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A SERVICEMAN LOOKS AT THE PEACE

by CORD MEYER, JR.

A GREAT many people, since the war began, have tried to define the soldier's point of view and have pretended that what they have said represents the common outlook of the men who fight. There are as many different reactions to the experience of war as there are individuals engaged in it, and the average soldier is as insubstantial a figure of the imagination as the average man.

But there is one reaction common to all who have by chance or volition found themselves one day in the front line of modern battle with the brutally simple choice of killing or being killed. I do not refer to the leaders who decide war is necessary, or to generals who conduct it from a distance, or to staff personnel and service troops, or to the vast majority of those who write about it. I speak of those who, frankly, are the only ones who know what it is and who have no illusions about it, the members of the assault battalions, the front-line fighters.

It is the men in the front line who must kill and then discover on the still-warm body letters and pictures much like those they own themselves, the disturbing proof of a mutual humanity. They live every day with death as their closest companion, and with a growing sense of the inconsequence and futility of human life as they see the best and bravest of their friends destroyed by the casual indifference of a bursting shell or the chance precision of a sniper's bullet.

A graduate of Yale, Class of 1943, CORD MEYER, JR., served as the leader of a machine-gun platoon in the 22nd Marine Regiment during our capture of Eniwetok and Guam. He was severely wounded, was decorated with the Bronze Star, and after his convalescence returned to this country. He was one of the two aides to Commander Stassen at the San Francisco Conference.

The first reaction to such an experience is universal and understandable. When one's first battle is done, when the inexhaustibly patient wounded have been cared for and those past caring have been buried, one feels no exaltation in the victory. Rather, there is no one who does not ask himself what beneath the sun could possibly be worth it. How and why has life, which once seemed so full of promise and possibility, come to this misery and degradation? Then the half-truths and shabby explanations of the war which once were adequate are so no more.

It is to men in this position that I address myself — to myself as I once was before forgetfulness and the spectacle of a prosperous and uncomprehending country blurred the memory, and to all those almost without hope who today must feel as I did. If the San Francisco Conference is to be viewed in its true perspective, its achievement must be seen through the eyes of these who alone know the true cost of the opportunity presented to the delegates.

The comparatively small percentage of our population which daily pays the real price of victory has the undeniable right to ask why and to what purpose. To that quite understandable question, it is remarkable how many spurious and evasive answers have been given and how few honest and adequate ones. The common explanation of the war has been the necessity of defense. We were treacherously attacked at Pearl Harbor, and if we had not fought, we, as a people, should have been conquered and subjugated.

The explanation is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It neither defines the underlying conditions which made the attack inevitable nor explains how those conditions are to be changed in the future. Its inadequacy is shown by

the fact that the same explanation was given the preceding generation for its sacrifices twenty-five years ago. One wonders if the same admission of a failure to use the opportunity of victory will have to be given the next generation as a reason for its decimation. Defense is not a sufficient explanation of the cause of the war and is an utterly inadequate positive purpose. It envisions a return to a past with which we cannot be satisfied, because it produced the present.

To my mind, there is only one purpose in terms of which the war is justifiable and which is at all commensurate with what is daily and irretrievably lost. In the victory of our enemies we should have had absolutely no hope for the future. By our victory we gain the opportunity to construct by intelligent and radical reform a more equitable society and a peaceful world. In the light of that purpose alone do the deaths of our friends have dignity and our own misfortunes significance. If we do not employ the opportunity with honesty and foresight, then our approaching triumph is only an illusion.

Certainly, in view of what has been sacrificed for this chance, we are under the deepest obligation to use it well. But the practical necessity is as strong as the moral one. A third world war, if it occurs, will dwarf in its catastrophic proportions both its predecessors. No country will be secure from the devastation of its cities or from the possibility of invasion from sea and air.

