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25th

Anniversary
of the



Statement
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United States
Catholic Conference

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Twenty-five years ago, this month, while World War II was still an agonizing reality, representatives of 51 nations gathered in San Francisco. In the name of "the Peoples of the United Nations," they pledged to unite their strength within a comprehensive new juridical and political world organization "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" in accordance with principles of justice and international law.

The American Bishops declared a few months later that our country acted wisely in deciding to participate in this world organization. Concerned that the great powers were placed in a position "above the law" in matters relating to the maintenance of peace and security, they expressed the hope that a sound institution would develop from the recognition of the rights and duties of international society.

As the American Bishops meet now in 1970 in San Francisco, a city which bears the name of the patron of peace, we deem it appropriate to welcome the twenty-fifth anniversary year of the United Nations. Even more important, however, this is a fitting occasion for an examination of conscience and a renewed resolve to unite, as both the Gospel and the times demand, to banish war and to make of the earth a peaceable kingdom.

We call upon American Catholics to join with us in appreciation of the noble purposes of the United Nations and of its innovative efforts and achievements in behalf of human solidarity, human development and peace, and we urge them to increase their knowledge and understanding of these efforts and achievements. At the same time we recognize, as the United Nations itself is doing, how far it still is from meeting contemporary threats to and demands for that peace, justice and true human progress which are the theme of the anniversary year.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Common endeavors of the Member States of the United Nations, in harmonizing their national interests, have indeed deepened and broadened awareness of the reciprocal rights and obligations of states in international life. Some conflicts have been

averted, contained or halted by its efforts. The horrendous character of nuclear, chemical and biological warfare has been universally acknowledged, and treaties to limit or abolish the respective weapons have been concluded or initiated. Numerous new states, formerly under colonial rule, have been assisted in the transition to independence and the new responsibilities thereof, and they have been welcomed to United Nations membership on terms of juridical equality. The dignity and fundamental equality of all members of the human family, without regard to sex, race, color, religion or any other distinction, have been repeatedly affirmed and enhanced through formal declarations and treaties, through various educational campaigns and through positive action of a social nature. Worldwide technical cooperation and other forms of mutual assistance are feeding the hungry, healing the sick, instructing the ignorant and sheltering the homeless. A body of international law to cover existing and expanding relations in international life, which otherwise might lead to conflict, is being progressively developed. Agreements to preserve outer space, the ocean bed and an uncontaminated environment as the peaceful patrimony of all mankind have been concluded or are in the making.

POSSIBILITIES

There can be no doubt that the United Nations could move to that higher dimension of community and authority demanded by the contemporary crises of peoples, which are, in fact, world crises, if men and states would take seriously the injunction of Pope Paul to the United Nations: "We must get used to thinking of man in a new way, of men's life in common in a new way, in a new way, too, of the paths of history and the destiny of the world." In a world made one by the evolution of communications and transportation, this new way requires States to emerge from the anachronistic structures which enshrine old concepts of unlimited national sovereignty.

As Christians and as American citizens, we have a special responsibility to cherish and protect the life of

men in community and to assist the United Nations to help us do so. As Americans we must acknowledge the reality of our massive power and take the lead in sharing it through strengthening the world organization. This calls for acceleration in the delicate exchange in which the United States and other nations experience a limitation of the power to act unilaterally and an expansion of the obligation to share the responsibility of global peace and development.

This limitation of unilateral power is required notably in the area of arms control to effectively curb the power of any State to make war and the concomitant establishment of a UN peacekeeping system capable of speedy action to guarantee security and facilitate peaceful solutions. The success of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the USSR is a first and necessary step.

As to possibilities of peacekeeping, without which there will be no real or lasting arms control, the words of Charles Yost, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, are worthy of note: "We have only to glance at some of the key provisions of the Charter to see how far we have fallen short of making them living realities, how substantially we have failed to develop the institution and the sort of international society which the authors of the Charter had in mind... The United Nations is still waiting for its members to give it the authority to settle disputes and to live up to its promise of peace."

The United States should not only take the lead in the new efforts to institutionalize a standby UN peacekeeping force and to help set up fact finding, arbitration, mediation and conciliation mechanisms for settling political disputes, it should also take bold steps in the effort to substitute for the rule of force a rule of law. In the light of changed world conditions we encourage and shall promote wide public discussion of greater use by the United States of the long established but practically unemployed International Court of Justice for the settlement of disputes.

The compelling needs of mankind no less than the growing dangers to peace are a strong indictment

of the untrammelled pursuit of national self-interest. There is evidence that our great country and its generous people hold not the first but the eleventh place among the nations in percentage of our gross national product allotted to help in the development of poorer nations and peoples. We encourage careful study of the new directions outlined in the report of the President's Task Force on International Development, which call for the reversal of the downward trend of such contributions and for greater use of international rather than national channels in distributing such aid. In this way can we share effectively in the promotion of global solidarity and increase the common stake of all nations in a strengthened United Nations. Sympathetic exploration in the United Nations of an International Volunteer Service for technical assistance and development should be given every encouragement.

The patterns and practices of international trade in which we are engaged also call for a serious reassessment in light of the present needs and the future well-being of the world. Our country should provide a far more adequate response to the needs of those nations which suffer from the injustices of the present system in which we play a powerful role; the structures which support these injustices must be examined with a view to change.

All of our strivings for true human progress will be frustrated if we cannot honestly regard each of our brothers as another self, whose true vocation, like ours, is to love and to seek and embrace the good and the true, and thus attain that higher level of life which is his destiny. This regard must be expressed also in laws and institutions. Of the many Conventions drafted since 1945 by the United Nations with the object of securing reciprocal commitment by all nations to protect and promote particular human rights, the United States has ratified but one. We urge again, as we did in 1968, U.S. ratification of the Convention on Genocide and pledge ourselves to assist in the promotion of wide public dialogue, not only on those Conventions which have already been submitted to Congress, e.g., on forced labor and women's political rights, but also on

others which should be so submitted, including those on racial discrimination and discrimination in education.

In any global approach to the problems of peace and human welfare, the real and potential magnitude of the People's Republic of China cannot be ignored. We commend the present Administration for continuing the efforts to develop workable relationships with the people of mainland China and urge wide public discussion of this subject.

Informed and conscientious participation in forming national policies is the surest way to promote change looking to greater international cooperation. The exercise of this right and duty should be ensured by continuing education. We must ask ourselves whether our schools, organizations and institutions are ministering to the formation of a global mentality or whether they are reinforcing outmoded nationalistic, and even chauvinistic, attitudes of the past.

In the development of a world public opinion, we would commend study of the possibilities inherent in the common interests and actions of the many international non-governmental organizations. Their experience is a contribution to the growth of world community and is so recognized in the consultative status granted to many of them by the UN Economic and Social Council.

In conclusion, we remind all of the words of Pope Paul VI to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1965: "This organization represents the obligatory path of modern civilization and of world peace... Go forward." The path is obligatory because the world can no longer afford the luxury of completely autonomous and self-sustaining nation states. In the United Nations, therefore, we see the beginnings of a new international order to replace the jealous sovereignty of States and the fragmenting forces of nationalism — a new international order in which mutual cooperation and respect for rights and duties will lead to that human solidarity which may be said to reflect the plan of the Creator who made mankind one that they might seek and find Him.