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SPEECH BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD TO THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION AT A DINNER GIVEN IN HIS HONOR AT THE WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL, NEW YORK

Wednesday, October 21, 1953, 7:30 P.M.

One of the many contradictions of life is the frequency with which we refer to ourselves as living in a period of change and rapid development, while, on the other hand, we are so often reluctant to acknowledge the need for adjustment in our ways to the changes which actually take place.

I am to talk tonight about "New Diplomatic Techniques in a New World." Is there a new world? Is there any need for adjustment of diplomatic techniques to that world?

Diplomacy as a professional activity is certainly one of the most ancient and conservative. There has always been a need for negotiation between nations and the technique and psychology of such negotiations have, at least until recently, undergone no great changes through all the centuries. I guess that the emissaries of Egypt or Greece or Rome had to approach their problem in very much the same way as the emissaries of Napoleon's France, Bismarck's Germany and Queen Victoria's Great Britain.

However, I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that the world with which modern diplomacy has to deal, differs from the world of the 19th Century in those respects which interest us here more than the world of the 19th Century differed from its predecessors.

May I give you a little example which seems to me to throw considerable light on what has happened to us in this field. In 1783, Benjamin Franklin signed on behalf of the United States of America a treaty of friendship and commerce with the King of Sweden. The first part of the 22nd Article of that treaty reads in translation as follows:

"In order to favor even further trade between the two sides, it is agreed that in case of war between the two nations, which we pray to God to avert, a period of nine months after the declaration of war shall be

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given to all tradesmen and all citizens on both sides so as to give them time to withdraw with everything they own, or to sell the same property wherever they like to do so, it being forbidden in any way to hamper such activities and, even more so, to detain the said persons during this period of nine months. On the contrary, they shall be given passports for the time which they consider necessary for their return home. But in case within the said period anything is taken from them or they are subjected to any harm by one of the two sides, their people or citizens, full and satisfactory compensation shall be paid to them."

War in the period of the enlightenment was, indeed, very different from what it has since become. At the time to which my quotation belongs one could still speak of war as merely the ultimate resource and extension of diplomacy. Although there were wars even then that occasionally got out of hand and became great wars, war generally was a limited military action, fought for limited objectives without weapons of mass destructive power by small professional armies when other means of diplomatic action had failed to arrive at a settlement. Under such conditions, normal civilian life was only moderately disturbed.

For many reasons arising from the development of the modern state, whether it be a democracy of the masses or a dictatorship of the masses, and of our industrial civilization, general war in the Twentieth Century means total war, fought not only by mass armies but the entire civilian population.

From the first world war, through the second, and into the age of the hydrogen bomb, the technique of war has been revolutionized in a way which now brings with it destruction of vast areas, death to millions upon millions of the civilized population, and economic and financial ruin with effects lasting over long periods after the fighting stops. All this does not mean that our ancestors in Benjamin Franklin's time were necessarily more civilized than we, but that the technique of war today presents a new problem to civilized man. To the diplomat of the middle of the Twentieth Century, war is something that must be averted at almost any cost.

But technological development has altered the basis for diplomatic action also in another respect which should be just as obvious to everybody but seems sometimes to be forgotten. Just as the diplomat of today must rule out war as an instrument of policy, so he must recognize that in the new state of inter-dependence between nations war anywhere becomes the concern of all. The intricate web of relationships which now exist have as part of their basis the new means of communication which have overnight made our world so much smaller than it was in previous generations. We are all very conscious of the fact that it is now but a question of hours for military forces to reach distant parts of the globe and that the old considerations of strategy based on geographic separation no longer count for much.

News also reaches us from all corners of the globe almost as quickly as if we had been eye-witnesses. We are parties to an action practically at the very moment it is undertaken. The nerve signals from a wound are felt at once all through the body of mankind.

But in this rough mapping out of the diplomat's world of today we must go further and deeper. His relationship to his own people has also changed. This has come as a fruit of broader education, of a development of the democratic system and of the revolutionary growth of the mass media of communication. The diplomat may still confer behind closed doors, but he will be met by reporters and photographers when he comes out. His words will reach everybody by press and film and radio and television. His personality will be known to vast numbers for whom in other times he would have been only a name, or less than a name.

These last considerations lead me on to the final, least tangible, but perhaps most important new factor in diplomacy: mass public opinion as a living force in international affairs. Of course, this public opinion has as its background the new mass media of communication, but as a psychological phenomenon and a political factor it is not sufficiently explained by this background. It is the expression of a democratic mass civilization that is still in its infancy, giving to the man in the street and to group reactions a new significance in foreign policy.

Is it possible to envisage the making of foreign policy and the tasks and techniques of diplomacy in the same way for a situation such as the one just described as for previous stages in history? The reply must be, No. The diplomat who works bilaterally on a national basis without the widest perspective, without recognition--and a proper handling--of the publicity aspect of his work, or without giving to public opinion its proper place in the picture, has little place in our world of today.

A first and major change in diplomatic techniques that is called for by developments, is the introduction of what might be described as the multilateral element. I do not mean to suggest that bilateral diplomatic contacts and negotiations have lost their old importance, only that they prove insufficient. In a world of interdependence means must be devised for a broadening of the approach so that the interests of a group of nations or of the community of nations are given their necessary weight.

