The Victory of World Governance

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The Middle Ages witnessed the periodic devastation of vast areas of territory for hundreds of years before the notion arose that social cohesion and order should take precedence over local ambitions, sovereignty, and religious belief. Thus the Magna Carta in 1215 and the first free European commune in Florence in 1266 marked significant steps toward formation of the nation-states that began to appear around 1500. Another sign of change was the feudal economy of the Middle Ages had been based on the bartering of a rural serfdom, while the Renaissance economy became increasingly based on the exchange of money in an urban society. So too the universal authority of the feudal church was irrevocably eroded by the rise of nation-states and by its own inability to keep pace with the intellectual and spiritual development of society. Slowly those qualities that distinguish the Renaissance from the Middle Ages acquired hegemony and transformed European society from one tied to the feudal estate or province to one determined by racial, linguistic, and national origin. By the time of Machiavelli, the complete detachment of power from transcendent moral authority had taken place and the beginning of modern totalitarian application of power to entire nations had begun. Unlike the emerging Machiavellian ethos, fledgling democracy drew both on the humanistic Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian traditions. Whereas Machiavelli had sought to extend the power of the state, the Founders of the American Union sought to limit it partly by affirming natural law in the interest of civil order and the individual. Steeped in the cosmopolitan heritage of Roman and European jurisprudence, especially British common law, the American Founders asserted the validity of basic human rights from a universal perspective. Accompanying if not leading to this split in the political realm was the rupture in the metaphysical universe. Regardless of the

immense differences in ideology, I believe each tendency evolved as a response to the same crisis. As the old order continued to erode, the movements toward oppression and federation augmented and consolidated. The manifestation of the ontological rupture remains unresolved both in the political and individual, personal realms.

In *Crime and Punishment* in 1866 Dostoevsky confronts the severity of the rupture and its implications for the future. From 1840 onward, socialism was increasingly influential throughout much of Europe and even occasionally in America as at Brook Farm, depicted in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*. In 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Communist Manifesto* at a time when national revolutions and workers' uprisings were beginning to occur throughout the European continent. Dostoevsky himself had been a member of the socialist, Fourier circle of Petrashevsky in the late forties and served a prison sentence in Siberia from 1849 to 1854. By 1866 Dostoevsky had come to regard socialism as the "new spirit of infidelity" that was further cutting the people off from the sacred traditions of the past by substituting "progress in the name of science and economic truth." The protagonist Raskolnikov, emulating his idol Napolean, oversteps all obstacles in his pursuit of power and murders an old pawnbroker in order to steal her money to finance his socialist schemes. He justifies the murder on the grounds that great benefit will eventually accrue to mankind from killing the "vile noxious insect." In an article foreshadowing his crime Raskolnikov argues that extraordinary men have the right to "step over a corpse and wade through blood," the right to destroy the prevailing order in favor of the future "New Jerusalem," the Marxist Kingdom of Freedom. This act of hubris at the core of the novel is explained at one point as a "turn away from God." Ultimately through the redeeming Christian love of Sonia, Raskolnikov replaces his socialist theories with the resurrection and reconciliation of a "new life." Despite the affirmative ending, Dostoevsky directly connects socialism with the loss of religious faith and adumbrates the devastation of the future. Repulsed by Dostoevsky's unequivocally religious understanding of his own work and of the events of his time, Western readers frequently reduce him, as they similarly reduce Murasaki Shikibu, author of the Japanese *Tale of Genji*, to

merely an astute psychologist of human motivation—a reduction Dostoevsky himself would have certainly regarded as symptomatic of precisely the malaise against which he wrote.

Fourteen years later Dostoevsky achieved his most complete condemnation of socialism in *The Possessed*, which was published toward the end of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to '71. The years since *Crime and Punishment* had made it increasingly clear that socialism was an unprecedented threat to the order of civilization. Such events as the first attempted assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1866 and the purge by Nechaev of an insufficiently zealous revolutionary indicated the direction in which Russia was moving. The new barbarism was threatening the values upheld by the Slavophiles as well as the values of those persons in favor of Westernization. In the novel Dostoevsky succinctly formulates the situation as a choice between God-man and man-god. The socialists choose man-god and attempt to idolize Stavrogin, the most uncompromising nihilist of the book. Central to Dostoevsky's purpose is the chronicling of the progressive corruption of socialist ideas. Stepan Verkhovensky represents a liberal aesthete who exults over his own early involvement and fellow traveling with the radical cause in the 1840s and '50s. The next generation are all nihilists and anarchists who have debased Stepan's aesthetic and mildly socialist ideas. His son Peter Verkhovensky foments a socialist uprising and arranges the murder of a disaffected socialist. As one socialist confesses to the police, they were trying

