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ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD AT DINNER IN HIS HONOR  
GIVEN BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS IN COOPERATION  
WITH THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS AFFAIRS,  
AT THE WALDORF-ASTORIA, NEW YORK, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1953

Recently a distinguished New York newspaper found me to be an "unashamed intellectual." It is not because of any desire to live up to this standard that I propose to talk with you tonight of certain basic ideas and principles rather than of the specific issues and grave difficulties with which the General Assembly and the Members of the United Nations will be wrestling in the weeks ahead.

No, it is for other reasons. First of all, I am sure you would agree that it would be out of place for the Secretary-General to make a public statement of his views of these questions at this time because of the very special place and unique responsibilities he has under the United Nations Charter. Later on I shall tell you something more of how I understand my job and my responsibilities on the positive side.

But there is a more important reason for going behind, for a few moments, the pressing problems of day-to-day United Nations debates and day-to-day headlines.

All of us in this room tonight are here because of our concern for the things that the United Nations stands for and for the proper place of the United Nations in our world in relation to these problems. I am sure this concern is shared by the many families who are not physically present but have just now joined in our program from their homes by means of radio and television. You, who are present as members and friends of the American Association for the United Nations, and of the New York University Institute for Review of United Nations Affairs, are here because you believe in the United Nations, you want it to succeed, and each of you, within the circle of your influence, is working for it to succeed. In this, the hopes and prayers of millions more are with you.

Thus, you and I are in the same boat together. It is true that while you are volunteers, I may be considered a draftee who had not much of a choice when the draft call came for the job I hold. But my commitment to what the United  
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Nations stands for is and always has been freely given. My recent experiences have strengthened my conviction that the job I hold in the United Nations is one that rightly commands the utmost that can be given to it.

So we are truly together, in the same boat. We are together in our concern and in our hopes, together also in our determination to use to the best of our ability the means at our disposal, with perseverance and firm trust in the future.

Baghavat Gita echoes somewhere an experience of all ages and all philosophies in these words: "Work with anxiety about results is far inferior to work without such anxiety, in calm self-surrender." These are words of worldly wisdom which we can all share. But they also express a deep faith. We will be happy if we can make that faith ours in all our efforts.

On the seas we sail we have to face all the storms and stresses created by the ideological, economic and social conditions of our world. Aboard this ~~new~~ Santa Maria we have to meet the impatience of those sailors who expect land on the horizon tomorrow, also the cynicism or sense of futility of those who would give up and leave us drifting impotently. On the shores we have all those who are against the whole expedition, who seem to take a special delight in blaming the storms on the ship instead of the weather. Well, let us admit that this comparison with the crew of Columbus soon after he set sail on the Santa Maria has some truth also in its negative implications. We have still to prove our case.

I think you will agree that it will help us to have frequent recourse to our compass and the Guide to Navigation for our civilization that historical experience and the new knowledge and techniques of science and technology have placed in our hands.

In the classical Chinese collection of poetic philosophy, ascribed to Tao-Tse-Tung, it is said somewhere that whoever wants to grip the world and shape it will fail, because the world is a spiritual thing that cannot be shaped. On first reaction, this might seem to be the antithesis of the spirit that animated Columbus. But this is not so. The history of mankind is made by man, but men partly make it blindly. No one can foresee with certainty what will emerge from the give and take of the forces at work in any age. For that reason history often seems to run its course beyond the reach of any man or nation. We cannot mould the world as masters of a material thing. Columbus did not reach the East Indies. But we can influence the development of the world from within as a spiritual thing. In this sense Columbus would have been a pioneer for a new age even if he himself had never reached America.  
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As individuals and as groups we can put our influence to the best of our understanding and ability on the side of what we believe is right and true. We can help in the movement toward those ends that inspire our lives and are shared by all men of good will -- in terms very close to those of the Charter of the United Nations -- peace and freedom for all, in a world of equal rights for all.

