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1950

COLLECTIVE SECURITY THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS

Five years ago representatives of fifty nations met in San Francisco again to attempt the establishment of an organization whose principal objective would be the maintenance of international peace and security. Twice within the lifetimes of most of the delegates aggressive and predatory powers had brought on world wars with all their untold sorrows for the peoples there represented. A high determination and hope animated the Conference. Now at last it was felt, a method and a machinery would be devised through whose intermediary succeeding generations would be saved from the recurring scourge of aggression.

The determination of the conferees was strengthened by the realization that the discoveries of modern science had made wars so destructive that another world conflict would threaten the continued existence of all civilization. At the same time nations had become bound together to such an extent that more and more a breach of the peace anywhere meant a threat to the peace everywhere. A system of collective security for the firm establishment of peace was necessary as never before. The pages of history seemed to have been turned to a chapter whose title might well be either "The Establishment

of World Order" or "The Descent into Barbarism."

To be sure, the San Francisco Conference was not the first large-scale endeavor by an international body to coordinate constructive forces in support of security and human welfare. After the First World War the League of Nations had been formed and people everywhere had looked to the League as the instrument through which it might be possible to develop international solidarity. The League, however, faltered under its difficulties. When it was put to the test of having to cope with aggressive acts, its peace-loving members shrank from assuming the burdens and responsibilities with which they were faced. The League system could not survive failure in its main purpose.

The varied experience of the League, nevertheless, was passed on to the new United Nations. The heritage included, on the one hand, a warning of the dangerous roads on which the League met disaster and, on the other, a guidepost to the highway where progress towards permanent peace was possible. The dangerous roads were those which led to the failure of the League to halt aggression. The warning provided by this experience has been wisely heeded by the United Nations and in the case of Korea it has taken the highway toward collective action to suppress overt aggression at its inception.

Perhaps it would be profitable at this point to ask ourselves a few questions about the United Nations in its role as a collective security organization. Just what kind of record does it have in the maintenance of international peace? Before the war in

Korea had the United Nations ever acted to good purpose in fulfilling this primary function? Why did the invasion of South Korea make it imperative that the United Nations intervene by force to restore international security? How can the United Nations be strengthened so that it can act with swiftness and united power to suppress aggression?

In answering these questions let us begin by reviewing a few of the disputes involving the maintenance of peace with which the United Nations has dealt in the past. In this way we will be better able to evaluate what is happening at the present and what developments should be anticipated in the future.

One of the first questions to be put before the United Nations Security Council was a complaint by the small country of Iran. It was a serious complaint. Iran was accusing its big and powerful neighbor, the Soviet Union, of maintaining its troops in Iranian territory against the will of the Iranian government. Now the Charter of the United Nations, which had been solemnly ratified by the Soviet Union, stated in plain terms: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". It was obvious that Iran alone could never have hoped to expel its mighty neighbor. Alone it would probably not even have tried to do so. But in the United Nations Security Council the Soviet Union faced, not just one small country, weak and helpless, but the organized nations of the world. As the dispute was discussed in the Council it developed that even the Soviet Union,

with all of its army divisions next door to little Iran, was not prepared to run the risks of defying the international community. In the course of time Soviet troops were withdrawn from Iran.

A question of a different sort was presented by the case of Palestine: "What to do about Palestine" had been a harassing problem for more than thirty years. The United Kingdom, as the mandatory power over Palestine, had at last announced its intention of giving up the Mandate and had brought the question of its future status to the United Nations for settlement. The decisions involved were extremely difficult. There was the possibility of the initiation of prolonged hostilities between Arabs and Jews with the ever-present danger of spreading conflagration throughout the Middle East. What could the United Nations do? After careful and extensive consideration the General Assembly adopted a resolution for the partition of Palestine. When the British Mandate came to an end in May of 1948 the Jews proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel in accordance with that recommendation. There was, to be sure, a period of fighting between Jews and Arabs but the authority and influence of the United Nations, exerted through its Mediator for Palestine, was successful in keeping the fighting within bounds and eventually in bringing about an Armistice. The United Nations is continuing its efforts to lay the foundations for a permanent peace between the contestants in that area. Few would deny the effectiveness of the organization in this instance, an effectiveness

beyond anything which reasonably could have been expected, in mitigating this dangerous threat of general conflict in the Middle East.

