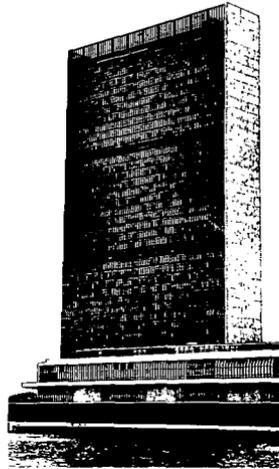


The Broken Dream



THE UNITED NATIONS today is a sorry forum in which the unfree nations of the world make ever more oppressive claims on our freedom, in which the planned nations of the world make ever more burdensome claims on our wealth, and in which nations not our friends make ever more relentless claims on the sovereignty of our friends.

Like all overweening governments, the United Nations is used by those controlling it to exact tribute from their fellow man, a facility Americans, too, gained in the aftermath of the Great Depression. The endless bickering among the claimants as to the size, scope, and shares of their demands is punctuated by righteous professions of devotion to

peace and indignant protestations of good faith. Our part in this forum, only lately reconsidered, has been to bargain with our freedom, bribe with our wealth, and trifle with our friends. Despite good intentions, our reluctant affirmatives and irresolute abstentions have only served to stamp the unwholesome Acts of this motley body with the validity of the Law of Nations, making way for the next, bolder set of demands.

What went wrong with the forum created, above all, to secure the noble ideals of harmony, goodwill, and peace? Many are the answers provided by the conventionally wise: the distribution of resources, rising ethnicity, continued economic disparities, global scarcities, the rise of international terrorism, the emergence of superpowers, the voting

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structure of the body, the paucity of its powers, and propaganda campaigns, to name but a few. But though some of these conditions are problematic, there are always global and local trends and it is never too difficult to relate the immediate causes of dissension and unrest to these. These are inessential answers that hardly suffice. Then, with Hobbes in mind and a terrible prejudice against human nature, we are told that the promise was too great, the dream too grand, the aspirations too high: The problem of war, they say, is without a solution.

Yet I hold a radically different view. As I see it, the promise was not great enough, the dream not grand enough, the aspirations not high enough. Nothing at all went wrong with the United Nations. It was fatally flawed from the start, for it was based on a conception of peace at once too narrow and too broad, and sought solution to mankind's greatest trouble without searching out its cause. Peace, it was thought, is the presence of goodwill and love or the absence of war. It is neither. The former fosters peace and the latter is the result of peace, for *peace is the absence of force*.

"Live and Let Live"

A world at peace would be governed by the ethos of "Live and Let Live." Force would be used when necessary in self-defense, never as a

means to an end. A world at peace, if I may be permitted the vision, brings to mind not a temporary cessation of hostilities in a violent world but a federation of minimally coercive societies in which the bayonets of government compulsion are raised only to neutralize the aggressive individual or outsider.

The deeply mistaken premise of the world body was that governments could solve the problem of war by forming yet another government. But with war, as with so much else, governments are the problem not the solution. There is not a people on Earth who would not rather live in peace. As Solzhenitsyn reminds us in his latest work, *The Mortal Danger*, this is as true of the enslaved Soviet peoples as of us, here in America. But when the powers that be, known as governments, are not accountable to the people, when they who make wars need never fight them, popular yearnings for peace are invariably broken.

More than this, though, the United Nations is predicated on an unwholesome disjunction of ideas. Somehow it is believed that the right to noninterference which among nations is known as sovereignty and among their peoples as sovereignty of the individual is divisible and that therefore the condition of noninterference which among nations is known as peace and among their citizens as liberty

or security is also divisible, that the one can be attained without the other. When have governments practiced in the unprovoked use of force at home been reluctant to aggress abroad? Are we to believe it an accident of history that the most ruthless dictators have always been the most aggressive?

When, it is asked with longing, will the long-sought ideal of lasting peace descend on the world? The answer is as simple as it is elusive: When the authority of governments is derived from the consent of the governed and extends no farther

than the protection of life, liberty, and property properly understood.

Governments were created, Hobbes says, to remove us from "the miserable condition of war" between one man and his fellow. It is now imperative for just this cause (writ large) that we move down the other road, the road to liberty. There is not a nation among nations which could not stand a substantial reduction in government. A real, mutual, verifiable reduction in weapons' stockpiles is indeed a beneficent idea, but it is hardly what matters most. After all, weapons do not wage wars, governments do. ☉

Social Power

PEACE is the business of Society. Society is a cooperative effort, springing spontaneously from man's urge to improve on his circumstances and widen his horizon. It is voluntary, completely free of force. It comes because man has learned that the task of life is easier of accomplishment through the exchange of goods, services, and ideas. The greater the volume and the fluidity of such exchanges, the richer and fuller the life of every member of Society. That is the law of association—and of peace.

It is in the free market place that man's peaceful ways are expressed. Here the individual voluntarily gives up possession of what he has in abundance to gain possession of what he lacks. It is in the market place that Society flourishes because it is in the market place that the individual flourishes. Not only does he find here the satisfactions for which he craves, but he also learns of the desires of his fellow men so that he may the better serve them. More than that, it is in the market place that he learns of and swaps ideas, hopes, and dreams and comes away with values of greater worth to him than the material things he acquired.

FRANK CHODOROV "One Worldism"

IDEAS ON



LIBERTY



Socialism Is Legal Plunder

FREDERIC BASTIAT, a member of the French Chamber of Deputies in the 1840s, is the author of perhaps the most damning definition of government ever penned: "The state is the great fiction by which everybody tries to live at the expense of everybody else."

When Bastiat made that statement to his fellow-legislators, they ignored him as usual, and continued to design and implement still more welfare programs to be financed by taking money from some people and transferring it to other people as a gift from government. Bastiat called that process "socialism," and he

fought against it throughout his career as editor, author, farmer, teacher, and legislator.

Bastiat's classical commentary on government, *The Law*, was published in 1850, a few months before his death. In that short book he explained his concept that plunder is plunder, whether done illegally by a robber who hopes to profit directly, or legally by a group of legislators who profit indirectly by thus maintaining their government jobs.

Actually, since Bastiat was as much a philosopher as he was a political economist, his writings tend to deal with universal principles on the proper organization of government, and what is (and is not) a proper governmental activity, and why.

The opening quotation from *The Law* concerns a frightening development in government Bastiat de-

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This is one of a series of articles examining current interventions of the welfare state in the light of warnings from the French economist and statesman, Frederic Bastiat (1801-1850).