



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson at a panel discussion sponsored by non-governmental organizations interested in the United Nations, at San Francisco, June 22, 1955.

It is very fitting that on this commemoration of the signing of the United Nations Charter 10 years ago, your organizations should have arranged these meetings which provide a useful opportunity to consider where we now stand in relation to the United Nations.

The subject which has been suggested, the United Nations, 1945 - 1955 - 1965, suggests a logical and systematic approach in our examination of the problem.

1945 was the year of the signing; the beginning of what we hoped might be a new era of peace, of international co-operation in the promotion of human rights, of social and economic welfare.

1955 is the year after a decade of experience. While a ten year period is a very short time in international life, many steps have been taken during that time which will affect the future development of our world organization. It is useful to examine what they may suggest in terms of its value for the future.

1965 is ten years ahead. It seems a long way from us and, with the quick changes which occur these days in the international scene, it is very risky to forecast what our world will be then. I can only hope that when 1965 arrives I will be discussing with you the prospects for 1975. This will mean among other things - that we shall have escaped the worst, for if there should be a war involving the use of the H-bomb the prospects for such discussions as we are having today - or for anything else - would not be very promising.

1945

In 1945, the most significant feature of the situation as regards the United Nations was the existence of an apparently strong alliance between the major powers of the world. The Alliance which had been formed during the war had fulfilled, or was about to fulfil, its most ambitious military objectives: the unconditional surrender of its enemies. It was assumed that so successful a military association would be continued into the peace and would enable humanity at long last to apply its vast resources to improve the opportunities for the good life

everywhere in the world. The Alliance seemed to be the guarantee of a more secure and better life.

This great power solidarity was, it is important to remember, not only the basis upon which the new world organization was to function, but it was the vital condition which made possible the elaboration and the signing of the Charter. The Dumbarton Oaks proposal, which were submitted to the San Francisco Conference, represented the degree of agreement which could be reached between the major powers. While at San Francisco the other powers were able, in some respects, to introduce improvements in the original scheme, the basic principles and structure were not really altered. In essential respects, the United Nations Charter as it stands today is the result of the initiative and the agreement reached before the Conference by the leading and most powerful members of the United Nations.

True, there was a vigorous and much publicized assault on the part of the middle and smaller powers against the voting arrangements in the Security Council, but it was largely unsuccessful for the understanding between the Big Four could not be shaken. They agreed to exercise their rights with moderation but they firmly refused to abandon them. And the other Nations realizing that the problem was basically one of continued co-operation between the Great Powers, both within and without the Organization, accepted the arrangement as the best which it seemed could be obtained under the circumstances. If the Big Four could continue to work together and to support the organization, the other Powers felt that some inequalities within the Charter was not too high a price to pay for the kind of organization which they were prepared to accept.

In addition, and this is the second point I should like to stress, with all its imperfections the organization, as it was defined in the Charter, represented a considerable improvement upon the League of Nations Covenant.

Under the old League, membership did not include many of the most powerful nations; notably the United States and, at first, the U.S.S.R. When the Charter of the United Nations came into effect, all the major Allies were committed to its support. In terms of numerical and geographical effectiveness, the United Nations started with a very considerable advantage over the League of Nations.

The Charter was also clearly superior to the Covenant in that it recognized more clearly that such things as denial of rights, material inequality and racial discrimination contributed to international tension; and therefore it made provision for removing these deeper and more complex causes of war. The Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the provisions concerning human rights stem largely from these considerations. There is no doubt that the approach at San Francisco to the problem of peace and security was much broader and deeper than had been found possible at the end of the first world war.

