

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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No. 53/10 THE UNITED NATIONS AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and President of the Seventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made at Founders Week Convocation, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, February 23, 1953.

... The United Nations is often - these days - used as the whipping boy for national sins - of omission and commission.

It is no super-state, or even a court with power to enforce its judgments. It can only reflect the picture of the world in which we live - and hope that - by giving an honest, if at times frightening picture, we, the people, may be persuaded to do something about it.

What do we see in the United Nations mirror now? Two groups of powers whom we loosely call "Western democratic" and "Communist dictatorial" facing each other in fear and hostility across a widening chasm of suspicion and ill-will, a situation which if it persists is likely to have only one ending - and it won't be a happy one.

The United Nations with all its weaknesses - which are the weaknesses of its members - remains the best mechanism by which this situation can be changed. We are, after all, still talking to each other there; in language which I admit is frank, at times to the point of ferocity as words become ammunition in the cold war. But would it not be far worse if we stopped talking and if this last tie between the two worlds was broken? That indeed would be an acknowledgement of the inevitability of catastrophe.

There is another respect in which the United Nations now serves - and in the future can serve mankind even more fruitfully: by acting as the channel for the peaceful expression of the national feelings and the hope for greater human welfare of the insistent and awakened millions of Africa and Asia.

We on this continent are only very dimly aware of what has happened in these parts of the world which not long ago seemed to touch our interests only through missions, trade, and travelogues. We should know that great forces have now been liberated in these places - once far away but now as close as a Korean hillside - with consequences for our Western part of the world that are incalculable.

Asians, Arabs, Africans are now flying jet planes, and driving tractors, and they no longer feel inferior to us in any field of technological or scientific endeavour. They certainly never had cause to feel inferior in any other respect! As Arnold Toynbee has recently pointed out, we should get accustomed to the idea that the West is now surrounded by the world.

The United Nations has already helped - and can help more - in driving home the realization of this development, the long run implications of which may be even more important for humanity than our present difficulties with the Kremlin.

Our world organization - where the voice of Asia already expresses itself clearly and in Asian accents, can do much, if we use it, to make this development peaceful and constructive rather than explosive and divisive. That is only one other reason why we should not falter or weaken in its support at this testing time in its short history.

With the increasing and complex ties that bind the nations together, ties that chafe as well as comfort, some agency for international co-operation and contact - and on the widest possible basis of universality - is not only desirable; it is essential.

If the one we raised at San Francisco is allowed to fail, much else will have failed beside our effort in international construction. Our best hope for peace would go too.

We must, therefore, persist in our determination to realize the purposes of our Charter through the international agency we have accepted; realizing that the moral value of a purpose is not lost because it is not easily attained. It is lost only if the effort to realize it is abandoned.

If this is true - and I think it is - then we must reject the counsels of those mistaken men who would substitute for this ideal of universal international co-operation - however imperfectly realized - the old and outworn concept of power politics; who would go back to the carefree dictum of George Canning "each nation for itself and God for us all" uttered at a time when Edinburgh was farther from London than Tokyo is today.

Faith in United Nations has been weakened by failure - and the responsibility for that failure lies not with the free democracies - to bring about peace in the cold war or a cease-fire in the Korean hot war.

But doubts and uneasiness have also arisen - or have been provoked - over the quality and loyalty of the men who serve the United Nations in the Secretariat and over our ability to keep our organization independent and free of crippling national pressures.

It is the first duty of the organization to serve - faithfully and efficiently - the international community, and not the interests of any member state.

On no other basis can an international organization be soundly built and survive. It should be a first interest of member states to protect this principle and apply it in practice.

This does not mean of course that an international civil servant is by that fact relieved of his obligations as a citizen of his own country. If he believes those obligations, he has no claim to refuge or immunity because of his international occupation. It does mean, however, that the state, in its duty to protect the national security, should also respect the international character of the organization, and the provisions of its Charter.

The impression seems to have been created - and to be growing - that the Secretariat of United Nations is full of dangerous and subversive people and, as such, a threat to the security of the host state. This impression has, I feel sincerely, no basis in fact. It is a distortion of the true picture, and its creation and spreading does no service to the cause of national security or international co-operation.

If, as I have been arguing, the United Nations deserves our full support, why then do we search also for security against military aggression in other and more limited arrangements, such as those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization?

The answer is an easy one. There can be no effective and continuing organization of collective security under the world body at this time, while the cold war rages and both sides to it participate, as well, in the United Nations. The U.S.S.R. as a permanent member of the Council could frustrate and prevent such efforts.

So we have had to fall back on more limited but more immediately practicable organizations, such as NATO, the members of which are willing to work together in a free partnership for the prevention of war, and for that purpose to pool their increasing strength, until we reach the point where that strength is such that any potential breaker of the peace will be convinced that aggression will not pay and, therefore, he will not be tempted to commit one. With that temptation removed, he may one day be willing to negotiate differences through the United Nations and do his part in the removal of those fears and tensions which are the source of war.

The leader in this great Atlantic coalition for collective security - and the strongest member of it by any test - is the United States. Indeed, one of the decisive facts in the twentieth century - is the acceptance by this country of international responsibilities commensurate with its power and resources.

The administration through which that leadership is exercised in this country has now changed but not the fact of it. Nor can that change make any difference in the attitude of your friends towards the continuing necessity of developing the strength and unity of our association in what we are beginning to call and understand as the Atlantic Community.

Canadians feel that they owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Harry S. Truman of Independence, Missouri, for the courage and persistence and wisdom he showed in laying the foundation for collective action against aggression and thereby strengthening our security and our confidence. We acknowledge wholeheartedly that debt.