There is another story of the activities of the United Nations which perhaps illustrates better than any other its value in peaceful settlement. The story began in Indonesia in 1947 when a major civil war was developing between the Netherlands and the indigenous population of 70,000,000. This threat to the peace was brought before the United Nations Security Council by Indonesia's uneasy neighbors, Australia and India, and the Council immediately began to exercise its conciliatory and mediatory functions to bring about a solution. For over two years the efforts of the Council continued. At times it seemed as if all negotiations were unavailing but the Council persisted. Finally it had the satisfaction of seeing the emergence of a new nation, the United States of Indonesia, joined in friendly association to its erstwhile enemy, the Netherlands. A sanguinary civil war, with all of its somber implications for international relationships in the Far East, had been happily averted.

These illustrations underline the value of the international precepts that have been agreed upon by the overwhelming majority of the world's people in the United Nations. They are precepts which, if made to prevail, would enable any nation to exist in safety and without fear.

The United Nations Charter states that in order to maintain international peace and security the members of the United Nations are pledged to "bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement

of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace." That substantially is what has been accomplished in Iran and Palestine and Indonesia. If these means are not sufficient then the members of the United Nations are to "take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace."

The members have solemnly agreed to certain principles by which they will be guided in implementing their main purpose. They will "settle their disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security are not endangered." They will "refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force" and they will "ensure that states not members of the Organization act in accordance with these principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security."

Now going back to the question raised a few minutes ago: Why is the aggression in Korea a clear-cut and fundamental challenge to the system of international security which the United Nations has sought to establish? The answer lies in the history of that unhappy land during the past few years.

One of the objectives evolved by the United States during the course of the Second World War was that Korea should become a free and independent nation. Korean resentment had long smoldered under the dominion of the Japanese militarists. Our traditional espousal of the

principle of self-determination of peoples made it natural and indeed inevitable that we should seek to free this country which for so many years had been ruled by an alien hand. Together with the Chinese and British, we proclaimed this objective and it was accepted by the Soviet Union.

The end of the war found the United States occupying the southern half of Korea and the Soviet Union the northern half. Negotiations were therefore initiated between the two governments looking toward the establishment of a united Korea. However, month after month passed without agreement and it became apparent that it would be impossible to reconcile Soviet and American viewpoints. The United States wished all of the Korean people to have a voice in the creating a provisional government, whereas the Soviet Union, wished to limit consultations to those who would be sure to favor an authority pliable to its own will.

As a result of the deadlock the United States took the matter to the United Nations General Assembly and when the Assembly met in the fall of 1947 it passed a resolution establishing a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea. The Commission was authorized to go to Korea and to supervise the holding of elections throughout Korea. In order to insure its impartiality neither the Soviet Union nor the United States were asked to name representatives to the Commission.

The Soviet Union did not submit to Assembly consideration of the Korean question and when the Commission was appointed refused to cooperate with it. Nevertheless the Commission proceeded to Korea and

when the Soviet Union would not permit its entry into North Korea the Commission was authorized to observe the holding of elections in South Korea only. In 1948 the Commission reported to the Assembly that the elections in the South had on the whole been fair and free and that the government established in the South represented the will of the people.

The UN Assembly decided that it would not be wise to dissolve the Korean Commission in view of the fact that its principal task, the unification of the country, had not been yet accomplished. Accordingly the Commission was continued and was instructed to persist in its attempt to fulfill that purpose. Since the Commission had not been able to observe elections in the North, the Assembly also affirmed that the South Korean government was the only legal government in Korea and recommended that all members of the United Nations recognize it as such.

The United States accordingly transferred the authority which it had exercised in South Korea to the duly elected government and withdrew its occupation forces. Although the Soviet Union affirmed that its troops had also been withdrawn from the North it did not permit the United Nations Commission to verify the withdrawal.

The South Korean government suffered from many disadvantages, as was to be expected. Long years of dictatorship had left undeveloped the abilities needed for self-rule: A backward agricultural system caused dissatisfaction and unrest. Separation from the industrialized north created dislocations in the economy.

Nevertheless, at the time of the recent attack, South Korea, after only two years, appeared to be well on the way to stability and

self-sufficiency in all essential respects. New elections, held in May of this year, had resulted in a representation which was a closer reflection of the will of the people than had hitherto been the case. Where in the past there had been twice as many tenants as owners of land, a redistribution of farm-lands had changed that ratio so that those who held their land in tenancy were outnumbered by those who owned the land they worked. Plans had been scheduled which would have made 90 percent of the farm families the owners of their farms.