Where, above, all, the Charter was superior to the Covenant was in relation to collective security. We talk a great deal now of the veto, but under the old League arrangement every member of the Assembly had a veto. The Charter contemplated a much more qualified and, in reality, more effective arrangement. The primary responsibility for collective security rests with the Security Council which acts on behalf of the whole organization. In certain circumstances, it was foreseen that the Council could vote enforcement action with the participation, but not necessarily the individual consent of member nations. This represented an important advance in making provision for effective collective security. True, collective forces could not be used by United Nations direction against the permanent members of the Council but, then again, military and other pressure could not be exerted against any member of the organization without the concurrence of two of the non-permanent Council members. The system was not fool-proof; it could not be. But, in many respects, it went further than might have been thought possible before the war. The smaller nations had learned the lesson that organized force might deter aggression and that there was no security in isolation. They were prepared to acknowledge the special responsibilities - and therefore the special privileges - of the more powerful in the maintenance of peace. They were also hopeful that the great would exercise their powers with a sense of moderation.

It seemed reasonable to hope the ties and restraints of a wartime alliance would not be severed as soon as peace was achieved.

Such, then, was the picture in 1945: there was agreement and a prospect of continued agreement between the permanent members of the Security Council. Acting in co-operation, they had drafted a plan for international co-operation for promoting collective security, social and economic progress and respect for fundamental freedoms, which represented a considerable advance over anything which had been in existence before. The smaller nations were not satisfied with the arrangements in every respect, but given the prospect of continued co-operation and understanding between the major powers, and the provision for amendment in the Charter, there was some reason to believe that, in our imperfect world, peace could be made secure.

1955

If we examine the position of the United Nations today, there is of course one obvious and tragic difference from that of 1945. Any unity, and understanding between the Big Powers has been lost. As the organization, and in particular the Security Council, was based on the assumption that it would be retained, the repercussions were bound to be far-reaching. The problem of assessing the position of the United Nations in 1955 is, therefore, one of examining to what extent these Big Power differences and misunderstandings have crippled its operations, and whether alternative arrangements might have been or may yet prove feasible.

Very soon after 1945, such wartime unity of the Big Five as existed began to disintegrate. The first serious conflict was over the fate of the former German

allies at the Paris Conference in 1946.

These - and other controversies over Iran, Korea, Poland and Greece - were however incidental to the major one which related to Germany itself.

Both sides were convinced that the fate of Europe would ultimately be decisively influenced by whatever solution was found to the problem of a peace treaty with Germany. So the battle for Europe was launched on this issue and it has continued all these years.

While this frontal clash developed, Communist ideology called for enveloping ideological assaults on the opposing countries. The Communists inexorably exploited for their own purposes any weaknesses among the countries of the free world and they used every trick to infiltrate and to divide us. This called for vigorous and continuous defensive measures both in the military and non-military fields.

In this tremendous conflict which was being waged, there was of course no prospect that the Big Five could agree to develop joint military plans through the United Nations and mobilize their forces to enforce common sanctions against aggressors as they undertake to do in Article 43 of the Charter.

The conflict between the two blocs also generated a tremendous propaganda effort. Each side endeavoured to mobilize world opinion in support of its cause. For this purpose the United Nations provided a unique forum for appealing to the conscience of peoples both in opposing and in neutral nations. It is true, no doubt, that these verbal battles sometimes produced an impression of dramatic frightening, and almost unbearable tension. The unprecedented ventilation of anger and insults at first led people to fear that the worst might happen. The lesson was soon learned, however, that such extreme tactics in the end defeated the purpose they were meant to serve. The effort which then followed to present a case in more reasonable terms was not without a moderating influence. Even though the United Nations meetings did not always result in agreement or develop satisfactory compromise formulae, I am convinced that the debates in the Assembly have on the whole served a useful purpose and have contributed to the maintenance of peace. The United Nations to some extent at least has brought the democratic process - and the pressure of public opinion - to bear in the handling of international issues; even on those totalitarian states which have been successful in isolating their peoples from contacts with others and from the direct impact of United Nations discussions.

There were of course some issues affecting nations not directly involved in the East-West conflict and, in these cases, the United Nations machinery was able to work. I need only mention Indonesia, Palestine and Kashmir to show that in some marginal but potentially explosive cases, the United Nations has been successful in preventing, or in stopping, fighting. No doubt propaganda considerations were involved in the action taken by some members but it is clear also that on certain occasions something approaching the expression of world opinion was made possible through the agency of the Assembly which was thus instrumental in applying effectively moral force in defence of peace.

