

## THE PROBLEM OF PEACE

*Under the title "Peace Research, the Science of Survival", the Unesco Courier (November 1970) includes an article written for another Unesco periodical, Impact — Science and Society, by Mr. Bert V. A. Röling, Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association and the author of various publications on international law and peace. Red Cross interest in the problem of peace is well known and the XXIst International Conference at Istanbul in 1969 again recommended the International Red Cross and the National Societies to seek practical means of participating to a greater extent in the safeguard of peace and the prevention of war. We think it useful therefore to bring to the notice of our readers some passages of the article in which Mr. Röling defines the study of peace and war as a branch of objective knowledge.*

... *The study of peace.*—This area of peace research examines the various forms of peace and the problems in a state of peace which tend to destroy it.

When talking about peace, certain basics must be realized. It can be asserted that peace is not a natural state. It is in the nature of man and beast to be primarily concerned with self, to identify self with things dear to it, and to be stout in their defence.

This should not be misinterpreted. I do not mean to say that war has its roots in that which is animal in man, because, among animals, a life-and-death struggle between members of the same species is a rarity. They fight for a female, or for living space, or in order to determine which is the stronger. Moreover, the large-scale group fight between bodies of congeners occurs, with the exception of some species of rats, only among men.

So it is hardly scientific to call war a manifestation of animalistic behaviour, and to speak of "beastly" wars, because animals just do not behave that way.

That brings us to the second basic point: that war is inextricably linked to what in man is peculiarly and uniquely human. As Raymond Aron has written, in *Guerre et Paix entre les Nations*, "The difficulties of peace relate more to the humanity than the animality of man . . . Man is the creature who is capable of preferring revolt over humiliation and his truth over life."

Starting from such foundations, peace must necessarily be a far from simple matter. There are a number of different concepts of peace which must be taken into account.

There are, for example, the paired concepts of negative peace, which is simply a state of non-war, and of positive peace, which implies the making of accommodations between groups so they can live together within a mutually accepted system of values. Our immediate concern is necessarily this negative peace, the mere avoidance of war, and this is indeed, what largely occupies the statesmen of the world at this time.

*Static and dynamic peace.*—If we try to confine ourselves simply to banning war as by a prohibition such as that in the United Nations Charter, what we are really doing is excluding war as a way of resolving conflict situations, yet without removing the conflict situations and without providing any alternatives to war.

This is an impossible situation, because the conflict situations must become so tense that they necessarily erupt into violence. But as soon as we attempt to make some arrangement for the prevention of open conflict, or arrangements for the peaceable solution of conflict situations, we are already within the realm of positive peace.

Another distinction that may be made is that between static and dynamic peace: between peace attained by the maintenance of a *status quo* (the kind of peace envisaged in the Covenant of the League of Nations) and peace attained by the adoption of ways and means to ensure peaceable change and re-adjustment of local, national and international social structures.

In a dynamic era, it is much more evident than in a period of stability that peace is only possible if changes can be adjusted to

## MISCELLANEOUS

without violence. We are living in an exceptionally dynamic era, owing to the release of atomic energy and the emancipation of former colonies.

Among the peace research studies dealing with the various factors of peace in its several concepts are those analysing the balance of power, cases of prolonged peaceful relations between nations, United Nations peace-keeping operations, mediation and arbitration, and non-violence as a method of defence.

Another large group of studies deals with the problems which have a strong tendency to rend the fragile fabric of peace. Two conspicuous examples are world armament and world poverty, but there are certainly others which are closely related, such as population pressures, intra-national tribal and ethnic group antagonisms, the shortage of arable land, the inadequate world food supply and the economic and political underdevelopment of new nations.

The urgency of the arms problem can be seen by making a comparison with the animal world. In the animal world there exists a kind of equilibrium between the degree of aggressiveness peculiar to a given species and the weapons which that species has at its disposal. Aggressive species have only weak weapons at their disposal. Non-aggressive species may be heavily armed. There probably have been species which combined great aggressiveness and a great potential for the infliction of injury but, if so, these species have died out.

The trouble in the case of man is that science and technology have multiplied the effectiveness of his weapons millions of times, but this process has not been counterpoised by an adequate reduction of his aggressiveness. This is the peace problem relating to weapons, of which there are too many at the disposal of the wealthy countries.

