

Saturday Review

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The Importance of Being Civil

“SO LET US BEGIN anew,” said John Kennedy in his Inaugural plea for peace, “remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness. . . .”

Many of those heartfelt injunctions to “both sides” seem lost or forgotten today. Indeed that snowy Inaugural Day, that speech, that new age of poetry and power which they inaugurated, all seem longer ago than they truly were. But few of the phrases which summoned an entire people at that hour are more frequently forgotten today than President Kennedy’s request for “civility” in foreign policy.

The Red Chinese, whatever their claim to seniority in civilization, were uncivil in their comments on that speech and have remained uncivil in rejecting every twig of an olive branch since offered. Soviet leaders, although at least not resorting to the shoe-banging pyrotechnics of an earlier day, have reescalated the Cold War rhetoric of insinuation and insult. (Fortunately for the Western world, the Soviets and Chinese save their choicest examples of vituperation for each other.)

Diplomatic discourtesy is not confined to large and powerful nations. One need only note the incessant harangues of almost any Albanian or North Korean spokesman. Nor is it confined to Communist states. Delegates from African nations regularly walk out on speakers, speeches, or even discussions of which they disapprove. Arab and Israeli leaders boycott each other to an extreme that is best summed up by Sam Goldwyn’s al-

leged advice regarding movie critics: “Don’t pay any attention to them—don’t even ignore them.” Somehow nearly every nation, large and small, seems to find it necessary to ignore, insult, or indict with harsh tongue some other nation, large or small.

Unfortunately, our own country has not been free from incivility in diplomatic word and deed. Indeed, the acceleration of events in Vietnam seems to have heightened our tendencies in this respect. War is war, it is said, and the enemy is the enemy. But are our war aims advanced by the sweeping rhetoric of denunciation? Will our willingness to enter serious negotiations be believed if the enemy feels we are capable of treating him only with contempt?

Nor is our conduct only a matter of the Vietnamese war. No doubt it is protocol to return to the East German regime a note on disarmament we would not deign to open—or to exclude the Cuban, Albanian, and Mongolian U.N. delegates from a White House reception, stating as grounds the fact that we had no diplomatic relations with them, but nevertheless inviting the Brazzaville, Congo delegate, whose government was not recognized then, either. No doubt it is accepted diplomatic practice for American ambassadors to walk out on offensive speeches delivered by spokesmen for our adversaries. But should not protocol and diplomacy in modern times take into account what is potentially tension-reducing or tension-building as well as what is formally and traditionally correct? Would civility in any of

these cases be seriously regarded as a sign of weakness?

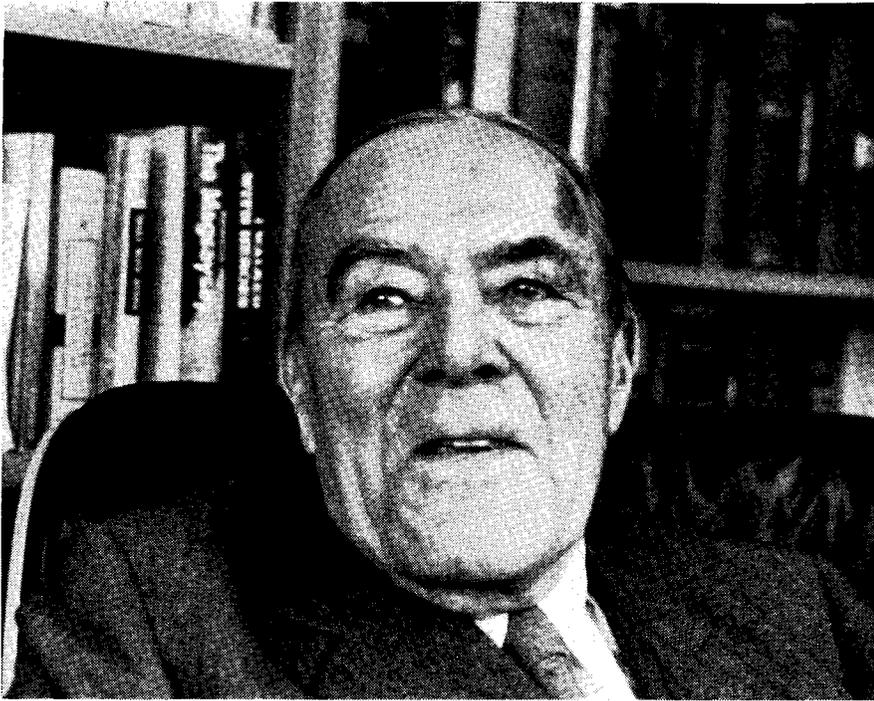
No nation on earth is stronger than the United States. We would demonstrate our confidence in that strength, in my view, by refusing to stoop to the petty discourtesies required by traditional diplomatic practices and protocol. If we feel our case is weak or shameful, let us change it. But if we are proud of our course and our convictions—if we are immune to threats and abuse—then surely we have no need to fear any kind of contact or communication on any subject with anybody, anywhere, any time. Responding to discourtesy with more discourtesy may demonstrate our disagreement or our displeasure—but it is hardly a display of our self-assurance.