In the annual report to the General Assembly I expressed my conviction that our time is basically characterized by two movements in civilization -- one toward greater social justice within nations, and the other toward greater political and economic equality and justice between nations. I am sure that there are many who would dissent from this proposition. They would say that the basic movements of our time are towards a free society on the one hand and towards totalitarianism on the other.

To them I can only say that I think this is confusing what are the forces at work in the world with specific manifestations of those forces, when utilized by or clashing with ideologies and unguided group reactions. I believe the dictatorships of the few -- and the dictatorships of the masses -- the devastating wars and the great revolutions that have characterized our generation are to be understood in the light of the basic movements toward social justice and equality within and between nations. When those forces are controlled and guided by constructive and far-seeing policies they yield other effects.

I am thinking of those nations that have managed without violent revolution and without passing dictatorship to create in this century a life for their own peoples not too far from the ideals of freedom and equality for all. I am thinking of the great new independent nations that have been born in the past few years, again without blood-shed, who are now cooperating in fruitful friendship with the nations which formerly had conquered and controlled them.

Thus, it seems to me, the basic movements of our time should not be confused with their various manifestations -- war, revolution, dictatorship, peaceful democratic evolution and the peaceful achievement of independence.

The United Nations owes its origin to those who, 50 years ago, surmised at least the basic trends of the 20th Century at its inception and sought in the international field to channel them within a peaceful framework of law and orderly development. The First World War interrupted those first efforts. But after that war the struggle to create patterns for peaceful international progress was renewed and the League of Nations was created. Once more we suffered a catastrophic setback, but the experiment has been repeated for a third time in the United Nations, an international instrument with more potential influence and a wider field of activity than any before envisaged.

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I think that all those who will take the trouble to re-read the Charter and examine the work of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies would agree that the United Nations is "in tune" with the basic movements of our time in their positive and constructive manifestations. All its pledges and all its work are in the direction of peaceful progress toward greater social justice within nations and greater political and economic equality and justice between nations.

But I must hasten to add, for the benefit of a certain school of thought probably not represented here tonight, that the United Nations has no power to encroach upon the national sovereignty of any state against the will of its government and people. It would indeed not only be against the letter and the spirit of the Charter for the United Nations to attempt to impose its will in domestic matters. It would also be against the elementary wisdom expressed in Tao-Tse-Tung's law of life. You cannot grip the world and shape it as a material thing. You can only influence its development if you recognize and respect it as a thing of the spirit.

Just as the United Nations cannot impose its will in domestic matters, so its existence does not add to the economic burden of its Members, beyond its modest administrative budget, which costs citizens of your country less than a dime a year and others a comparable amount. Nor does it create restrictions on the freedom of action of its Member nations beyond the commitments of the Charter -- commitments that I believe every civilized community in the world would wish to uphold in any case.

Beyond this, economic burdens and restrictions on freedom of action of any nation are imposed not by the United Nations, but by the facts of international life and the national interests of the countries concerned. Programs of economic and military aid, and the conferences and negotiations through which agreements are sought, are undertaken by governments because they are deemed to be necessary to the national interest and position of the countries concerned and not because of restrictions imposed from outside by Charters and treaties.

This again is a case of blaming the ship instead of the weather for the difficulties of steering a safe course in rough seas.

In fact, organized international cooperation as represented by the United Nations and other agencies tends to reduce, rather than increase, the burden upon any single nation in its efforts to prevent war and encourage an orderly evolution toward a more peaceful, just and prosperous world. What would otherwise be a burden on the shoulders of one, is shared by many and the equitability of the

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sharing is something that can be worked out. But if there is no international organization, no United Nations, then equitability and sharing itself become academic questions. There is a price to be paid for organized international cooperation. But it is a far lesser price than the one that would be exacted from any nation that attempted in this day and generation to "go it alone."