The other major peace problem follows out of the unequal distribution of material benefits, with too few being at the disposal of the poor nations which represent two-thirds of the world's population. The distance between the rich and the poor is widening every year. The widening of the gap is bound to lead in the long run to revolutions and wars.

Peace research projects which relate to the major problems of peace and to the formulation of the conditions for peace include those on arms control, the influence of industrial-military complexes,

the economic and social consequences of disarmament, the social aspects of technical assistance, in fact, all aspects of economic development.

About one-third of peace research institutes are working on mathematical models of arms races. Such models, like all mathematical models of complex dynamic structures, are necessarily somewhat simplified but can sometimes provide useful insight.

*Man, society and the international system.*—This area of peace research examines the world as it is, not as it should be, if we want to prevent war. It investigates the world as we find it, with the people in it as they truly are—people with their rational and irrational elements, with their loves and hatreds, their suspicions and enmities and in particular with their tendency to distort the image of their environment until it fits the picture of the world they have made for themselves.

While man as he really is must be the point of departure in our understanding of this combative world, peace research must also deal with the groups in which man lives, the states, collective bodies with their own sociological laws, in which the past plays a dominant part, where tradition often carries the day and emotionality plays a predominant role, within which thought and action are based not on humanity, but on nationality, in which conformity is the rule and independent thought is looked on with suspicion, in which collective distortions of reality, especially at critical junctures, have a fatal effect.

Bearing on these matters are peace research investigations into ethnocentrism—acceptance of the standards of one's ethnic group as absolutely right and appraisal of all other groups by these standards—into race relations, into the sources and components of nationalism and into political ideologies and war propaganda.

Finally this area of peace research deals with the relationships and behaviour of the world of sovereign states, that underdeveloped community of independent units organized into what is called the international system, in which right and justice receive hardly any consideration when it comes to vital issues, in which military power is so frequently the clinching argument.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Experimental studies on small groups, put into test situations where we see aggression, threat and conflict developing out of group behaviour, particularly out of intergroup rivalries, are providing insight not only into similar behaviour between far larger social groups which are segments of national populations, but into similar behaviour on the international scale.

Peace research projects are probing into all the many factors involved in international behaviour and international relations. They examine, for example, the workings of international diplomacy, the decision-making process in foreign relations, the role of élites in foreign policy decisions, the legal aspects of peaceful coexistence, World Court practices, the significance of geographic factors in international relations, the effects of modern warfare on popular ethical standards, and the reasons for the successful federation of peoples of different cultures—one example of this being Switzerland.

Other studies are devoted to making a semantic analysis of international disagreements, appraising not only how the opposing parties' different ideas of the meanings of the same words complicate conflict situations, but also how the intensification of conflict situations is manifested in a changing terminology in interchanges, particularly by an escalation in the use of violent and threatening language.

The relations between states in the international system are today, as virtually always throughout history, totally "realistic", marked by a total absence of considerations of morality.

As Machiavelli put in his handbook for rulers, *The Prince*, "A ruler cannot be good in a bad world". A modern political scientist drew the same conclusion: "The international environment makes it difficult almost to the point of impossibility for states to behave in ways that are progressively more moral".

It is this pessimistic attitude which lies at the root of naked power politics. Optimists, however, think that the behaviour of an adversary in a controversy may indeed be favourably affected by a gradual *rapprochement* in matters of disarmament by taking graduated unilateral steps. The policy of the good example, in which the risk of a small concession is taken.

In any case, the antagonisms between states arise out of conflicts of interests. In some cases, the conflict of interests is such

that a gain for one party must mean a loss for the other, as, for instance, in territorial disputes. Yet in the majority of cases the situation is different and an agreement between the two or joint action would produce results advantageous to both. Proportionate mutual disarmament between two states is an example of this, since both states would maintain the same relative strength, but at far less cost.

Yet it has always been the case that the uncertainty which either party feels as to the possible conduct of the other, instead forces both of them to arm all-out, to engage in an unlimited arms race. The fact is that the conduct of one state is more or less determined by the conduct of the other, or by its anticipations as regards the other's conduct. States are accustomed to act upon the premise that other states, striving to promote their interests, will behave badly—which causes them to behave badly themselves.