This lesson has been driven home, with the force of actual experience, everywhere except in the Western Hemisphere, where men have been able for the last time to profit from the ever diminishing advantage of geographical distance. Scientific progress has given us not only the power of unparalleled self-destruction but, for the first time, the technical means by which the world can be ordered as an entity. The Conference was the beginning of an attempt to make the choice between these two alternatives, and men turned toward San Francisco in the hope that the delegates there could save them from themselves.

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AT San Francisco the representatives of the fifty nations faced what seems to me the central problem of our time. How far they went toward meeting it can be judged only if the problem itself is clearly understood. It is far more complex and profound than it is believed to be by those who find a full explanation of this war in German or Japanese militarism, and who believe that peace will be assured if only we can liquidate the German General Staff or eliminate the Japanese militarists. Those who propose general disarmament are similarly misguided. Mistaking effect for cause, they attempt to cure the symptoms without first diagnosing the disease.

The death of more than sixty million men and women in two wars within a single generation is the

concrete result of basic conditions in international society that must be changed if we are not to see the experience repeated on a larger scale. Any brief attempt to define those conditions must necessarily be oversimplified, but the point can and must be made. Our present world is composed of more than fifty separate sovereign and independent nations. Each one of them jealously guards its twofold sovereignty, through which it proclaims itself free from any interference by others in its internal affairs and equally free in its external affairs to make any decisions that it wishes.

Even when these nation states are temporarily enjoying a period of armed truce, which we hopefully call peace, the condition that exists is anarchy, because each of them is a law unto itself and is subordinate to no superior law or authority. In an ordered and peaceful society such as we enjoy within the United States, the groups of people in the various towns, cities, and states of the Union have for eighty years lived without war with one another, not because they have no great conflicts of interest, but because there is a law to which they are all subordinate and within which conflicts can be peacefully resolved.

In international society there is no final authority to which the national states must refer their disputes for settlement. Any disagreement is a potential source of armed conflict, and each nation must rely, for the protection of its interests, on the amount of armed force it is able and willing to bring to bear in a given situation. We should frankly recognize this lawless condition as anarchy, where brute force is the price of survival. As long as it continues to exist, war is not only possible but inevitable.

In the past, open warfare has been avoided for limited periods of time by the theory and practice of the balance of power. These periods, though called "peaceful," were merely temporary cessations of armed conflict, characterized by mounting tension, armament races, and eventual war. There is less hope than ever that any system of alliances or any league between separate, sovereign nations can prove successful in the future. Every scientific advance, every new means of transportation and communication, makes the political map with its picture of boundaries separating absolutely independent nations a more dangerous anachronism.

In an economically interdependent world, each attempt to solve pressing economic problems in exclusively national terms is itself a cause of developing conflict. Every step on the part of one nation to assure itself the self-sufficient productive capacity, the access to raw materials, and the strategic bases essential to national security conflicts with the corresponding security measures of other nations. Who can say, in the day of the atomic bomb, where legitimate defensive precautions end and aggression begins?

The cycle of increasingly destructive wars in which we are caught is the direct and inevitable result of the attempt to prolong the political system of absolute national independence under changing conditions

that make it increasingly unworkable. This, then, was the problem set the Conference, though most of the delegates did not define it in exactly these terms, for they were themselves committed, in their thinking and by the nature of their position as representatives of existing governments, to the continuance of sovereign independence.

I for one firmly believe that if this war is not to be as abortive as the last, and if peace is to be at all possible, we must change the basic relationship of national states. Let us admit the truth that, throughout history, groups of men residing in separate communities have been able to live continuously at peace together only by subjecting themselves to a sovereign law and by creating a government that can administer, change, and enforce that law.

There is only one direction in which we can proceed if we seriously intend to transform the anarchy in which we live into the order and justice of which the Preamble to the Charter wishfully speaks. Just as within any democratic country the groups of people living in its various communities retain the right to deal with local affairs, but delegate the power to deal with those issues that affect all to the national government that is over all, so the people living within the nations of the world must delegate to a higher government the power to decide those issues that are international.