It was on this little country, brought into being with the participation of the United Nations, that the Soviet-dominated North Koreans launched their well-planned surprise attack in June of this year. There could be no doubt of the nature of the attack. The United Nations Commission on Korea, the eyes and the ears, of the General Assembly, was able to report immediately that an unprovoked aggression had taken place against the South, whose forces were stationed in purely defensive positions. There could be no doubt as to what country had tacitly sponsored the attack. The North Koreans scarcely would have dared to act if they had not been supported and coached and supplied by the Soviet Union.

Immediately upon receipt of the news the United Nations Security Council met and, in the fortunate absence of the Soviet Union -- fortunate in that the Soviet Union would have prevented it from acting -- it passed a resolution calling on the North Koreans to return to the dividing line. The invaders did not obey the order. The Security Council met again and called on all members of the United Nations to assist the South Koreans in repelling the attack.

In accordance with the United Nations directives President Truman, without loss of time, issued instructions giving the South Korean forces the support of our sea and air power. Later, the decision was made to add the strength of our armed forces to the aid already given. Before taking this decision, the President called into consultation several Members of Congress directly concerned with foreign affairs. As one of the participants in these Executive-Legislative Conferences, I am happy to report that the discussions were conducted without partisanship and with high regard for the national interest.

Other nations have joined us in responding to the UN appeal to repel the aggression in Korea. Some have contributed armed forces, some, economic aid; some, medicines and hospital supplies; some, transport. The specialized agencies of the United Nations have also marshalled their facilities to subscribe to the common effort. Although we, in the United States, have had to bear the brunt of the fighting, the help of others has not been negligible. The South Koreans themselves have fought valiantly and even now are pressing the attack to the aggressor's strongholds.

The decisions of the UN General Assembly in 1947, 1948 and 1949 envisaged a united Korea. The resolutions passed by the Security Council authorize a pacification of all Korea. No peace based on an artificial dividing line, which in any case has never been accepted by the United Nations, could be a permanent peace. Now, in accordance with a recent directive of the General Assembly it has been decided that the United Nations forces under General MacArthur should continue to

advance until the job is finished. Beyond the day of the eventual defeat of the forces of aggression lies the immense task of cementing the unification through political and economic reconstruction. It is a task in which the Korean people will sorely need the help of the United Nations.

In our concern for the pressing developments in Korea, however, we must not lose sight of an even larger issue that is involved. Those who remember the lessons of the old League realize that the failure of the United Nations to act in Korea would have meant the eventual destruction of that organization. With it would have gone collective security and the constructive, progressive international order envisaged in the Charter. On the other hand, the momentous decisions taken in June and July open the way to the development of procedures which may lead to a suppression of aggression anywhere. The free peoples of the world have demonstrated unmistakably that they are determined to have the kind of world that was dimly seen in the hopeful days of 1945, at San Francisco.

This brings us to the last question - how can we strengthen the United Nations so that it will always be able to act, so that it will have the facts on which to base action, so that it will have the police to enforce its judgement when necessary?

The United States has made several proposals in this direction to the United Nations General Assembly now in session. They are far-reaching proposals which, if accepted by the Assembly,

will strengthen considerably the system of collective security.

We have proposed that if the United Nations Security Council is kept from acting in a case of aggression by the obstruction of one of the Big Powers, then the General Assembly be constituted so as to be able to meet immediately to consider and to recommend what should be done. In order that the Assembly and the Security Council may always have recourse to the facts, we have proposed that "peace patrols" be established to make investigations in areas of potential aggression.

We have also proposed that the members of the United Nations earmark certain units in their armed forces for use by the United Nations when necessary, under authorization of the governments. Acceptance of this plan would lay the foundation for an organized international police force which would do much to prevent future aggression from occurring or, if and when it occurred, toward its effective suppression.

I would like to leave with you this closing thought. On this, the fifth anniversary of its founding, there is reason to hope that the United Nations will fulfill the faith which the peoples of the world have placed in it. This hope is based not on the blind optimism that infected so many of us in the war weary days of 1945. Rather, it springs from the fact that the free world has demonstrated a growing willingness during the past five years and especially in Korea to face and to respond

to the responsibilities of collective peace. If we are unremitting in our efforts, this generation may yet be able to title its chapter in history, not the "Descent into Barbarism" but "The Establishment of World Order."

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