Now I come to an even more central question in this examination of our compass and our Guide to Navigation. As you all know, the United Nations Charter is based on what I may call a working hypothesis. This is that all the great nations and groups of nations must belong to it if it is to succeed. The Charter does not quite say that membership should be universal, but that is its spirit.

We know that this hypothesis is being challenged, and challenged not only by those who do not yet fully understand and accept the essential inter-dependency of our world today, but also by truly internationally-minded people animated by the most serious desire to build a better world. Yet it seems to me that the idea of the United Nations as a club to which only the like-minded will be admitted in which membership is a privilege and expulsion is the retribution for wrong doing, is totally unrealistic and self-defeating.

Look anywhere in the world today. Is there any solution in sight except peacefully negotiated agreements? Granted that at a given moment the prospects for such agreements seem dim indeed. What is the alternative? Only the attempt to establish "one world" by force of arms. And that is no alternative. Such an attempt would lead to a catastrophe just as fatal to the presumed victor as to the vanquished. Beyond that, history and social conditions have given us a world so heterogeneous that the conditions simply do not exist for a one world established by force. I believe this should be recognized as true no matter on what ideology you base your judgment and for whatever way of life you plead.

So we return to our working hypothesis of somehow living together. And we find that the governments of the Great Power members of the United Nations seem to believe in it enough to continue actively working inside the United Nations. We find that in the present division of the world the power of veto often prevents decisions by the Security Council. But we also know that the United Nations as a whole need not be paralyzed. First of all, the application of the veto does not exist in the Assembly and the other Organs.

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But there is a more important and basic consideration that should be more widely understood. Peaceful settlements of the great issues between nations are not prevented by a veto written into the Charter, but by the hard fact that such settlements require agreement and acceptance by the parties to it. This would be true even if there were no provision for a veto in the Security Council. Thus, it is not primarily a question of this or that voting procedure, but of working to create conditions of international life more favorable than those that exist today for the acceptance by the parties concerned of just and wise solutions to these great issues.

Is there anyone who would tell us that any course of action tending to make the United Nations less universal than it is would improve the prospects for finding such solutions by peaceful means? In fact, so far, we find no nation willing to risk what is likely to be the end of a course, once entered, that would make the United Nations no longer a meeting place for all the world. I believe that the currents of history and the judgment of the governments alike are on our side.

When I think of the work before us -- you as friends and believers in the United Nations, and I as Secretary-General -- I am reminded of a famous idea of Dostoevsky in the "Brothers Karamazov", where he has one of his heroes say that the future may be one of a struggle between the state trying to make itself church and the church trying to make itself state.

Applied in international life today, we might say that the United Nations represents ideals at least professed by all nations, but that it is not a super-state trying to impose on people any "right" way of life or any way of life different from one freely chosen by the people. On the contrary, it seeks as the repository and voice of a common heritage of ideals to penetrate the life of states in their international relations and to influence their conduct toward a wider realization of those ideals.

I think that such a view of the United Nations as I have outlined will help all of us who are working for its success, whether as citizens or officials, in judging wisely each issue as it comes along and in meeting the various currents of criticism and opposition. No state, no group of states, no world organization, can grip the world and shape it, neither by force, nor by any formula of words in a Charter or a Treaty. There are no absolute answers to the agonies and searchings of our time. But all men and women of good will can influence the course of history in the direction of the ideals expressed in the Charter.

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What does such an approach mean in practical terms for you on the one hand and for the Secretary-General and the Secretariat on the other? You will permit me to take my own role first, not because it is more important but because it may have some bearing upon yours.

I do not conceive the role of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat as representing what has been called a "third line" in the international debate. Nor is it for him to try and initiate "compromises" that might encroach upon areas that should be exclusively within the sphere of responsibility of the respective national governments.

On the other side I see the duty of the Secretariat to form, in the first instance, a most complete and objective picture of the aims, motives and difficulties of the Member Nations. Acting in that knowledge, it is our duty to seek to anticipate situations that might lead to new conflicts or points of tension and to make appropriate suggestions to the governments before matters reach a stage of public controversy.