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IF I have stated fairly the dilemma with which we are faced, and have indicated the way out with any degree of accuracy, it must be immediately obvious that the United Nations Charter does not pretend to make the changes that appear to be necessary.

The limits of what was accomplished at San Francisco are evident in the veto power. The Security Council, which has the power and authority to keep the peace, can take no enforcement action without the concurring votes of the five permanent members. If a major nation is not a party to a dispute, it can prevent even the investigation of the case by the Security Council. Any amendment to the Charter requires ratification by the five major powers before it can take effect, with the result that one of the Big Five can forever prevent any change.

The large nations made one minor concession that may perhaps become significant. If a large nation is party to a dispute, *it must abstain from voting* until the dispute has been investigated and methods and terms of settlement are recommended by the Security Council. In a sense, then, the Council, by the nature of the terms of settlement, can indicate its judgment by implication, though this judgment must take the form of a suggestion that is not binding. Any attempt to implement it by enforcement action is subject to the veto of the offender.

In practice, this voting procedure means that if one of the permanent members of the Security Council chooses to act in an arbitrary or aggressive man-

ner, the Organization as such can take no effective action. There is the further consequence that a major power can violate every principle and purpose set forth in the Charter and yet remain a member of the Organization by the lawful use of the veto power expressly granted to it. The aggression of a major power can only be met by the other nations' acting independently and outside the Charter, and a war cannot be fought against a large nation to maintain the Organization and to preserve the Charter. It cannot be a civil war waged in the name of unity.

These voting provisions define the essential nature of the Organization. Decided upon at Yalta and incorporated into the finished Charter at San Francisco, the veto power is incontrovertible evidence that the major nations will retain intact their complete sovereign independence within the new Organization. Obviously, not one of the large nations is yet willing to delegate any of its power to any organization over which it does not have complete negative control. Only on the basis of this voting rule and all that it implies was it possible to have an international organization that would include the great powers. By ratifying the Charter, those nations will not have created even the shadow of genuine government with a law binding upon all. They will have entered into a voluntary coöperative society to keep the peace, a partnership of independent equals from which there is the implicit right of withdrawal if the partnership proves unprofitable.

Every other provision of the Charter serves to emphasize the original implications of the voting rule within the Security Council. The General Assembly is not a legislative body with the power to enact laws that must be obeyed. Its wide power to discuss any situation which falls within the scope of the Charter, and with which the Security Council is not expressly dealing, can result only in recommendations to the Security Council.

The Charter's provisions for the use of force have led to the popular misconception that the impotence of the old League has been remedied by the creation of a new organization with teeth in it. Actually, the so-called "world police force" will consist simply of agreements by the members to make available certain portions of their armed forces to the Security Council when it decides to take enforcement action. This decision could be made only against the smaller nations, because the major powers retain the right to veto such action directed against themselves or directed against any small country they see fit to support.

Personally, I feel that it borders on hypocrisy or self-delusion to call such a use of force against a small nation "police action." Violence can be justified as police action only when it is employed to enforce the law of an established government that applies to all and that all accept as citizens of that government.

Further indications of the voluntary nature of the Organization are found in the limitations placed on the powers of the other organs created by the Char-

ter. Because of the absence of any genuine supranational law, the International Court of Justice is restricted to the interpretation of treaties, to fact-finding, and to the determination of reparations. Even in that limited sphere it can sit in judgment on a case only if both parties to the dispute agree to allow it to do so. The Economic and Social Council has wide power to study and consider, but its decisions can take only the form of recommendations that are not binding on any nation. Finally, the Trusteeship Council can take surveillance over a specific territory only if the nation in possession voluntarily submits to this international control.

I have described these provisions of the Charter because I wish to make one point so clear that no one can miss it: the International Organization cannot rely on its own power and authority in dealing with the most powerful nations of the world, because it has been given none. Behind the façade of what I believe to be genuinely good intentions, there remains the basic condition of anarchy implicit in the existence of absolutely independent nations with large amounts of armed force at their disposal.