It is clear that both as a forum where world public opinion can be expressed and brought to bear on particular issues and as an agency capable of coping with certain issues arising outside the immediate sphere of interest of the two main blocs, the United Nations has served, and continues to serve a very useful purpose in spite of all obstacles. I am fully and regretfully aware that this is far from the full loaf we had hoped for in 1945. But, half a loaf should not be despised, particularly as this is not the full extent of the United Nations contribution in the political and security sphere.

The record shows that on one special occasion, the United Nations has indeed been able to mobilize more than moral force. The story of United Nations action in Korea is disappointing in many respects. The aggressor was not defeated as decisively as many would have liked. Many nations which supported strongly the principle of collective United Nations action have been weak in performance and their contributions have sometimes been belated and inadequate to the point where it appeared that the burden of resistance was to be left to a few nations and particularly to one. Nevertheless, to me, the Korean record, in spite of its shortcomings, shows clearly that on certain issues, the conscience of the world can be roused and policies adopted in the knowledge that they will have moral and material support from a majority of nations. This is important for domestic and international purposes alike and international aggressors are not likely to overlook it in planning their moves. In this respect also, I consider that the United Nations has contributed to the preservation of peace and security.

What is also significant and increases in my view the actual and potential usefulness of the organization is that as a result of the Korean incident, the Organization has developed new machinery which could be put to quick use, not only to deter but also to defeat aggression. The Assembly, where no veto operates, can be called together on short notice and take the security measures which are required. Next time, if there has to be a next time, the uncertainties, the fumbings which accompanied the decisions on Korea need not be repeated. And this knowledge and experience is not limited to procedural matters; it extends to such practical and highly important matters as unified command, strategic direction, reconstruction and rehabilitation schemes as well as logistic support. In the future, the United Nations through the Assembly should be able to enforce its convictions with greater speed and efficiency and with broader participation.

There is another chapter in this story of collective security. As the Security Council was unable to provide for such security and as East-West tension increased, nations everywhere realized that there was mortal peril in isolation and they sought protection in more limited association for defence with like-minded nations. As a result, there developed regional agreements such as the Brussels Pact, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and the North Atlantic Treaty. Due to the flexibility which had been written into the Charter, these security arrangements could be developed as alternative to the broader arrangements which had been foreseen initially. These Treaties expressly recognize the principles of the United Nations Charter and provide for action

in accordance with its provisions: for instance measures for self-defence are to be taken only until such time as the Security Council can effectively intervene.

I am convinced that these regional security arrangements which have been possible under the Charter have been useful deterrents to aggression. Largely because of them would-be aggressors have had to recognize that further gains could not profitably or easily be made by force. They have prepared the way for negotiations. The easing of tension and the greater prospects of a rapprochement which are now before us may be due in large part to these alternative security measures which have been taken within the framework of the Charter.

For a long time we have been obsessed by the clash between the two world blocs, so we may not have given sufficient notice to the emergence in the world, and its reflection in the United Nations, of a third group of nations who are trying to follow a neutral course in the East-West conflict. My purpose is not to appraise the policy of these countries but merely to point out that their attitude in the United Nations is likely to have a restraining effect on the behaviour of the Soviet bloc - or any other bloc - and this in turn may not be without significance in the role of the organization in promoting the cause of peace.

On the whole, therefore, as I see the organization today, though it is not now the strong agency for general collective security we all visualized in 1945, it has become a useful and potentially effective instrument for that purpose. Both directly and indirectly it has served the purposes for which it was originally set up, though it has fallen short of the initial objectives we had in mind. Handicapped as it was by the failure of the basic assumption, on which we acted at San Francisco - great power co-operation - it has nevertheless facilitated the development of security arrangements which make the prospects of aggression increasingly less inviting.

So far, I have discussed the contribution of the United Nations in only one field, that of security. To give a fair and more accurate picture of its accomplishments, however, it is necessary to refer, even if only briefly, to its other activities which may have been less spectacular but which have undoubtedly been most useful. In many respects, in these other areas of operation, the United Nations has been more successful in living up to earlier expectations.

