

BUILDING THE *Peace*

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The United Nations Today

The Security Council's rapid and determined action in calling upon member governments of the United Nations to "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack [by the Communist regime of North Korea] and to restore international peace and security in the area" is fresh proof of the real capabilities of the United Nations. It belies the impression, held by some, of the United Nations as a feeble, sleeping giant. But was this impression ever valid? This is a good time to take another look at the United Nations and to ask a few questions.

Just what is the United Nations and what is it doing in the world today? There are many ways of answering. The way most valuable to you will depend upon where you sit and how closely you have been following international affairs. One thing to remember is that the U. N. is mainly a deliberative body. When there is conflict, the U. N. collects facts, studies them, and then recommends courses of action. Its recommendations carry real weight, for the member nations have obligated themselves to respect them. Even more important, perhaps, U. N. action is backed by the great moral force of world opinion—which no nation dares ignore. And finally, as we have now seen in Korea, U. N. action can also be backed by armed force.

The 59 member states have pledged themselves to try to live up to the high standards of the U. N. Charter. When any state strays too far from those standards, it faces a hostile world opinion. One of the greatest virtues of the United Nations is that the toughest problems of our day are being worked out in an atmosphere of pledged principles where selfish actions stand out clear and sharp and can be pinned directly on the offending nation. This is a great force for agreement.

There have been agreements on ways of helping each other, agreements on food and health problems, on transport and communication matters, on tariffs and trade. There has been agreement on more fateful questions, agreement to stop military action if fighting has already begun, or agreement to keep observers at a trouble spot.

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The U. N. is more than just a useful device, or merely a practical way of getting things done.

The U. N. of today mirrors the stresses and strains of our world society. It is not perfect. It will become increasingly effective as the sovereign nations who belong to it learn a great deal more about getting along together. The U. N. does represent, however, a long start toward world unity. It is today the means and the main center of action toward a lasting world peace.

GROWTH THROUGH EXPERIENCE

In the daily work of seeking and finding agreement, the U. N. is growing steadily more useful and efficient. Most of the nations today are finding its facilities and services to be invaluable avenues to agreement and their main available reliance in dealing with the Soviet question. As a result, many of the conflicts and problems which the governments cannot solve readily by their own efforts wind up somewhere in the U. N. system. The proof is visible in the U. N. work load. Thousands of productive meetings are held each year on hundreds of diverse subjects, and on problems in the economic and social field many nonmember nations and private international organizations may work together with the 59 members under the auspices of the U. N. or of one of its specialized agencies.

Out of this beehive activity emerges the truest picture of the U. N.—an intergovernmental organization hard at work helping peoples to help themselves and to help each other, so that all men can eat better, live longer, get about more easily, and enjoy to the fullest their rights and freedoms.

GROWING PAINS

Naturally, the U. N. has not reached its present stature without picking up scars along the way. It has had to make its way in a hard-bitten world, in which a few nations still insist on playing the lone wolf. Yet in growing it has sprouted some unexpected talents. It has developed a toughness and adaptability which have made it a major influence in shaping world events. In 1945 the people of the world, in whose hopes and dreams the U. N. had taken root, had very big plans for their offspring.

They looked on it as a quick and easy way to enduring peace. Five years have passed since then, and a peaceful world still is nowhere in sight. Some people have begun to wonder and to ask questions about the real value of the U. N. The U. N.'s inability to bring off a miraculous ending of the cold war has obscured its great worth as a world forum, as a focal point of world opinion, and as a central nervous system of the complex world community. Everyone needs therefore to take a fresh glance at the U. N. now and then, so as to be able to see its accomplishments as clearly as its limitations.

THE GUIDING SPIRIT—PEACE

The U. N. was set up, above all, to eliminate war. Its activities have been along three main lines:

1. Collective security actions, including the peaceful settlement of disputes by the Security Council and the General Assembly and efforts to set up international disarmament and atomic-energy control plans;

2. The building of a more just, lawful, and orderly world society;

3. Work which is directed toward a wider sharing of the good things of life among all peoples and an increase in the abundance of good things.

It might be said, in other words, that the U. N. program is peace through united action, peace through law and order, and peace through well-being. A knowledge of major developments in these lines is necessary for an understanding of the U. N. today.

Peace through united action suggests the whole U. N. idea of nations working together for common goals. More specifically, it might refer to unity of nations in discouraging aggression and in resisting it, by force if necessary. Once aggression has been done away with, freedom can flourish as never before. The main U. N. arm of unity against aggression is the Security Council, which is flanked by the U. N. Atomic Energy Commission, the Commission for Conventional Armaments, and the Military Staff Committee.

The already hard task of this arm of the U. N. was compounded early this year by a Soviet-bloc boycott. Although the Soviet Union has now returned to the Security Council, the planning for world-wide regulation and limitation of conventional armaments and the setting up of troop contingents for the Security Council continue to be slowed by Soviet obstruction. Even more serious, the repeated refusals of the Soviet Union to accept the U. N. majority-approved plan for atomic-energy control have made it rather pointless to continue discussions on that vital problem.