4

I HAVE been talking as though the creation of genuine government above the nations were an objective and a possibility at San Francisco. Certainly it should have been, but obviously it was not. The Conference was called by the four sponsoring powers simply to gain the consent and adherence of the smaller nations to the decisions made at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta. In this they succeeded: the final Charter was signed by all the fifty nations present. There were improvements and clarifications, but the framework of the International Organization remained unchanged from the original conception of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin.

Because of their very smallness, the Little Forty-five had much to gain from increasing the power and authority of an international organization within which they might find the security denied them in a world where power is the price of survival. Their fight was led by Evatt of Australia, Fraser of New Zealand, and Rolin of Belgium. It consisted of an attempt to limit the veto power that gives a control over the Organization to the large nations which the small nations themselves did not have, and which involves a certain surrender of their independence because the Security Council can employ their armies and territories without their consent in carrying out enforcement action.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand summed up the position of the small countries in a committee-meeting speech that upset the monotonous ritual of empty oratory and petty disagreement into which the Conference often subsided. It was one of the few honest, far-sighted, and courageous speeches to which it was my privilege to listen, and I wish that it might

have had a wider audience. Fraser pointed out that the veto power forced the Organization to depend for its success on unanimity among the Big Five and that already such unanimity was conspicuous by its absence. He termed the Charter "a series of platitudes — and petrified platitudes at that" if it could only be amended with the consent of all the large nations. He asked for some provision against the possibility that one of the Big Five might not forever retain the power commensurate with its voting privilege.

The speech was greeted with much applause, but the small nations gradually learned what perhaps they should have known at the start: the four sponsoring powers considered the Yalta voting agreement sacrosanct. Because of mutual mistrust, it was the keystone in the small structure of agreement that the United States, Britain, and Russia had begun to build. Faced with the choice between a Charter with a big-power veto or no Charter at all, the small nations at last capitulated, but not without gaining in return broader powers of discussion and recommendation for the General Assembly.

San Francisco saw additions to the Dumbarton Oaks proposals as well as changes in them. One resulted from the Atlantic Charter. Since the war was fought ostensibly for the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter, some provision had to be made for the vast number of colonial subjects. That provision takes the form of a mere declaration by the colonial powers that they will further the "free political institutions" of their colonial peoples.

There is no machinery or guarantee in the Charter through which the restless inhabitants of the colonial areas can find their way to political freedom. Their future rests, as before, in the hands of their masters, who are not likely to surrender voluntarily so large a source of economic power or strategic security as long as armed might remains the only real assurance of security.

I should add that the position of the United States delegation on this question was much misunderstood by the press and public. Russia, who has no colonies and is hardly satisfied with the status quo in Asia, was able to take an immaculate moral stand for independence and employed to the full the propaganda value of her position. The United States, as so often, had to play the part of mediator in order to assure the success of the Conference, and endeavored to find a compromise acceptable to Russia and the colonial powers. The declaration I have mentioned is the best that could be obtained, though it must be small consolation to those who have fought on our side in Asia in the belief that victory would mean freedom.

It seems obvious to me that sooner or later the type of domination synonymous with colonial rule will have to end, either by bloody revolt or by far-sighted policy, as exemplified by the United States in the Philippines. Which it will be depends on whether the declaration in the Charter petrifies in disuse as merely another monument to the hypocrisy

of nations or whether it becomes the symbol, and the starting point, of genuine reform.

The final significant addition made at San Francisco was the Trusteeship System, a product also of past promises and obligations. It was constructed to provide for the international supervision of the old League mandates, which was necessary if they were not to be annexed outright by the present mandatory powers. It also represents a convenient receptacle for the conquests of those nations that have publicly renounced territorial aggrandizement.

