

Dag Hammarskjold *speaks*

During his years as Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold has enhanced the prestige and broadened the influence of that post and contributed immeasurably to the peace and security of our chaotic world.

As the number-one international civil servant, he has had to cope with such diverse and complex problems as disarmament, atomic energy, "the cold war", economic and social development, and the care of approximately 200 million persons in non-self-governing and trust territories. In carrying out his work he has been a skilled behind-the-scenes negotiator, an able administrator, and an effective spokesman. Two of his special interests have been the formation of the United Nations Emergency Force, and the furtherance of "private diplomacy" in many tense international situations.

This slender, blond diplomat was born on July 29, 1905, in Jonkoping, Sweden. He received degrees in law and economics from the Universities of Upsala and Stockholm. At 31 he became Permanent Under Secretary of the Ministry of Finance. Later he combined with this post the chairmanship of the National Bank of Sweden. In 1949 he became Secretary-General of the Foreign Office and in 1951 he joined the Cabinet as, in effect, Deputy Foreign Minister. He served as delegate of Sweden to the U.N. Assembly sessions and to the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (O. E. E. C.).

In 1953 he was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations, bringing to that post a quick, precise mind, enormous energy, tireless devotion, and a quiet yet firm manner in dealing with people and problems. In 1958 he was unanimously reelected to a second term. Out of his rich background in world affairs he speaks:

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ON THESE REVOLUTIONARY TIMES . . .

“At this time of great ideological conflicts and violent clashes of interests, technological and economic developments have, as never before, brought us together as members of one human family, unified beyond race or creed, in a shrinking globe, in face of dangers of our own making. In such a situation many ethical problems take on a new significance and our need to give sense to our lives exceeds the inherited standards. True, our duties to our families, our neighbors, our countries, our creeds have not changed. But something has been added. This is a duty to what I shall call international service, with a claim on our lives equal to that of the duty to serve within those smaller units whose walls are now breaking down. The international service of which I speak is not the special obligation, nor the privilege, of those working in international economic corporations, in the field of diplomacy, or in international political organizations. It has become today the obligation, as well as the privilege, of all.”

“For vast multitudes this is an era when, for the first time, they have fully sensed the rights and responsibilities of free peoples and sovereign nations. It is also the era when freedom and sovereignty for the first time have been actually within their reach. Parallel with great social and economic revolutions within many countries, we witness now a world revolution from which peoples long dependent on others begin to emerge as strong, dynamic national states.”

“We are on dangerous ground if we believe that any individual, any nation, or any ideology has a monopoly on rightness, liberty, and human dignity.”

ON THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

"... the United Nations is not a new idea. It is here because of centuries of past struggle. It is the logical and natural development from lines of thought and aspiration going far back into all corners of the earth since a few men began to think about the decency and dignity of other men."

"The United Nations, despite some formal resemblances, has none of the power of a world government or parliament. It is a framework for diplomatic operations. The power of decision remains, in almost all cases, with Member Governments."

"We should recognize the United Nations for what it is—an admittedly imperfect but indispensable instrument of nations working for a peaceful revolution toward a more just and secure world order."

"I think that it is proper to say that to the man deeply concerned about peace, about world affairs, in simple human terms, the United Nations stands as a symbol of faith. It is also an instrument for action, inspired by hope, and in many corners of the world it stands as a framework for acts of charity. . . . I mean charity in the sense of mutual co-operation in a well-understood common interest."

"Although it is a new venture, with possibilities only partly explored, it has justified the hopes of those who have served it and supported it as a pioneer undertaking. It may, as such an undertaking and with a development of its institutions guided by experience, pave the way for a future structure of international life in the firmer forms and with the greater authority which, I believe, one day must come."

ON THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL . . .

"I do not believe that the Secretary-General should be asked to act, by the Member States, if no guidance for his action is to be found either in the Charter or in the decisions of the main organs of the United Nations; within the limits thus set, however, I believe it to be his duty to use his office, and, indeed, the machinery of the Organization to its utmost capacity and to the full extent permitted at each stage by practical circumstances. On the other hand, I believe that it is in keeping with the philosophy of the Charter that the Secretary-General should be expected to act also without such guidance, should this appear to him necessary in order to help in filling any vacuum that may appear in the systems which the Charter and traditional diplomacy provide for the safeguarding of peace and security."

ON PRIVATE DIPLOMACY . . .

"Long experience has shown that negotiation in public alone does not produce results."