Beyond this, the Secretary-General should express with full frankness to the governments concerned and their representatives the conclusions at which he arrives on issues before the Organization. These conclusions must be completely detached from any national interest or policy and based solely on the principles and ideals to which the Governments have adhered as Members of the United Nations. In other words, the relationship of the Secretary-General to the governments should be one of a trusted consultant on those considerations following from adherence to the Charter and membership in the United Nations that should be taken into account by the Governments in coming to their own policy decisions.

Clearly such a relationship of mutual confidence and trust would be impossible in an atmosphere of publicity. This does not mean that the Secretary-General should not also be a public spokesman for the Organization. Indeed, to explain, interpret and defend the United Nations to the peoples of the world is one of the important duties of his office. But he should never do this in such a way as to contravene his obligations as representative of all Member Nations and to the principles of the Organization. He should not permit himself to become a cause of conflict unless the obligations of his office under the Charter and as an international civil servant leave him no alternative.

Thus you see that I conceive the Secretariat and the Secretary-General in their relations with the Governments as representatives of a secular "church" of ideals and principles in international affairs of which the United Nations is the expression.

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In a different way those who belong to organized citizens' groups supporting the United Nations in all countries, represent this secular "church" to their respective national states. It is your role to influence opinion within the circle to which your reach extends toward the course you believe to be right for your country. Whether your circle be small or large, it counts, for it is the sum total of all of them that influences the policies of Governments.

Your role is different from mine in this respect. Whereas the international civil servant speaks for the ideals and commitments of the Charter as they may affect the formulation of national policies, you speak for the national interest of your countries in their policies toward and in the United Nations. This is important. You are rightly partisans for the best interests of your country as you see them. When you speak and act for national policies that will strengthen the influence of the United Nations you are doing so because you believe that this is best for your country as well as for humanity.

Your role is of the highest significance. No matter what their private judgment, those in positions of authority cannot go against prevailing public opinion or lead in a direction the public is not prepared to follow. Your influence in what you believe to be the right direction, exercised in the manifold ways that are available to you, is essential to the exercise of statesmanship.

I know there are many occasions when the pressures and the events that lead in the contrary direction seem overwhelming. But just as we cannot shape our world at will like a handful of clay, neither do such pressures and events inexorably lead on to a pre-ordained doom. They are subject to influence and change.

Time is also a great healer and "playing for time" is an important element in the tactics we must follow in these days of crisis, anxiety and frustration. We all have a tendency to regard the situation as it exists at any single moment as a lasting one, forgetting that we ourselves and the societies which we form are all subject to the law of change. Those people and nations which are to live together in the future, if we succeed in overcoming the immediate risks of war, will not be of the same generation as those who do not see any possibility of living together as they are now and as conditions are today.

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Conflicts, not only in human life, but also in the life of nations, are often never resolved, but simply outgrown. Often in history situations have arisen where people were saying, as it is sometimes being said now, that they could neither live together nor fight each other down, and in spite of that, the world has moved on and the situation of despair has become past history.

It is always delicate for a foreigner to speak about a country where he is but a visitor. And it is difficult for him to assess the significance of the spiritual and political history of his host country. I feel, however, you will understand, if, in conclusion, I refer to an American experience to which all the world owes much. The founding fathers of this great nation took upon themselves the responsibility for the creation of a new and independent state on American soil. They did so in a firm trust in the future and with a firm belief in the basic decency of man. In that spirit they managed to weld together in one nation people from many nations of the world. E pluribus unum is rightly inscribed on the shield of the United States.

That could also be the motto of the United Nations in its defiance of seemingly insuperable difficulties, in its belief in freedom and in its hope for world unity. Read in the right spirit, the Charter of the United Nations expresses an approach to the political problems of man which would have been well understood by men like Jefferson and Lincoln.

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