Fortunately these facts are only part of the U. N. story. In areas where the Soviet Union is not immediately involved, the Security Council continues to have real effect, and, in areas where the Soviets are involved but cannot exercise a veto, the record of the past 5 years shows that the U. N. can act effectively.

In the field of collective security action, where the going has been roughest, there have been major accomplishments. The U. N. Security Council has had dramatic success in the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran, in bringing peace to Indonesia and Greece, and in stopping bloodshed in Palestine and in the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. The Security Council also contributed, it will be remembered, to the ending of the ominous Berlin blockade.

The General Assembly has begun to figure large in the settlement of international disputes, partly because of the growing concern and interest of all of the U. N. members and partly because of obstacles put in the way of Security Council action. In the case of conflicts the Assembly studies, makes recommendations, and, like the Security Council, may send out special missions to look into the trouble at first hand. Assembly action focuses world attention on conflicts, clarifies the issues, and brings great pressure to bear on wrongdoers.

Without the U. N. a large-scale war might very likely be raging in one or several of the above areas. By preventing a large-scale war in these cases, the U. N. has paid off its cost many times over. Yet its achievements extend into many other fields.

Peace through law and order is another basic U. N. objective. Only an orderly society can be a peaceful society. Under the U. N. there emerges steadily a growing body of law and legal precedent approved and accepted by almost all nations. The growth of international law is bound, of course, to be slow. It involves a compromise between legal systems as diverse as those of Mexico and Russia, Egypt and Denmark, or Iceland and India. Nevertheless this U. N. program will form a growing foundation for a world rule of law under which nations will bring their disputes to established courts of justice, just as individuals do today.

The chief judicial organ of the U. N. is the International Court of Justice—Supreme Court of the Nations, it might be called. Its 15 eminent judges sit at The Hague, Netherlands, on contentious cases and give advisory opinions on matters such as interpretations of international law and the U. N. Charter. The most publicized case thus far is the Corfu Channel Case, in which the Court awarded England about £840 thousand (almost \$2.4 million) as compensation following the damaging of two British destroyers by mines in Albanian waters. While

the Court has no enforcement power, the Charter provides for potential action by the Security Council to give effect to the judgments of the Court if nations do not of their own will bow to its authority.

X The U. N. International Law Commission, made up of 15 noted jurists, has the job of encouraging a progressive development of international law. This Commission is charged by the General Assembly with giving a consistent shape and form to the growing body of precedents, principles, and accepted procedures. It is now hard at work surveying international law and selecting topics for codification. As a part of its assignment the Commission is currently drafting a declaration on the rights and duties of states, preparing a code of offenses against the peace and security of mankind, and examining the possibility of establishing an international criminal court.

International law is also being enriched in other parts of the U. N. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights tells all men for the first time in history what kind of treatment they should expect from their governments. Overwhelmingly supported as a declaration of aspirations, it is being followed by a more limited draft covenant in the form of a treaty. When an International Covenant on Human Rights is approved, it will become legally binding upon all nations which ratify it. Another convention, the U. N. Convention on Genocide, has branded the mass destruction of people as a crime punishable under international law.

These are just a few outstanding examples of what the U. N. has already done toward building a peaceful world order. That building job will take a very long time. It will also require conditions of international stability, such as exist only when most human beings are able to live decently. To this end the U. N. has undertaken a third major program for peace.

Peace through well-being describes an effort which takes up most of the U. N.'s time, money, and facilities. The problem of peace in the long run is the problem of individual human contentment. If men and women are decently fed, clothed, and housed, and if they are kept informed, and if their dignity as persons is respected, they are likely to be peace-minded. It is a huge job to create these essential conditions of life in a world where many millions of people are hungry and destitute. The share of U. N. facilities devoted to this task is proportionately large.

The Economic and Social Council, often called Ecosoc, is the center of U. N. activity in the field of human well-being. It works with 12 commissions—fact-finding, study, and advisory groups in matters ranging from economic questions to women's rights—and is associated with 10 specialized agencies, which are practical working bodies

concerned with specific material problems and which have their own budgets and raise their own funds. Other *ad hoc* bodies are set up to do special jobs as the need arises. The U. N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is one of these. Another is the U. N. International Children's Emergency Fund, which has supplied about a billion and a half meals to needy children and mothers during the past year.

The U. N. is also deeply concerned with the treatment of peoples in dependent territories. The U. N. Trusteeship Council looks after the well-being of some 17 million inhabitants in the 10 territories under the international trusteeship system. It sets standards of behavior for the nations which administer trust areas and checks performance against those standards by the examination of annual reports from the administering governments, petitions concerning the territories, and reports of its own visiting missions. The United Nations also examines information on the economic, social, and educational progress of 185 million people who live in dependent territories other than the trust areas. This information is transmitted annually by U. N. members who have responsibility for such dependent territories.