First, there is the whole range of relief and rehabilitation operations, where the record of the organization is one of substantial achievement.

I should mention also the whole array of co-operative undertakings sponsored by the Economic and Social Council directly or through the Specialized Agencies. In this field, the work and the influence of the organization are often indirect, but they reach almost every field of government and they are expanding continually. In many respects the organization provides indispensable liaison between governments and is almost a part of national administrative machinery. Labour,

food and agriculture weather, radio and postal communications, health, finance, aviation, cultural exchanges and many other fields are the particular concern of the Specialized Agencies which have made easier important advances in human welfare.

Nor should we forget the extensive studies which have been undertaken in the social and cultural fields. I realize that some of these, such as the Covenants on Human Rights and Freedom of Information, are controversial but never before had such thorough and systematic explorations of these subjects been undertaken. In the course of these studies there has been a most useful confrontation of viewpoints and a greater insight into the approach of various nations and groups on particular issues has been gained. These intellectual surveys represent an important and useful clearing of the ground for future action.

Then there is the question of the non-self-governing territories. Here the record of the organization is one of steady pressure towards self-government and ultimate independence.

In most of these social and economic fields, the work of the organization is highly technical, it is developing slowly and can hardly be presented in a simple, graphic way. It is nevertheless expanding and beneficent, and there can be no question that it should be continued. If the outstanding political issues can be brought under control, further and faster progress can certainly be made. But the scope of the organization is so broad that misunderstandings on political and security issues have not prevented some progress already in these other areas.

In short, the flexibility of the Charter and the wide fields of effort of the organization have offset to some extent the political consequences of Big Power disunity.

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As I look forward and try to visualize the Organization in 1965, I have to discount my personal hopes and preferences. I would naturally favour quick and decisive strides towards full collective security and determined and genuine co-operation by all members in the social and economic fields. But this might be daydreaming.

On the other hand, in trying to picture probable evolution during the next decade, we should not allow our speculations - because they cannot be more than speculations - to be unduly discouraged by past history and memories.

The basic factor in the situation today, and one which may be decisive in shaping the course of events in the immediate future, is the kind of equilibrium, uncertain and unstable as it is, which seems to have been reached between the democracies and the communist bloc; conflict between which has so far dominated United Nations activities.

The prospects of consolidating what progress has been made, of eliminating gradually the specific sources of friction, are greater because of the existence of the

organization. In this process the moral influence of the United Nations and its wealth of resources for negotiation can and should be brought to bear on the side of peace.

It seems also clear that any steps which can be taken either inside or outside the Organization to solve outstanding political issues and to remove tension will to that extent open up new possibilities of co-operation and progress in the various other fields covered by the Charter. I visualize a sort of interaction between efforts inside and outside the organization which in the long run are likely to consolidate the prospects of peace and those of the Organization itself. As the outlook for peace improves the opportunities for achieving the purposes of the organization are bound to increase.

I do not believe that by itself the organization can achieve lasting peace and reconcile the differences between the Big Powers. The United Nations was not devised for such a task. But it can certainly facilitate the attainment of this objective. Looking forward to 1965, I feel therefore that while there may be no sudden dramatic advances in the field of collective security (it will be a long but I hope steady process) the role of the organization is likely to develop and become more important as an agency for discussion, for negotiation and for the settlement of outstanding problems.

As the tension between East and West decreases and new groupings emerge within the organization, more attention may have to be given to a whole range of other problems. In this regard the future of the organization may perhaps be different from that which the recent past suggests.

I have in mind, first, the relations with dependent territories and underdeveloped areas. There will be more room here for creative and useful development, with the "haves" and the "have nots", the so-called "colonial" and the liberated countries understanding better each other's point of view. There are indications that former colonies which have achieved independence are becoming aware of the fact that suspicion and criticism of colonial powers and even political freedom is not a cure for all the major problems. They are now approaching these issues with more restraint and maturity. Similarly the administering countries now frankly acknowledge their responsibilities to assist, in the road to freedom and a better life, those over whom they have had control. Increasing economic assistance, and good administration, having as its primary objective the betterment of the situation of these peoples, are gradually being accepted as standard and normal policies. On this basis, the United Nations can provide the framework for invaluable work in assisting the less favoured peoples towards political freedom and greater welfare.

