

The Korean War and the Problem of Agression.

By Professor Hans Thirring, University of Vienna.

The attitude of the majority of the member states of the United Nations towards the Korean conflict shows very markedly the gradual change of our conceptions of international right and moral which has taken place within the last few generations. Up to World War I the right of declaring and waging wars had been recognised as part of the sovereign power of a nation, and warfare was still considered as a kind of chivalrous game with well fixed rules. The sombre experiences of two world wars have shaken our confidence that the rules of the game will be kept, and on the other hand they have confirmed the idea originally upheld by pacifists only that war in itself is a crime and that aggression as well as preparation of an aggression ought to be banned and punished.

Attacking the evil at its roots instead of making the ridiculous and hopeless attempt to humanize manslaughter is the aim towards which our recent practice of dealing with international affairs is tending. Mussolini's attack against Abyssinia has been answered only by timid and ineffective sanctions. Hitler's invasion into Poland four years later resulted already in Britain's and France's declaration of war - and the recent invasion into South Korea has at last mobilized the majority of the UN.

International law and jurisdiction is however lagging behind this practical development. The Geneva Convention rules out specific methods for killing people in wars, leaving ample space however for allowed wholesale slaughter. Although all nations appear to agree officially that aggression ought to be forbidden and punished no international convention defines explicitly what aggression means. No permanent neutral control mechanism for ascertaining and stating the fact of aggression has been set up. Our civilisation which in so many respects is overdoing the tutelage of grown up people tolerates that kind of jungle anarchy in international life which leaves doubts in quite a lot of overconscientious people as to whether the facts of the Korean aggression are established clearly enough for drawing definite consequences.

What we need therefore most urgently and what might be besides much easier accomplished than the vainly sought agreement on Atomic Control is that:

- 1) A proper and plainly comprehensible definition of the conception of aggression,

2) an international control organ consisting of a plurality of detached neutral commissions well equipped with air clippers which can report to the United Nations within twentyfour hours the facts of a genuine or alleged aggression,

3) an international law or convention specifying the duties of the members of the Un as regards collective steps against any aggressor.

Human history is an endless story of failures, errors and mistakes of men. We have failed so far to learn from the experiences of the past, to draw conclusions from emperical facts and to use them wisely for avoiding future mistakes. The principle "rechercher pour savoir, savoir pour prévoir, prévoir pour prevenir", which is being used with brilliant success in science and technics, has never been applied efficiently enough for improving politics by using the experience of history or to improve human relations at large by using the re/sults of modern psychology.

The UNESCO Programme pays due attention to the need of teaching young people about the United Nations. I agree with the utility of this project, but I do not agree with those who might feel that this measure was sufficient for the education for peace. You cannot make anybody a masterbuilder by telling him stories about Michelangelo; what you have to do is rather to teach him solid theoretical knowledge about statics and technology. In the same way you have to endow your children with elementary knowledge about the complexity of human personality, about the mental mechanism steering our impulses and fixing our habits, about the causes of our feelings of frustration and of our maladjustments. A certain amount of that knowledge ought to be imparted to anybody whom we are wishing to make into a human being, wise and mature enough to walk through life without hatred and fear.

An education of that kind cannot be implemented by simply inserting into the curricula special courses on psychology. What ought to be done is to imbue the teaching of history and all the other humanities with that kind of scientific spirit which tries to discover how things are working as causal systems. Hence the necessity of well devised training of teachers and hence the necessity of collection, comparing and exchanging experiences in this field. An Austrian textbook on elementary philosophy which is going to be published shortly will contain a list of typical mistakes frequently made in human relation and behaviour together with hints as to avoid such mistakes.

We do not venture to say that all can be done by imparting knowledge alone - but all that can be done through knowledge should be used. All the valuable seeds of psychological insights which by being implanted into human spirit can serve to avoid unnecessary frictions should be thoroughly collected, examined and disseminated. This fundamental higher education, this eradication of men's present psychological illiteracy is as we feel it the task No. 1 of human culture and therefore of UNESCO as well!

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