

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 54/6 Text of address given by Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at a luncheon at the Empire Club, Toronto, February 25, 1954.

(See also Supplementary Paper 54/7 containing Mr. Hammarskjöld's address at a Convocation of Carleton College, Ottawa, on February 26, 1954, at which he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.)

It is a source of special gratification to me to visit Canada and to be the guest today of this distinguished gathering. This is for several reasons.

Need I tell you what great personal admiration and affection I have for the man who was President of the General Assembly of the United Nations when I started my work there -- your Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson. I am sure it will not be news to you to hear that this admiration and affection are shared by many, many others -- foreign ministers and other representatives of countries large and small, and officials of the Secretariat high and low -- who have worked with him. His term as President of the seventh session of the General Assembly was not the first occasion, nor, I am sure, will it be the last, upon which he has exerted a significant influence on the side of that positive and constructive approach to world problems which is epitomized in the United Nations Charter.

But it is not only because of Mr. Pearson and other distinguished representatives of Canada that the United Nations has come to expect in its debates to hear from Canada the voice of reason and enlightenment, rejecting the extremes of partisanship, seeking patiently the common ground for men of good will, yet always standing firm upon the basic principles and purposes of our world organization. Canada, with its rich traditions from many peoples, harmoniously blended, and its key position between two great nations in the Western world, is also a nation with a rich future. All these elements are truly reflected in Canada's constructive role in world affairs.

Indeed, the history and traditions of your country have prepared you in an unusual degree to play an important part in the development of the United Nations. On the political side you have, by constructive compromise based on reciprocal respect for freedom, developed a working partnership of peoples that unites in one nation a diversity of cultural backgrounds. And in the wider framework of the British Commonwealth you have had long experience, together with your fellow members, in the methods and the mutual advantages of a working partnership of independent nations freely united for common ends.

It is about the place of the United Nations in the international scene, with special relevance to these

traditions of yours, that I wish to share a few thoughts with you today. Where do we stand in this year 1954? What part is the United Nations playing, what part might it reasonably be expected to play, in the struggle for peace in circumstances that seem so different from those which attended its birth in 1945? Do the Charter and institutions of the United Nations really fit any more with the realities of today? Or has the United Nations become a symbol of frustrated hopes, still worthy of salute for its high purposes, of preservation for some future and better day, but in the meantime put away on the shelf insofar as the realities of policy and power are concerned?

I suppose it is not surprising that these questions should be asked. It is certainly true that the wartime concert of five Great Powers, upon which the peace-keeping functions of the Charter was intended to rest, broke down in the earliest days of the United Nations' existence. And it is, of course, an understatement to say that the prospects of healing this breach have not improved with the passing years.

In a world so deeply and dangerously divided as ours today the United Nations cannot be regarded as an agency for the enforcement of peace. But this does not mean that its role in the maintenance of peace has lost significance. It is too often forgotten that even in 1945 the governments were unwilling to give to the United Nations Council's power to order enforcement action to prevent or suppress armed aggression when -- and only when -- the five Great Powers agreed unanimously to do so. In every other respect, the United Nations was always intended to rely for the accomplishment of its purposes upon the moral power of the undertakings of the Charter and upon the influence which its recommendations could exert upon the policies of its Member Governments.

The central principle of the United Nations is not -- and never has been -- the principle of police power exerted by a supra-national authority. The very limited police powers with which it is constitutionally endowed obviously cannot be applicable to a war between the Great Powers. For the most important task of all for our generation -- the prevention of another world war -- the role intended for the United Nations is a different and more realistic one. The United Nations exists because the nations who compose it, no matter how great the differences between them, or how deeply some of them may be divided in many of their interests, recognize an over-riding common interest in avoiding the mutual self-destruction of a third world war.

To do this in a world that has become so closely and irrevocably inter-dependent as ours requires world organization -- a centre, in the words of the Charter, "for harmonizing the actions of nations" in the attainment of common ends. It is, of course, true that at almost every session of the United Nations you will find more evidence of disharmony than of harmony. In this respect the United Nations is only too accurate a mirror of the actual state of affairs in the world. But disharmony is the very reason why a centre for harmonizing is necessary. We may regret and even deplore the frequent bitterness of the debates in the United Nations, but we should never make

the mistake of thinking we would be better off if these debates did not take place. For the differences and the conflicts exist. We cannot escape them. We have to live with them and deal with them.

The role of the United Nations is to bring to bear upon all these differences and conflicts of interests, month in and month out, the over-riding common interest and to do this in terms of the principles and purposes of the Charter. For the United Nations is not only a meeting place, but a meeting place in which the instinct of mutual self-preservation is reinforced by the constant presence in the background of moral purpose. The positions taken by the Member Governments, the policies they advocate and defend, can never escape comparison with the principles and aspirations of the Charter, to which all of them are solemnly committed by treaty. Thus, the influence of the United Nations upon the Member Governments is being exerted steadily and constantly on the side of peace, justice and progress in their efforts to reach solutions of the problems that confront them. This influence is exerted in many ways and through different instruments. Let me cite three examples of what I mean.