There is no doubt that, once a territory is placed under the Council, the rules governing the supervisory power of the new Trusteeship Council demand a stricter accountability from the mandatory nation than did the mandate system of the League. But the system is purely voluntary. By ratifying the Charter, a nation is not obliged to place any territory under the supervision of the Trusteeship Council. It can do so if it wishes, and, in doing so, can reserve the right to the use of strategic bases within the trust territory. Because of these drastic reservations, the international Trusteeship System is nothing more than a possibility that may or may not materialize.

But even the idea that the United States might some day place some of its Pacific conquests under international control drew cries of outraged protest from the Hearst and McCormick sections of the press. They not only misrepresented the case but displayed an astonishing ability to describe, from a distance of 8000 miles, the exact motives of those who fought in the assault. By continuous reference to "the blood of our boys" they attempted to use the genuine sacrifice of those who died as a means of fostering the narrowest and most destructive kind of jingoistic nationalism. It seemed to this "boy," at any rate, a sickening example of ignorant irresponsibility.

5

So I return to my beginning. What can be said of the Charter with honesty to those who have fought this war, endured its hardships, and faced its dangers with courage, in the belief that through victory we might find the way to a good society and a peaceful future? What assurance can be given the mortally wounded that the death they are about to die is not merely the pitiful by-product of a colossal struggle for power, but a meaningful sacrifice in a good cause? What consolation for the past and what hope for the future does San Francisco provide?

In answering, I can see no necessity for the uncritical optimism that the man in public office must assume. There are times when reality makes optimism ridiculous. The International Organization is, at present, as incapable of dealing with the probable causes of another war as a fire extinguisher is of quenching a forest fire. With the ability to take effective action only against small states that are without the support of a major power, it can cope, as

Van Kleffens, the Dutch Foreign Minister, remarked, only with "the non-causes of war."

A friend just back from the Pacific, who knew something of the situation in Asia but had been unable to follow the course of the Conference, asked me seriously what the Organization could do in the event of a civil war in China with Russia favoring one side and the United States the other. Obviously the product of San Francisco is totally unable to deal with such a situation. The Preamble of the Charter expresses noble human aspirations, but today they are far more of a fervent wish than a reality.

Chapter I on Purposes is full of the best intentions, but so were the Covenant of the League and the Kellogg Peace Pact. Assemblies, courts, and police forces have been the traditional instruments of just government, but here they are without the power to govern. Leaving aside principles that are more easily expressed than implemented, and discussion groups that have no power of decision, the Charter relies for its success upon the willing coöperation of heavily armed and independent nations.

Whether the governments of Russia, the United States, and Britain can find in the idea and need for peace a sufficient incentive to continue the coöperation demanded of them by a common foe is the immediate question upon whose answer the future of all of us depends. The answer cannot be found in the new Organization, but in the policy of those three governments. If they choose to coöperate, the Charter is there as an effective instrument. If they are unable to agree, there is nothing the Charter can do about it.

There is one further question which the men who fought this war have every right to ask. If the creation of government on a world level is the real price of peace, why was it not paid? In reply, I can only ask them to look at the world as it is today. The delegates at San Francisco were many of them enlightened and far-seeing men, but they did not work in a vacuum. Their decisions were largely predetermined by inescapable realities, and the margin of choice that history left them was narrow. For example, the United States delegation had no choice but to accept the fact that the present Senate stood ready to reject with righteous indignation a Charter that conceded any of our sovereign independence. The necessity of ratification drew an invisible boundary line over which the delegation could not advance. The final price paid for Senate approval is an Organization that the United States can join and still retain intact every attribute of independence.

The record of the hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are a tragi-comic commentary on what was achieved at San Francisco. To allay the fears of even the most unregenerate isolationist, every impotent inadequacy of the Charter was stressed as a positive assurance that in ratifying it we were committing ourselves to nothing.

