

P E R S O N A L

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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REFERENCE:

November 2nd, 1954.

Dear Mr Hammarskjold,

Your letter of 2nd November disturbed and saddened me. I thought that a critical attitude of mind expressed in private with honesty of purpose ought not to elicit protest. Far from damaging the Organization, such an attitude could only be beneficial to it in that it drew attention to possible salient weaknesses. I likewise believed that after all these years of administrative uncertainty and fumbling, a complacent view of the present situation might jeopardise the prospects of the Organization. On the contrary, a resolutely critical review of persons and procedures would be a healthy prerequisite to the long-delayed Re-organization.

This is an important moment in the history of the United Nations. The task is pressing and the challenge worthy of the new Secretary-General. The part to be played by your immediate collaborators cannot be exaggerated. Human institutions flourish or perish according as the men at the helm are or are not adequate to the task.

Technology, knowledge and science are very important but courage, backbone, fortitude and strength of character are more important. These "vérités premières" were preached by wise men in Athens in the Vth and IVth centuries B.C. They are still valid to-day. It is essentially a humanistic approach and reminds me of the well-known apothegm of Zola: "Tant vaut l'instituteur primaire, tant vaudra la nation." We could, I think, paraphrase and apply it to the United Nations.

In every Organization there are people that are below par. Some of the officials in the U.N. Secretariat, particularly in the intermediate strata are remarkable. Some of them are better than their opposite numbers in the League of Nations and I wish to pay tribute to them. The personalities referred to on page 1 of your letter are almost all good and some among them outstanding. Who ever dreamed of disparaging a man like Bunche or the learned Professor Bokhari? If there are differences in our assessment of certain persons there is no reason - philosophically speaking - to exclude the possibility of your being right or of us being right, since after all, as P. Janet says: Une chose, pour pouvoir être vraie doit pouvoir être fausse.

As regards the penultimate para. of your letter I must register my surprize at the hypothetical view expressed therein. Never, even remotely, did the Advisory Committee come anywhere near harbouring such thoughts. Rather, their feelings would run in the contrary direction, to viz., that the Secretary-General is assuming, under the new plan, increasingly heavier responsibilities and that, by the same token

he is being inadequately remunerated.

Dear Mr Hammarskjold, I cannot tell you how much I deplore our recent disagreements and misunderstandings. I should have loved to concur in every detail of your plan, since I would thus be a happier man. Alas! it seems that this is not to be. My only hope and consolation lie in the thought that, may be some day, you will be visited by a striking and dramatic revelation of what at present appears to be shrouded in mist and therefore remains unregistered in your mind. J'espère que cela aura l'effet d'une modulation à la tierce majeure supérieure dans un motif conçu sur le ton mineur.

With kindest regards

Yours sincerely

U. Agnarsson