> systematically to undermine the foundation of the existing order, to bring about the disintegration of the social structure and the collapse of all moral values, which would cause general demoralization and confusion. Then the broken, decaying society, sick and in full ferment, cynical and godless, but thirsting for some guiding idea and for self-preservation, could be taken over when the banner of revolution was raised....
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> (tr. Andrew R. MacAndrew)

The Communist Manifesto had prefigured these strategies for revolution, as had Chernyshevski in his 1863 novel *What Is to Be Done?* With overwhelming prescience, Dostoevsky foresaw the ontological rupture led from the "destruction of God" back to the "gorilla." That this debasement should proceed in the political as well as the philosophical realm only stood to reason.

Kirilov fully embodies the new barbarism by advocating the "total destruction in the name of the ultimate good" of "more than one hundred million heads . . . so that reason may be introduced in Europe." In this he merely conforms to socialist doctrine and therefore is declared by a fellow anarchist "ahead of everyone." Later Kirilov advances what to him is the heart of the matter: "If there's no God, then I'm God." Far from circumventing the problem, Kirilov connects the ethos of socialism with the determining loss of modern times. What Nietzsche was soon to discover, acknowledging Dostoevsky as his master, Kirilov perceives in his own deviant way: "If He doesn't exist, then all will is mine." Kirilov's decision to kill himself to affirm his unbelief, his refusal to "invent God," conforms faithfully to the logic of Marx, who had heavily imbibed the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach. That the mass of communists never imitated Kirilov can be explained only by their unmitigated pursuit of power. In "Modernity on Endless Trial," Leszek Kolakowski articulates exactly what concerns Dostoevsky in *The Possessed*: "A world that has forgotten God has forgotten the very distinction between good and evil, has made human life meaningless, and has sunk into nihilism." Kirilov chooses to affirm nihilism by what he imagines to be a grand gesture. In a manner very different from Dostoevsky, Tolstoy attempted to respond to this same crisis of the spirit, as in his book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. With the tell-tale cunning of the guilty, Soviet authorities, after their own wading through blood in 1917, never permitted the publication of a separate edition of *The Possessed*.

Despite enormous opposition, the late nineteenth century witnessed the continual spread of communism in Russia. The failure of the movement known as "going to the people" in the

mid-seventies only confirmed the socialists in their use of violence, as in their finally successful assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. Unfortunately, radical tendencies, though widely held under control during the last decades of the nineteenth century, were exacerbated by reactionary policies and by endemic social injustices. As the twentieth century began, the reactionary rigidity at times provoked further unrest and anarchy. Meanwhile in Europe the imminent threat of socialism had been considerably defused by more enlightened social legislation that increasingly acknowledged the human rights of the masses. The peoples of Europe took for granted the continuity of civilization, and few persons foresaw the outbreak of World War I. The prevailing atmosphere was one of prosperity and optimistic abandonment to progress and to the immediacies of life. After all, it had been forty-four years, La Belle Epoque, since the Franco-Prussian War had convulsed Europe and welded together the separate saxon states into the German Empire. Although the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been prophesied for years, most persons were more than a little complacent, which was especially true of the common man. Even Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka were stunned by the outbreak of war and by the rapidity with which countries took sides, though the latter's writings had already expressed the angst produced by the pervasive ontological gloom. The European countries had been waging cold war for years and when open hostilities eventually came, the shock of the horror of modern warfare was so intense that it swept away, along with most of the surviving monarchies of the time, all vestiges of the nineteenth century belief in progress and the perfectibility of man. The very notion of unbridled nationalism was called into question as total war quickly produced more than ten million corpses and more than thirty million maimed soldiers and civilians. Walter Lippmann cut to the quick: "It was such a happy time up until 1914." Melville's verse on the outbreak of the Civil War reads like a prophecy of the twentieth century: "Horror the sodden valley fills."