After pronouncing the United States capable of continuing the Monroe Doctrine by the lawful use

of its veto power, Senator Connally summed up the power of the Trusteeship Council and the Social and Economic Council in two succinct statements. Concerning our island conquests in the Pacific, he said, "All we have to do is to hold on to them till we want to let them go." The weakness of the Social and Economic Council seems to be a point in its favor in the statement that "if a nation doesn't agree with what is recommended, it doesn't have to do anything about it." So it appears that the Senate ratified the Charter not in spite of its inadequacy, but because of it.

But if the United States was determined to prevent any infringement of her independence, Russia was equally or more determined to make no surrender of sovereignty. She insisted throughout that all real power should reside in the Security Council, over which she, as a permanent member, had complete control.

6

THERE is a bitter lesson here for all who have fought for a victory that they hoped might bring with it deep and necessary change. There are two prerequisites if government on a world level is to become an abiding reality for the many. First, there must be a clear comprehension that the continuation of national egotisms is at the root of our misfortunes. Second, there must be wide agreement on the general principles and values upon which this government on a world level is to be based.

Neither of these two essential conditions exists today. The war has intensified the most extreme national loyalties in many parts of Europe, Asia, and this country. The instrument of war with which we sought to cure the social body has caused it to spread. Experience is not the teacher that we thought she was, and we who are young must learn the old, unhappy truth that men are moved not so much by clear necessity and the gift of reason as by inherited patterns of thought and behavior.

Workable constitutions rest upon the consent of the people and grow from a community of belief and the whole ethos of a society. There is no such unifying supranational belief today. The weakness of the Charter is the historically determined result of these conditions. We live in a tragic age where the moral and intellectual resources of our time do not seem adequate to meet either our problems or our obligations.

To my companions of the past, living and dead, to those who look backward over their shoulders to San Francisco in search of the courage of hope as they prepare for the final assault on Japan, I have given what I believe to be an honest answer, but I do not pretend that it is an adequate one. The discrepancy between what we shall win by this war and what we have lost can never be adequately justified.

But the realization that the prospect for the immediate future is not a happy one is no excuse for inaction or despair. There is a clear course of action for those of us who are lucky enough to have survived the war and who have fought for something more than military victory. We must support the Charter to the limit as the maximum that is possible today. We must do so not with any spirit of complacency, but with the determination to see it change and grow until its impotent instruments take on flesh and blood to become the strong arms of just government for all men.

Even in this country our opponents will be many. There are, first, the old isolationists, who believe that the United States has an exclusive monopoly on all that is good, and who remain convinced, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that we in this country can still find a unique salvation while the rest of humanity proceeds toward the purgatory that in their opinion it deserves.

Their more modern friends are the regionalists, who believe that if the United States can no longer find security within its own borders, it can still build the hemisphere into a self-sufficient system that can be defended. Not only is the construction of autonomous regional blocks that must inevitably compete and conflict a good way of promoting another war, but on the lowest level of power politics it is hardly to the advantage of the United States to foster regionalism when the systems of possible opponents are potentially far more powerful than ours.

Finally, there is the unholy alliance of the jingoists and the profiteers. The former, with easy access to certain portions of the press, will attempt to lay the emotional basis for the next war by flattering every ignorant prejudice and making every possible appeal to mass hysteria, while the latter will believe war worth while if there is promise of a sufficient monetary return on the investment in human life. They both see another war as a necessary prelude to the dawning of the American century and the unrestrained expansion of American power. These will support the Charter as a harmless sop to be thrown to present public opinion while they go about the serious business of preparing the country for the next war.

For those of us who have fought not for power but because we believe in the possibility of peace, the Charter is more than a series of harmless platitudes. Weak and inadequate as it stands today, it is all that we shall have won from the war. By our effort, it may yet become the symbol and instrument of a just order among men. No matter how remote our chances or how distant our success, we have in simple honesty no alternative but the attempt to make it that. As I have suggested, it is possible that we shall fail, and that the death agony of nationalism will be prolonged beyond our lifetime. But eventually, if the civilization of the West is not to disintegrate completely, others who believe as we do will succeed. If this hope is naïve, then it is naïve to hope.