

The Task at San Francisco

The over-all job of the United Nations conference at San Francisco is to offer a plan of world organization based on principles which appeal to the moral sense of the peoples who must first accept and then support it. The base of discussion—Dumbarton Oaks—has been charged with forgetting the ideals of mankind. It did not forget them, but they are implicit in the "proposals" rather than explicit.

It is a moral concept "to maintain international peace and security, to afford a center for harmonizing the actions of nations." The declaration that "the organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace loving states" is a moral concept, and still more the insistence on an international court of justice. These declarations must be made more definite, as must many other of the proposals. That is what San Francisco is for.

There will be many compromises, and much will be made of them by critics. Some persons are demanding that all the rights in our bill of rights be guaranteed to every people. This is a manifest impossibility, for many peoples would not even understand our bill of rights. Moreover, such a move would conflict with the principle of the right of every people to choose its own form of government.

A great deal is made of Russia's insistence on the right of any member of the Big Five to vote on a question that involves applying military or economic sanctions to itself. Yet weighed against the priceless boon of world security, this is no insurmountable objection.

There is also the question of authorizing a representative on the council to commit his country to the use of force. In our case this would mean giving the president such power. And no one can conceive a president's deciding to use force unless he knew that the country supported him.

Others are concerned about the relatively minor role assigned the smaller nations. This role might well be increased. And certainly a guarantee against aggression to nations which keep the covenant ought to be made explicit.

The "perfectionists" are not going to be satisfied, or even the near perfectionists. We are not going to be offered a purely Anglo-Saxon or Latin or Russian charter. We cannot ask it. Compromises were made in our Constitution between small states and large, between economic and social princi-

ples of northern trading states and southern slaveholding states.

The test of all decisions is whether they outweigh, or too greatly interfere with, the great goal of relieving the world from constant fear of another war which could leave little hope to any nation.

There are fundamentals which must not be transgressed. They are moral principles, ideals some call them, which are enshrined in our hearts rather than in words. Freedom comes first—the rights of man as we attempted to set them forth in the Declaration of Independence. Any charter which does not put liberty first must fail of acceptance. For, if accepted, it would fail of accomplishing the end sought, which is security.

Closely associated, indeed a fundamental, is justice. There is no value in accepting any form of organization which is given overlordship of the world. There must be no interference with any nation on any ground except its breaking its covenant by so acting as to affront the conscience of mankind.

For the United States, there are some things to which our people would not assent. It will not be proposed that we give up the principle of the Monroe Doctrine, as it was enlarged and strengthened at Chapultepec. We shall not leave to other nations decisions which would involve dividing the territory or attacking our sister republics or Canada.

But, even as we make these reservations for ourselves, we must understand that recognition and assurances will be demanded by other nations, in other regions of the earth, of established principles which we may not wholly approve.

The perfectionist would like to see a full grown plan as definite as our own Constitution. He would like to guarantee the natives of Africa the same individual liberties we are guaranteed. We are not ready for such a world government. We are not ready for a world police force to be directed without the consent of the nations which would contribute to it. But we were able to act in Europe with several nations under an American commander; in Asia with several nations under a British commander.

The great hope is of getting nations together, acting under specified and well understood rules, learning more and more how to work together, forgetting fears as they prove empty.

We shall accept nothing which violates liberty and justice and the moral principles of man. But we can go a long way in forgetting minor differences for the great goal that is before us.