

Resurrecting the United Nations

By LINCOLN P. BLOOMFIELD

In a period of history dominated by dangerous conflicts ranging from the division of Europe to the war in Southeast Asia, the United Nations as a political-security instrument is moribund.

The chief danger is not that the United Nations will die, but that it will settle into a condition of permanent invalidism. With the important exceptions of the Middle East, the Congo and Cyprus, it has focused obsessively on a handful of racial and colonial questions in southern Africa on which it has been essentially impotent.

It has comforted some Americans to believe that the United Nation's decline was chiefly the fault of the Soviet Union. At one time I believed this was so. But increasingly the United States, while giving lip-service to multilateralism, has itself acted unilaterally, often in disregard of majority opinions. This policy has been thoroughly bipartisan. While arguing that the United Nations was unable to handle vital questions, we have given it fewer important things to do. The effect is to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, helping to produce a United Nations increasingly incapable of dealing with anything very important.

Beginning with these premises—first, that the United States is decreasingly likely to intervene unilaterally outside of a few vital areas, and thus a multilateral substitute may become a sheer necessity rather than a luxury, and second, that some of our own rhetoric about the need for an improved world order is persuasive and deserves to be converted from myth to reality—let me advance for mind-stretching purposes three far-out proposals:

1. What would happen if we turned over to the United Nations a really major problem? One intractable problem is the future status of the Indochina successor states. The United States is now in the process of pulling out. The unanswered question is what to do if, after we leave, the non-Communist regimes in the three capitals are unable to continue to function. We should plan now so that something other than blind chance resolves ques-

tions of elections, boundaries, reunification, peacekeeping, aid and neutralization under international law. The alternatives that might be supported by a two-thirds vote in the United Nations General Assembly do not seem particularly worse than the alternatives if the United States pulls out and Hanoi simply takes over.

2. The chances for any basic improvements in world order now depend on the consent of the lowest common denominator. Rather than waiting for Communists to become capitalists or the poor to become rich, the United States should organize a coalition within the United Nations of those who are willing now to accept the recommendations of a specified majority on questions of genuine importance to the nations concerned. In other words, to create a fragment of community, so to speak, by initially limiting it to those who share the basic values and premises that in any polity make up a true community.

This "coalition of the law-abiding" would agree in advance and without reservations of any sort to be bound by the judgments of compulsory arbitration and adjudication, and to terms of settlement of disputes reached by the Security Council under Articles 37 and 38, in disputes involving two members

of the coalition—but only with respect to other countries that have taken the same pledge.

3. The United States correctly would be willing to accept as having binding force the judgments of a majority of members of the United Nations General Assembly, in theory, representing only a fraction of the world's power or population. But a coalition to the U.N. budget. But a coalition would probably never agree to their power weakened by 1 schemes of weighted voting.

What I propose is that the United States unilaterally decide that it will accept as binding the judgments of a specified majority of members of the General Assembly on important questions if, on a weighted scale, that vote represents a meaningful majority in terms of strength, population, power and territory. No Charter change would be necessary. No one else would have the right to change his policy. Our gamble would be that others would gradually come to see the common cause in our action and the promise it holds of a new working world order.

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