The same state of mind applies in many other aspects of the conflicts between nations. States blindly pursue their own individual paths as they react to each other, including the path to war, in the belief that they are acting realistically.

I feel that what is basically necessary is a different system of international relations, incorporating new rules of conduct based on rationality. That is the task of international law combined with a world-wide organization which can keep a proper check on the observance of the rules for international behaviour it has laid down, and which has the power to enforce their observance.

*The means of bringing about change.*—The fourth area of peace research includes a consideration of those forces in society which might help the world to realize the basic conditions for peace. One might think here of the churches, the arts and sciences, education, and mass communication, including the press, radio and television. These studies deal particularly with such questions as: "How can a large body of people be reached?"; "What is the role and significance of protest?"; and "What may be the influence of the idea of militant non-violence?"

To find the answers to such questions, peace research studies are being conducted on such general topics as the effects and effective-

## MISCELLANEOUS

ness of non-violent protests, the effect of public opinion on foreign affairs, the role of mass media in relation to biases affecting international relations, the influence of communication channels and mass media on foreign policy issues, the methods of communicating the findings of social science to decision-makers and to the general public, and how the general public perceives the intentions of other nations.

Still other studies evaluate the educational programmes of international organizations, the effects of student interchanges on national attitudes and the role of religious movements on international relations.

Change in the present attitudes of the world towards war will come slowly. The degree of potential change in public opinion has been investigated. It appears that a considerable percentage (40 per cent) of those interrogated in one survey had not altered their views over a period of twenty years, even in circumstances most favourable to changes of opinion.

In other cases, the changes of opinion were very slight. Each generation has a relatively small radius of attitudes. Major changes usually only follow out of bitter experience, and tend to coincide more or less with the advent of a new generation.

In view of the components of the vast problem facing peace research, which are respectively man, the group (state) and the world of states, it is obvious that the science of peace must necessarily be a broadly multi-disciplinary one.

Since most of the topics of peace research fall clearly into the domain of the social sciences, the scientific staffs of peace research institutions are heavily weighted with specialists in various social science fields. Among them are those trained in history, economics, international law, international relations, political science, and social psychology.

However, specialists in other disciplines at the margin of the social sciences or in some of the physical and biological sciences are increasingly finding a place on peace research staffs. Many staffs now include specialists in mathematics and statistics, military science, geography, physics, anthropology and psychology. Almost one-third of all peace research institutions employ philosophers.

*Controversy between two schools.*—It is regrettable that the number of biologists on peace research staffs is still relatively low, for these are the scientists who must appraise man, to determine how his innate biological characteristics affect his behaviour. Many peace researchers are not sure that the study of man as an aggressive animal falls within the scope of this field.

Co-operation between the disciplines is by no means an easy matter, since the various branches of learning have gradually isolated themselves, developing their own apparatus of research, and wish to keep their respective spheres free from the taint of outside influence. The process of integration has been set in motion, but it is still far from being completed.

While it is fundamental that the science of peace must aim to become more and more an exact science approaching the natural sciences, it is evident that, as a social science, it can only make limited utilization of the methodologies of the natural sciences.

Peace research methodologies may be classified, generally speaking, as being of two types, and there is a controversy currently going on about their respective merits. The first approach is what we may call the “traditional” or “historical-analytical” approach. The second is the “modern” or “mathematical” approach, which turns to statistical methods, mathematical analysis and mathematical model-making in the treatment of the subject matter. The controversy between adherents of the two schools is an extension of the same controversy as is found in the fields of sociology and international relations.

My conclusion tends to be that both methods are indispensable, because they are complementary. The exact method will often succeed in proving beyond refutation what the traditional method has suggested. Moreover, figures form an international language which can be understood across the frontiers of states and ideologies.

Usually peace research starts within a national context. In each country, it bears a national stamp and employs a national rhetoric. Each investigator's outlook cannot fail to be conditioned by the system of values prevalent in his own country, by what Julius Stone (in “*Aggression and World Order*”) called “the national versions of truth and justice”.

## MISCELLANEOUS

... In our divided world, we shall be very long in achieving the common starting-points, the Greek "topoi", which according to Plato's ideal might convince even the gods. But in a situation where, I believe, peace can only be finally realized as a universal peace achieved by a universal culture, it is imperative that this common basis be established as soon as possible.