In the economic field generally, related efforts will no doubt be made in support of political evolution. The expanded programme of technical assistance is the symbol of a new trend. Provision has also now been made for an International Finance Corporation and if the armaments race could be brought under control, the flow of financial and economic assistance to the less favoured areas should further increase.

Nevertheless, motives, for, as well as the nature of Western help to under-developed countries will be scrutinized. Trade promotion or political security schemes disguised under the label of technical or economic assistance, or even relief, will not be sufficient. There must be a deeper and wiser impulse than this. Within the United Nations during the coming years our Western civilization may be given its last opportunity of revising its relations with the other civilizations, of transcending its temporary technical superiority, of winning the peace through the expression of its basic moral and spiritual content. Men in other parts of the world expect from us more than experts or equipment - important as these are. They are observing how we really put into practice our professed principles concerning the dignity of man, the rule of law, social and economic progress. They are trying to assess the worth of our civilization as an effective system for promoting human happiness.

If and as tensions decrease, it is also probable that renewed attempts may be made towards correcting some of the basic handicaps of the organization; as regards membership, for instance, and the exercise of the veto. Certainly an effort should be made to enlarge the number of member nations. The waiting list should be admitted to membership. The prestige and the influence of the organization would increase considerably if it could be made more nearly universal.

The problem of the veto is more difficult and even in my most optimistic moments I do not anticipate that the permanent members of the Council will renounce their right of veto even by 1965. What I foresee however is that if confidence can be promoted, if issues can be eliminated, the Powers concerned will be more inclined to exercise their right in this respect with the restraint that was originally envisaged and accepted. This can only come gradually as advances in other fields are made, but any relaxation in this regard would inevitably affect the attitudes of the smaller nations in their relations with the organization and, in particular, their willingness to surrender certain powers. The more powerful members of the Organization must, however, set the example and give proof of their own willingness to accept international discipline.

To the extent that the general atmosphere may improve, the prospects of Charter Revision will have to be considered. Taking a realistic view of the situation and even assuming that within the next ten years there will be a substantial easing of tension, I do not really believe that large scale revisions of the Charter will be possible; or possibly desirable. Given the right climate, some changes could, should be made but, in essential respects, the Charter today substantially embodies the degree of authority which the member nations are prepared to accept at this stage of development of the international community. I doubt whether even under optimum conditions it would be possible by 1965 to advance beyond the present provisions of the Charter in any important respect; if the United Nations is to retain the principle of universality.

The real problem is not one of constitutional revision but of making full use of the present generally adequate provisions. Much will depend on the attitude of

the member nations, on their approach to the problems which will face the organization. There is need not only for discipline in accepting agreed decisions, but there is an equal need for restraint on the part of the majority in deciding on particular courses of action. If it were possible to concentrate on positive problems, on problems which can be solved at this stage within the organization as it stands rather than on condemnatory or idealistic schemes, the effectiveness of the organization would be greatly improved.

In the fields assigned to the Economic and Social Council, the International Court and the Secretariat, there probably will not be startling developments but continued expansion. Here is unspectacular but solid work for the organization which, over the years, contributes powerfully to human welfare and helps also in improving the prospects of peace. I am confident that by 1965 the achievements of the Organization will have become even greater and more impressive and will have gained wider recognition.

Looking forward in 1955 to the future in 1965 I am more confident than ever that the 1945 ideals remain valid and that the instrument which was developed to achieve them is adequate for the purpose if we agree to use it sensibly, wisely and consistently. In any event, it remains - as it always has been - our best hope for progress toward international co-operation and friendship. As such it continues to deserve, and I hope will receive, the support - strong and unswerving - of all peoples and governments everywhere.

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