubt about our resolution to make the United Nations and all its agencies serve the cause of humanity. While we can take encouragement from the progress I have noted, there are still a number of ways in which our task might be made easier and our hopes for success improved.

The most evident difficulty, of course, is the continued intransigence of the U.S.S.R. Machinery has now been set up to cope with the Soviet veto by providing a means whereby the General Assembly can deal with any future act of aggression in the event of a deadlock in the Security Council.

But the basic conflict between East and West remains. This is a problem that will not be solved overnight. We must be patient. We must discuss. We must arbitrate. We must adjudicate. It is perhaps too much, at this stage, to hope that any words or deeds of ours can influence those trained in the sorry statecraft of the Soviet. As I have said, however, great importance can be attached to the fact that the United Nations provides for a constant exchange of views, however opposed they may be, and that this exchange helps to prevent the two blocs from withdrawing into a state of hostile seclusion in which disagreements could the more readily lead to conflict.

There is, indeed, even consolation in the fact that the debates of the United Nations are so often bitter and contentious. If our discussions were ever to deteriorate into a meaningless exchange of diplomatic courtesies we would have real cause for concern. For then, the real attitudes and true feelings of member states would be bottled up and obscured, perhaps to find expression elsewhere in some violent form.

A deficiency of the United Nations that comes forcibly to one's attention -- and this is a procedural weakness -- is the lack of orderliness in the debates. There are too many speeches that are needlessly long -- and here I am conscious that I am a prime offender myself. As an editorial writer for the Ottawa Journal once put it, taking his cue from one of my speeches: "U.N. speeches begin on page 15". For myself -- and this is a personal view -- I should like to see fewer formal speeches and more consultation and informal discussion, not necessarily always in the glare of the public spotlight. While the

United Nations is a world forum, it is also an instrument for diplomatic negotiation.

For this reason, I cannot agree with Lord Beaverbrook's view that we should keep our foreign ministers at home. On the contrary, I think it would be most desirable to have government leaders in more continuous attendance at United Nations sessions. The number of foreign ministers not appearing in person or making only brief flying visits seems to be on the increase. It is obviously not possible for them to be in New York for weeks and months at a time. On the other hand, surely some orderly arrangement of debates could be worked out so that they might be able to participate personally in the discussions of the most crucial problems.

The U.N. -- Our Hope For The Future

The United Nations is by no means a perfect instrument. Like all things contrived by humans, its Charter must be looked at periodically to see whether it is capable of improvement. Indeed, such a review was specifically provided for eight years ago at San Francisco. As you know, Article 109 of the Charter stipulates that if a conference to review the Charter has not been held before the tenth annual session of the Assembly -- that is in 1955, the question of holding such a conference is to be placed on the agenda of that session. A review conference will then be held, if this is so decided at the tenth session, by a majority vote of the General Assembly and by a vote of any seven members of the Security Council.

At the present session in New York, Canada has joined with other countries in supporting the initiation of appropriate studies by the Secretary-General and by member governments because we feel there are real advantages in having a preliminary look at the problems involved in revising the Charter well in advance of the decision to be taken by the Assembly in 1955.

Here is a fruitful field for thought and study both by governments and by voluntary associations such as your own which have a deep interest in seeing that the Charter is developed as a more useful instrument for the purposes of peace.

But I do not think that any one of us believes that the Charter revision is a panacea for the deep-rooted ills of international life. The ultimate success of the United Nations will not be a matter of revising the Charter, however important this may be. Peaceful settlement of the world's problems depends not on votes or vetoes but on a spirit of agreement and acceptance on the part of the nations concerned. If a nation is not moved by a sincere desire for agreement or is not prepared to accept a proposed settlement and carry through its own obligations, it little matters how it votes.

With all its shortcomings, the United Nations still carries the hopes of humanity for a better life. We must not forget that the United Nations did not create the acute division that now exists between East and West. The division would most certainly exist, and in all likelihood in a more explosive form, if there were no world

organization. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, recently warned, we should not blame the storms on the ship instead of the weather. This warning takes on added significance when we realize that we are all in the same boat.

What we must steadfastly seek is an international climate that is more conducive to friendly agreement when just and equitable solutions to the world's problems are put forward. It is no easy task to harmonize the complex and divergent ambitions, desires and ideals of sixty member nations. But, through persistent trial and patient effort, the United Nations has already found peaceful solutions to disputes that in other times would almost certainly have ended in conflict. In this time of peril, I earnestly believe that, given intelligence, understanding and forbearance on the part of men of good faith, the United Nations will yet find the formula for lasting peace.

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