When it became evident that a universal system of collective security was for the time being beyond their reach, various Member Governments cast about for other means that would give them at least some measure of interim security. In former days these might have taken the form of the traditional military alliances so well known to history. And we have, indeed, seen the creation of collective self-defense arrangements that are outside the institutional framework of the United Nations. Of one of these -- the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -- Canada is a very active member. I myself have been invited to speak next week at the meeting in Caracas of another -- the Organization of American States. But these are not alliances that recognize no higher law than the naked exercise of power. Both of them, by the terms of the treaties which brought them into being, explicitly recognize the supremacy of the United Nations Charter. This also is implicit recognition of the fact that regional organization can never be a substitute for universal organization, although it may be an important or even necessary supplement. Indeed, the United Nations Charter in Articles 51 through 54 makes full provision for such supplementary regional arrangements. Thus, the Charter and the existence of the United Nations as an institution have given a new meaning and imposed new obligations upon such groupings of nations.

An example of how the United Nations exerts its influence toward the just and peaceful solution of a dangerous problem is in Palestine. This problem has been with the United Nations since 1947. Aside from those issues directly related to the cold war, it is at once one of the most difficult and the most challenging of all, because the claims on both sides are so strong and so extremely difficult to reconcile. The problem is still far from ultimate solution and the danger of a breakdown in the armistice continues to be a cause for concern to the Member Governments in the Security Council and to me as Secretary-General.

Although the United Nations has already been instrumental in ending the war in Palestine and in preserving

the armistice, we cannot claim that the peace-making task of the Organization is in any way fulfilled. Three current conflicts there -- the Israeli-Syrian dispute over the Jordan River, the Israeli-Jordan dispute over boundary violations and the Israeli-Egyptian dispute over passage through the Suez Canal -- are acute expressions of a state of affairs far from final peace. In all of them the United Nations organs are actively endeavoring to bring about a solution. And in all of them the United Nations appears as the only party which has a chance to serve as a catalyst for those forces which work in the direction of establishing conditions under which lasting peace is possible. The work is not much talked of and the day-to-day results may not be spectacular. But seen from the inside the contributions made on a United Nations basis must be recognized as vital. The primary task of the United Nations is to prevent conflicts or a sharpening of conflicts that might lead to war. Its work in fulfillment of that task must necessarily to a large extent be a slow, patient, undramatic operation based on continuing negotiations with all parties concerned. A resolution in the General Assembly or in the Security Council may be the starting point for such an operation, or a registration of its results. The negotiations themselves are generally not headline news but the very substance of the United Nations' peacemaking work.

A third example of the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and in the peaceful settlement of disputes is the case of Korea. Here the United Nations sought for three years by peaceful means and common consent to bring about the unification in freedom and independence of a people long under foreign domination who had been left divided by the development of the "cold war." In 1950 that peaceful effort was interrupted by the act of aggression from North Korea. This presented the United Nations with its greatest challenge. We know how this challenge was met. The armistice that was won in Korea at such heavy cost was a victory for collective security. Since the armistice the United Nations and the Member Governments most directly concerned have been seeking to move forward in the direction of real peace in Korea. This effort has gone forward at United Nations Headquarters in New York, at Panmunjon and, most recently, in Berlin. It has been a slow and painful process. You will recall that it took a whole year of negotiation even to reach an armistice. Now it has taken nine months even to reach an agreement on the time, place and composition of a peace conference. The agreement that was reached at Berlin last week to hold a conference in Geneva in April has broken that deadlock. This is a step forward, though he would be a rash man who would venture to guess today how far this conference will bring us toward peace. It may prove to be necessary to live for a long time to come with another armistice regime -- another truce line -- like those in Palestine and Kashmir, and like the demarcation lines between the Soviet and Western occupation zones in Germany and Austria. Even if that should come to pass, let us remember, however, that it is better to disagree around the conference table and then try again, no matter how frustrating the experience, than to meet on the battlefield in war.

The price of peace since 1945 has come high indeed and I would be the last to pretend that I can see

any easy way out of continuing to pay that price for a long time to come. When I speak of the high price of peace, I am not thinking of the burden of armaments. That is in the picture, of course. But I am thinking of the price in terms of the demands upon our capacity for patience and for steadiness of purpose. The process of learning to live together without war in this torn and distracted world of ours is going to continue to be painful and a constant challenge for the rest of our lives. Yet we know what the choice is. Either we manage it or we face disaster.

The mere fact that the Governments created the United Nations and have maintained it is, in itself, evidence that mankind is capable of responding to the challenge of interdependence with which the evolution of human society has now brought us face to face as never before. We also know that history has many lessons to teach about apparently irreconcilable conflicts. Terrible wars have been fought in the past because people thought that they could not live in the same world together, or because they thought their beliefs were in head-on collision with those of their neighbors. Then, with time, they found that it was not only possible but necessary to make a working compromise that allowed for the differences. They found that it was not only possible but necessary to accept the principle of diversity in human society. Time itself is a great healer and situations that seem to defy solution can be lived with until that day when the evolution of human affairs brings a more favorable opportunity.

Each year that the United Nations holds together as a world meeting place and as the expression of universal aspirations responding to a common need, improves the chances of peace and orderly progress for our civilization. Conflicts of ideology or interest between the Communist world and the Western world, between the Western world and the Asiatic world, between Arab and Jew, between Moslem and Hindu, are not the only law of life for our generation. There is also another law. When the vital interests and the basic ideals which join all humanity are fully recognized -- not only, as they already are, in declarations and speeches by spokesmen of the peoples all over the world, or in the written word of the Charter of the United Nations, but also in actions inspired by conviction -- then fruitful cooperation in peace is possible and reconciliation of conflicts by peaceful means is attainable. When this happens, we can turn into an asset those very differences which at present divide the world and represent a threat to peace. The United Nations is based on this insight.

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