THE problem is not confined to the Department of State. The Mayor of New York, with obviously political motives, felt compelled to snub the King of Saudi Arabia upon the latter’s visit to New York. Later, in massive retaliation, twelve Islamic Chiefs of Mission boycotted the Mayor’s dinner dance for U.N. delegates. The AFL-CIO representatives to the International Labor Organization boycotted its sessions when a Communist president was chosen. No doubt the State Department deplored these and similar actions—but its own example makes removal of the mote from other eyes more difficult.

Before liberal and intellectual critics nod too quickly in agreement let them consider the discourtesies practiced in their own ranks. For students and faculty members to walk out on a distinguished commencement speaker is the height of rudeness, whatever their disagreement with his policies. For anti-war demonstrators to interrupt the President of the United States with chanting or heckling, or to smear his motorcade with paint, is a demonstration not of their pacifistic zeal but of their militant bad manners. (It is also the kind of act that encourages among extremists of every shade a disrespect for the office of the Presidency, and this can create an atmosphere in which an uglier violence can be—and has been—bred.)

If any faction within the anti-Vietnam movement is so lacking in logical appeal that its members must resort to intolerance, insults, and illegality, then that faction deserves to be ignored. If, on the other hand, its members can respect the rights and views of others, and seek an orderly change through reasoned appeals to the majority, then their cause and their spokesmen are more likely to earn similar respect. To be sure, there would still be no guarantee that their views—or those of any group in a free society—would prevail. But a show of civility would not be a sign of weakness.

—THEODORE C. SORENSEN.



—S.R. Photo by N.C.

Grenville Clark—"It is doubtful if any living American is more deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize."

A Man For All Seasons

GRENVILLE CLARK, who makes you think of a company of Americans like Madison, Jefferson, and John Adams, has just turned eighty-four. He has never held public office and is not popularly known, but it is doubtful if any living American is more deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize. If the United Nations ever achieves the maturity of a workable government with adequate, responsible powers, the role of Grenville Clark in making it possible will have been a key one.

I first met him in 1945, shortly after the end of the Second World War. He had joined with the late Owen J. Roberts, associate justice of the Supreme Court and the late Robert P. Bass, former governor of New Hampshire, in inviting forty-eight Americans to a conference in Dublin, New Hampshire, where he lived, for the purpose of considering the revolutionary new situation in the world represented by the development of nuclear weapons. I learned that he was widely respected by his peers as a lawyer with a keen interest in world affairs, and that he had been consulted by four Presidents on matters of foreign policy and national defense.

Clark made the opening presentation at the Dublin Conference. He attempted to look ahead twenty years or more. He said he thought it unreasonable to as-

sume that the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union could hold up under the pressure of events. He forecast a struggle for the balance of power under conditions of uncertainty and insecurity for both countries. He saw the emergence of a world atomic armaments race. Despite published assurances to the contrary by U.S. Government spokesmen, he anticipated the development within a few years of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union, and by other countries within a generation. He said it would be difficult to keep the atomic armaments race from leading to a world holocaust unless strong measures were taken to create a world authority with law-enacting and law-enforcing powers.

He believed the moment in history had come for creating the instruments of workable law. He spoke of the need for a world government which would have "limited but adequate" powers. It should be "limited" in the sense that it would not interfere with internal functioning of the nations. It should be "adequate" in the sense that it would be able to deal with the historic causes of war and would seek to insure justice in the relations among nations. In short, he proposed world law as the only alternative to the existing world anarchy.

Listening to Grenville Clark that day

at Dublin, New Hampshire, was an unforgettable experience. He was then, as he is today, a magnificent example of the man of reason joined to the man of good will. He summoned historical experience, always giving proper weight to his analogies, always making the essential qualifications. The political philosophy reflected in his talk placed him in the tradition of John Stuart Mill, the Physiocrats, the leaders of the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention, and jurists like Oliver Wendell Holmes. When he spoke about the need for world law, he was not just trying to prevent world war; he was speaking to a condition necessary for human progress.

As the result of Clark's leadership, the Dublin Conference produced a document that commanded national attention and served as the effective beginning for the world law movement in the United States and elsewhere. Clark was its main architect and champion; he was also its primary source of energy and inspiration. Since then he has put everything aside in order to work for the ideas contained in the Dublin Declaration. He is one of the few men in the world, in fact, who has given full time to the most important need on earth. With Professor Louis B. Sohn of Harvard University, he wrote the book, *World Peace Through World Law*, which addressed itself to the multiplicity of problems involved in the transformation of the United Nations into a source of enforceable world law. The book recognizes that a world legislative body must be "weighted" in representation. For the present one-nation, one-vote system of representation makes the enactment of world legislation cumbersome and potentially inequitable. The book presents carefully developed ideas that indicate the practicality as well as feasibility of weighted representation. In 1959, the American Bar Association awarded him its Gold Medal, referring to *World Peace Through World Law* as a "major contribution to world literature" on the subject of peace.

Clark has tackled the bugaboo of absolute sovereignty in a way that has disarmed even the most pronounced adherents of unfettered national determination. At the Dartmouth Conference between prominent Americans and Russians in 1960, the meeting was virtually at a point of tension-saturation. The Americans were steadfast in their advocacy of a plan for disarmament with full inspection and control. The Russians reacted sharply to what some of them described as a plan for violating the sovereignty and security of their country. The tone of the meeting became somewhat harsh and strident. Grenville Clark, who until that moment had been silent, asked to speak.

He began by saying he accepted fully
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