International cooperation is at its brightest in the labors of the specialized agencies. These independent agencies may have anywhere from 18 to 91 states and territories as members. Almost 8,000 persons have been employed by the 10 agencies at one time during 1950. Driven by the need to find a cooperative solution to problems none can handle alone, many nations are now learning, in their joint attacks on hunger, poverty, and disease, how to solve in harmony other problems which used to lead to war.

In the field of health, the U. N. and its specialized agencies are cooperating in world-wide attacks on malaria, tuberculosis, and venereal and other diseases. They are introducing modern medical and sanitation practices around the world, fighting the narcotic addiction, and teaching basic hygiene.

The U. N. drive on hunger is spurring the production of food through the teaching of modern agricultural practices, concerted attacks on animal diseases, and other measures. It also works toward a better distribution of available world food supplies.

Against poverty, illiteracy, and depression, the U. N. is acting as world economic adviser, banker, technician, teacher, and sometimes policeman. It probes into almost every field of economic action—mail, shipping, communications, aviation, customs and trade practices, and international technical assistance.

This vital work is moving on an increasingly impressive scale. It is without doubt the most encouraging aspect of U. N. cooperation today.

SPOTLIGHT ON DISAGREEMENT

The hum of the U. N. processes of peace is often drowned out by more spectacular happenings, a few of which have occupied the headlines in recent months. These emergency cases must be seen in proper perspective.

The success of Communist forces in China created a major problem for the U. N. The representatives of the Chinese Nationalist Government still sit in all U. N. councils, including one of the vital permanent Security Council seats. Whether the Nationalists should be replaced by the Communists—and if so, how—has been in the air since late 1949. The United States has said that it will vote against unseating the Nationalists and against seating the Communists but that it will respect the will of the majority in this question. The Soviet Union, declaring that it considered invalid all action taken by U. N. bodies on which the Nationalists sat, walked out of the Security Council on January 13, 1950, and until August 1 refused to take part in meetings of any U. N. organs where the Nationalists were seated.

One effect of the boycott was to stir up misgivings about the U. N. and in some quarters to raise questions such as: Should a new U. N. be formed without the Communist countries? Or: Should the U. N. be abandoned for something more like a world government?

TO CHANGE THE U. N.?

The U. N. is a true world organization. It includes most of the nations of the world. It is the only place where the Soviet bloc has regularly sat at the table with the democratic world in open discussion. To form a U. N. without the nations in the Soviet grip would cut off this last point of meeting. It would split off about one-third of the world's people and deepen their isolation from democratic influences. It would transform the U. N. into something less than a world organization. Certainly, such action would not solve the basic problem of the cold war.

Again, some people believe that some form of world government is the only answer to the problem of peace. Without regard to the merits of this idea, it clearly would not be a good thing if the U. N. should be weakened by losing the support of people who would oppose a stronger authority. For when and if the world's people set out in earnest to form a world government, they will find in the

U. N. a logical starting point. The U. N. has a structure which has already been tried and proved. It has a working constitution and a tested civil service. It is ready to take on new responsibility at any time.

Actually, the creation of a world government, in any shape or form, depends not primarily upon the structure of an international organization but upon the willingness of key countries to surrender certain sovereign rights. Until a more cooperative attitude appears on the part of certain nations, the U. N. must continue to exert all the pressure it can on immediate conflicts, continue to tackle the long-run problems of peace, and continue to hold itself ready to take advantage of any more cooperative attitudes. It must continue to use its admittedly underdeveloped powers, as far as it is possible to use them, day by day. In the kind of world we are living in, no substitute organization of sovereign states could do more than the U. N. is doing today.

Here in summary is how the U. N. programs stand: *First*, there has been a slow growth of collective security through the U. N. machinery and through other safeguards against aggression within the Charter framework, such as the Rio and North Atlantic Pacts. *Second*, the U. N. has moved steadily ahead in expanding and codifying world law and in creating significant new law in the area of human rights and freedoms. *Third*, there has been a forward surge of international cooperation toward the advancement of human well-being, with more nations doing more in all fields and doing so on an expanding scale.

Through these actions the U. N. has become essential to the smooth functioning of the society of nations. It could not be disbanded without severely disrupting the world's business nor without tragic consequences for world peace. Any proposal to make sudden radical changes in the U. N. structure or membership ought, moreover, to be very carefully weighed against the danger of striking a death blow at effective world organization.

The role of the U. N. as an instrument against war, as a key to real peace, and as a practical aid to international action makes this organization essential to the world society. The world desperately needs the center of balance which only the U. N. idea can give. That is why the United States gives unfaltering support to the United Nations and to the search for ways to strengthen the authority and effectiveness of that system.

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