Negotiations and conferences with several nations represented are, of course, as old as history, but what must be considered as new, in such a conference of today, is when the diplomatic representative speaks not only for his own country, but also shares responsibility for the interests of the other nations represented around the conference table. I have myself, before coming to the United Nations, seen such a development of community viewpoints at various conferences in Europe. On occasions which traditionally would have consisted simply of interlocking bilateral contacts and reactions, this development has added something essential to the picture, meeting a need of today and making the results transcend what would have come out of the conference, had everybody approached it in the traditional way.

A further element in the development of the multilateral approach may be found in the international Secretariat. The concept of an international civil service directly responsible to the whole community of nations was first developed in the League of Nations. It has been carried further in the United Nations, where the Secretariat has wider responsibility, negotiating rights, and powers of initiative, than in the League or in any previous international organization.

The much-debated independence of the international civil service being created in the United Nations Secretariat and in the secretariats of the specialized agencies and various regional organizations, has a vital significance here. If this independence should be jeopardized and national influences come to dominate the Secretariats, this evolutionary development of the multilateral approach would receive a serious set-back and international organization would be gravely weakened in its capacity to meet the demands of interdependence upon the policies of all governments. I feel that the best defence for the independence of the administrations of the international organizations lies in a fuller understanding of the very special and new needs for such administrations in the kind of a world we live in today.

When I speak here, in the first instance, of the secretariats as representative of the multilateral element in international negotiations, I have done so because they demonstrate in the most obvious way what is new in the picture. However, it goes without saying that their status and their duties only reflect the tasks of international organization as such. Everybody working inside or with the United Nations also carries the responsibility for making it a multilateral diplomatic instrument transcending nationalism and bilateralism, in the approach to political problems

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This is well illustrated by the way in which the Security Council is entitled to go into questions concerning every single part of the world where a threat to peace and security is considered imminent or developing. Similarly, the General Assembly may discuss any question within the scope of the Charter and both the Council and Assembly appoint representatives of states far removed from an area of conflict to commissions charged with seeking peaceful settlements. Undoubtedly, there are some who still dislike the idea of a group of political representatives from countries far from the storm center passing judgment on the actors in the drama and making recommendations for a solution of conflicts. But is that not a true expression of a very real interdependence, where aggression in Korea may forebode dangers to a country at the other end of the globe?

A characteristic of the new diplomacy, developing on the multilateral basis or with multilateral aims, is that it has to operate in daylight to an extent unknown in the diplomacy of a traditional type. The importance of publicity for good and for bad in international diplomacy may be studied with the greatest profit in the international organizations. It has been said that one should never forget that the United Nations operates in a glass house. I would add that in our world of today it could not operate properly under any other conditions; in fact, in my view, it should operate in a glass house in order to serve its purposes. Multilateral diplomacy is by its very nature such that the old secrecy has lost its place and justification.

But there should be no mistakes. Publicity is right and necessary in multilateral diplomacy. However, it also represents a danger. Open diplomacy may, as a prominent delegate to the United Nations recently pointed out, easily become frozen diplomacy. This comes about when open diplomacy is turned into diplomacy by public statements made merely to satisfy segments of domestic public opinion or to gain some propaganda advantage elsewhere.

Considerations of national prestige also enter into the picture. Legislators and members of parliaments in our democracies have long been used to the give and take of debate on state and national issues, to the compromises that are fashioned every day in the legislative process, to accepting defeat as well as victory in voting as part of the normal course of politics. Neither the diplomats who practice multilateral diplomacy on the public stage nor the Governments they represent are yet fully acclimated to this new aspect of international relations. Nor, it must be said, is public opinion itself. Too often, any modification of national positions once taken publicly, or acceptance of sensible compromise, is shunned out of fear that it will be labelled appeasement or defeat.

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At this point the diplomat of today has to face public opinion in its contemporary significance for international affairs. It may seem to him that this opinion being more or less the master of his masters, is the most important single factor in his planning of the implementation of international policy. And, of course, it is a factor of singular importance. No diplomat can depart too far from what is accepted or acceptable to public opinion in those quarters which give weight to his arguments. But it does not follow from this that he should simply let himself be guided by anticipated reactions of the public. A diplomacy that gives full weight to recognized or anticipated public opinion may in a decisive way also give direction to this opinion.

In the modern world of mass media and publicity no diplomat trying to respond to the demands of the situation can be only a servant. He must to some extent and in some respects also be a leader by looking beyond the immediate future and going underneath the superficial reactions, be they expressed by ever so powerful news organs catering for what are believed to be the wishes of the broad masses -- wishes which may in reality be as loosely attached to the man in the street as the suits which he decides to wear this year. It is part of the diplomat's responsibility not only to lead public opinion toward acceptance of the lasting consequences of the interdependence of our world. He must also help public opinion to become as accustomed to the necessity for give and take and for compromise in international politics as it has long been on questions of state and local concern.

I had promised to speak about diplomatic techniques. In fact, I have talked almost as much about the substance of modern diplomacy. The two things cannot be separated. The technique must be adjusted to the substance and to some extent it is the very substance of diplomacy. No diplomat is likely to play the multilateral game well unless he believes in the need for and value of a multilateral approach. No diplomat will adjust himself to the new type of publicity -- which is unavoidable in all official activities but is of special importance in multilateral diplomacy -- unless he has the courage of his own actions. No diplomat is likely to meet the demands of public opinion on him as a representative in international policy unless he understands this opinion and unless he respects it deeply enough to give it leadership when he feels that the opinion does not truly represent the deeper and finally decisive aspirations in the minds and hearts of the people.

The ultimate test of a diplomacy adequate to our world is its capacity to evoke this kind of response from the people and thus to rally public opinion behind what is wise and necessary for the peace and progress of the world.

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