"Full weight should also be given to the fact that the processes of adjustment and negotiation which the institutions of the United Nations make available to the Member Governments embrace much more than the public proceedings of its Councils and Assembly. In the diplomacy of world organization the quiet work of preparing the ground, of accommodation of interest and viewpoint, of conciliation and mediation, all that goes into the winning of consent to agreed solutions and common programs, this forms a basis upon which the United Nations can become an increasingly influential and effective force to aid the Governments in pursuit of the goals of the Charter."

ON BLOCS AND ALLIANCES . . .

"It is natural in a body like the General Assembly, where there are no political parties, to find groupings based on mutual interests, mutual traditions, and so on. Those groupings have a necessary function to fulfil. But I think that they become a danger . . . if they become so fixed and frozen that the vote . . . can always be safely predicted."

"Systems of alliance maintained side by side with the United Nations in recognition of the prevailing balance of forces, may serve a useful purpose during the period through which we are passing. However, most of us agree that such systems . . . are limited in their value as safeguards of the present and future security and welfare of our countries. Nations and groups of nations will never again be able to live and to arrogate judgment unto themselves in international affairs in ways which were a matter of course."

ON THE U. N. EMERGENCY FORCE . . .

"The United Nations Emergency Force is the first of its kind. It was created in a few days under emergency conditions without benefit of precedents. It is a temporary force with a limited mandate and designed to meet a special situation. But the value of such a force in situations like that in the Middle East has, I believe, been fully demonstrated, and this value should be preserved for the future."

ON WORLD GOVERNMENT . . .

"We undoubtedly need world organization, but we are far from ripe for world government."

ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD . . .

“Most serious is the continued widening of the gap between the industrially advanced countries and the underindustrialized countries in the relative rate of growth of per capita incomes since before the war. This has occurred in spite of all the effort and attention that have been directed over the past decade in national, bilateral, regional, and United Nations programs toward the economic development of those vast areas of the world where poverty continues to be the law of life for the majority of mankind.”

“Unless . . . at least a higher percentage rate of growth in the economically underdeveloped countries than in the developed countries can be achieved, it will be impossible ever to increase the share of the less developed countries in the distribution of the per capita income of the world. This should be a reasonable and attainable target So far this target has not been reached and the trend persists in the other direction. Even in percentage terms, the poor have become relatively poorer.”

ON DISARMAMENT . . .

“Strong evidence has been given of the growing mutual recognition that the immensely destructive power of the new weapons has made another world war incompatible with national survival on both sides If the nations have found it possible to join together in a constructive program to use atomic energy for man’s peaceful progress, they should also be able to find a way in time to join together in a disarmament program that will provide all with safeguards against destruction.”

ON ATOMIC ENERGY . . .

“Continued economic development in the world as a whole depends in large measure upon the possibilities of increasing the supply of energy. As rapid a development of atomic energy as possible is essential. Although atomic energy and possibly other non-conventional sources will come increasingly into use, the demands on conventional sources will go on expanding, and they may be expected to continue to supply the greater part of the world’s energy needs for some time to come.”

ON THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATORS . . .

“So much attention has been paid to the need for greater capital investment in economical development that the pressing need of most of the newly independent countries for trained administrators has tended to be overlooked.”

“It will take many of the new countries twenty to thirty years to train enough administrators. If they are to carry out their development plans, what are they to do in the meantime? . . . I have suggested the creation by the United Nations of an International Administrative Civil Service as a way of solving this problem. Under this plan the United Nations would recruit the administrators, but they would then serve as seconded members of the national administrations of the countries requesting them, in much the same way—but in reverse—as national civil servants are seconded for service for a period of years to the international civil service of the United Nations.”

ON THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS . . .

"We may well rejoice in having taken the first steps toward the establishment of an international democracy of peoples, bringing all nations . . . together on an equal basis as partners in the vast venture of creating a true world community. But we have taken only the first steps and they have often proved painful. There is a maturity of mind required of those who give up rights. There is a maturity required of those who acquire new rights. Let us hope that, to an increasing extent, the necessary spiritual qualities will be shown on all sides."

"But all of us . . . influence to some degree the spiritual trend of our time. All of us may contribute to the breakdown of the walls of distrust and toward checking fatal tendencies in the direction of stale conformity and propaganda. How can this be done better or more effectively than by simple faithfulness to the independence of the spirit and to the right of the free man to free thinking and free expression of his thoughts?"

"Anyone who today tries to disengage himself from the political aspects of life cuts himself off from developments of the deepest direct significance for his own destiny."

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