But Canadians also admire and respect the great captain who led us - with grandeur but with modesty - through dark days of war to final victory and whose genius for firm but understanding leadership has now been placed at the service not only of his own country, but of the whole free world.

I am sure that the people of the United States - and its new administration - must by now be very conscious of the difficulties of leading a coalition - not of satellite followers - but of free democracies, in a period of half war, half peace, when dangers which face us require solidarity and sacrifice, but when the atmosphere of all-out conflict with its stirring emotions which makes sacrifice easy to bear, is absent.

As a leader of free states, the United States has at times to make concessions to the views and special requirements and special anxieties of its partners.

But those partners in their turn have the obligation to recognize frankly the special contribution to the common effort made by the U.S.A. and the heavy responsibilities it is bearing.

The reconciliation of these two things will be the test of the value and the enduring character of our association. It will be made successful only by the exercise of tolerance, steadfastness and mutual understanding. It will require also, the fullest and freest possible consultation between the members of the group. What concerns all should be discussed by all, so that we may all face together, with resolution and unity, the consequences of any action we take. To put the matter in its most exaggerated form - "There should be no annihilation without consultation"!

The problems now facing the United States as the leader of the North Atlantic alliance are in many respects those which have arisen in every previous alliance. Moreover, these same problems have given rise to reactions very like those which are sometimes current today in the United States. It is a penalty of leadership to feel overburdened and often misunderstood. This was certainly the feeling of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century. You may remember how Matthew Arnold, replying to criticism of the Britain of that day, pictured it as "a weary Titan ... staggering on to her goal, bearing on shoulders immense, Atlantean, the load, well-nigh not to be borne, of the too vast orb of her fate". The United States may today feel at times the same way, but I do not think there is much danger that she will stagger under the "too vast orb" of her fate. I hope not, because that fate involves nothing less than the destiny of all mankind.

There are, then, heavy obligations laid both on those who must bear the responsibility of leadership for peace in United Nations and in the North Atlantic alliance, and on those of us whose duty it is to co-operate effectively and wholeheartedly with that leadership whenever it is possible

for us to do so. We must avoid words or actions or reactions which will weaken the association and our work for peace without any compensating advantage. Irresponsible action or talk which might divide the free countries in these days of crisis would be folly. I do not mean by this that we should hide our differences by pretending that none ever exist. In any coalition of free states there are bound to be honest differences and, unless they are examined and discussed honestly, they may fester underground and poison the partnership. But, in discussing our differences we should use only the accents of good temper and good faith, and we should display, always, a sense of responsibility and a sense of proportion, and indeed a sense of humour! We should have such a strong faith in each other's good purpose, that difference over methods to achieve them will not prove disruptive.

In our achievement of political democracy we have learned to settle our domestic problems by frank discussion, fairly and decently carried on. If we forget that lesson, and there are some signs of this, we may one day lose our system of free and popular governments. Similarly, if we do not project this practice into the international democratic system which we are trying to build, our coalition may fail to meet the tests ahead. It may even break up.

The tasks to which we are called, then, are manifold and challenging. We must support and strengthen the United Nations as the best agency for international co-operation, and build up defensive security in the North Atlantic alliance. We must also look much further into the future than the immediate crisis and do everything possible to develop the international community within the North Atlantic area. Above all, we must remember that we are increasing our military strength not primarily to win a war but to prevent one; not to defeat Communism in war, but to destroy it without war. The real test of our cause, will be how to use our increasing strength. To acquit ourselves well in that test, we will need both wisdom and steadiness. "The strong man armed keepeth the peace". But to do that, he must first keep his head!

Finally, if we are to discharge our full responsibility to the cause of freedom and to humanity, we must not lose sight of the idea of the human community which is world-wide in scale, although some peoples have been alienated from it by the action of their Communist totalitarian rulers. While we work to meet the challenge to our own civilization, we must not forget this human family from which such a large part of the world's population has cut itself off. There are, therefore, many concentric circles defining our responsibilities - to our own countries, to the present coalition of countries in the North Atlantic community, to the United Nations and to the world-wide community of all human creatures.

The kind of education and training you are receiving at Rollins will help you who are fortunate enough to be here to play your part as citizens in discharging these responsibilities wisely and well. It will help you, as you respond to the challenge of our times, to keep your feet firmly on the ground, but not in the mud; to hold your heads high, but keep them out of the clouds.

I realize that on an occasion like this it is customary for the speaker to address words of advice to you who are students. I have been doing my best to resist that temptation. In any event, I could give you no better advice than to follow the motto which, I was once told, Mr. Truman kept on his desk when he was at the White House, It read: "Always speak the truth and act honestly. This will please some people and astonish the rest".

Now I end where I began, with my tribute to this college, to its ideals of service, culture and the good life. I convey to you once again my deep gratitude for the honour you are about to confer on me, and, if I may speak for them, on my fellow-graduates of the class of February 1953.

This has been a happy weekend for us. As it ends, may I express my feelings in a few lines from a Chinese poet, Li Po, where he describes how one may pass a winter's night with friends. He concludes his verse with these words, "...and after the guest has gone, watch him make his way into the distance. If he leaves just at daybreak this is very agreeable, particularly if he plays upon his flute as he goes".

I shall leave this peaceful place long before daybreak, I fear, for another world at the United Nations Assembly. I assure you, however, I will be playing upon my flute as I go and, because of your kindness, will face with greater equanimity any discordant notes that may await me while I try to conduct my sixty-piece international symphony at New York.

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