During the Great War people in both Europe and the United States began to realize the extent of the barbarism that modern warfare constitutes. The Peace Conferences at the Hague in 1899 and 1907 had given impetus to the incipient notion that the threat of war and the maintenance of peace were the responsibilities of all nations, as had the many US initiatives and arbitration treaties of John Hay, Elihu Root, President William Howard Taft, and William Jennings Bryan—the last of whom signed thirty Advancement of Peace Treaties prior to the war. After August 1914, within Great Britain, the Lord Bryce Group and the League of Nations Society, among others, such as the Fabian Society under Leonard Woolf, worked diligently to further the direction of the Peace Conferences by advocating the abandonment of the old method of secret diplomacy and alliances and by calling for some type of strengthened Concert of Powers, while, in the United States, the League to Enforce Peace had its beginning as early as January of 1915, with Taft at its head. Although such persons as Lord Robert Cecil, Norman Angell, Jan Christian Smuts, and Leon Bourgeois were instrumental in the development of the idea of the application of federalist principles to the community of nations, it was President Woodrow Wilson who fully perceived the necessity of world governance to champion "public right" over the "interests of particular nations." Like the ancient Greek Cleisthenes who realized Athens had to move forward from the chaos and oppression of the tyrants to democracy, Wilson understood it was essential to move forward from the chaos and upheavals of the nation states to democratic federalist principles on the international level. As the second Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold in 1956 said, "Woodrow Wilson went to the heart of the matter." He had, as Stefan Zweig writes in *The World of Yesterday*, a "clear and simple plan." Wilson's experience as an historian of American history uniquely qualified him to recognize the imperative of federalism to stem the rising tide of barbarism. Surveying the ruins of the old monarchical world, he was the first statesman of stature to proclaim "There is a way of escape if only men will use it." Regardless of the postwar triumph

of isolationism, the failure of the United States to enter the League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson succeeded in introducing into international affairs the highest federalist standards that had evolved out of Christianity, Roman law, and Greek democracy. At exactly the same time that Wilson was affirming these standards Lenin was undermining them in Russia. Though an attempt was made to assist the Whites against the Reds, the effort was actually half-hearted because the Western nations were eager to return to their domestic concerns. Few persons were sufficiently worried about the communist crevasse that was opening at the edge of Europe.

In *Doctor Zhivago*, written by the end of 1955 and only published in Russia in the '80s, Boris Pasternak takes account of the Bolshevik Revolution and of its implications from the events of 1905 to the early 1950s. Although Yuri Zhivago was "once filled with enthusiasm for revolution," the novel recounts his growing disaffecton with communism. At one point a young revolutionary he meets on a train reminds him of Dostoevsky's nihilists and of Peter Verkhovensky's "frivolity and shallowness." Everywhere Zhivago observes doctrinaire communism undermining the foundation of society and the well-spring of human affection. Lara, with whom he falls in love, sums up best their shared revulsion with the new regime: "All customs and traditions, all our way of life, everything to do with home and order, has crumbled into dust in the general upheaval and reorganization of society. The whole human way of life has been destroyed and ruined." Against this background of the devastation and aftermath of the October Revolution, Yuri and Lara endure and affirm the sanctity of individual life. Early in the novel Zhivago's Uncle Nikolai argues that "what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music." Later Lara's friend Sima defends "individuality and freedom" when she contends both have evolved out of Christianity and are equated with a life principle that flourishes free of ideology. Along these lines Zhivago refutes a revolutionary by insisting "I think that nothing can be gained by brute force. People must be drawn to good by goodness." Similarly Gordon defines Christianity as "the mystery of the individual." In

place of Dostoevsky's God-man or man-god, Pasternak advances something approaching Life-god or Death-god, individual human freedom or mass communal oppression. What Zhivago calls the "madness" and "absurd nightmare" deprives him of a profession, a livelihood, his family and home, until there is "nothing personal left." According to his own diagnosis the strain of living a life of "constant systematic duplicity," in what Osip Mandelstam called the "Wolf-hound century," catches up with him and results in death by heart attack. Lara, "the representative of life and existence," is later arrested on a city street and sent off to the Gulag Archipelago. Their child ends up an uneducated orphan and laundry girl for soldiers in World War II. Thinking of the revolution that has victimized her and so many millions, Gordon remarks, "It has often happened in history that a lofty ideal has degenerated into crude materialism." Such understatement about the revolution and subsequent murder of millions of its own citizens can only grimly undercut the closing passage of the novel that seeks to draw sustenance from the "thaw" in political oppression during the fifties.

By the time the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in 1934, what little influence the world organization had left was already waning. The twenties had been a period of relative success for the League since there were few significant challenges to peace. It had proven useful in settling or defusing minor conflicts and disagreements such as the Aaland Islands, Upper Silesia, and the status of Danzig, now Gdansk. The Great Depression brought an end to international prosperity and initiated a decade-long decline in the effectiveness of the League, which the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 could not prevent, despite its collection of sixty signatories committing on paper their countries, including Germany, Italy, and Japan, to repudiation of the use of force as an instrument of national policy and to peaceful settlement of disputes. With the Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931, the German withdrawal and rearmament, and the Italian subjugation of Ethiopia from 1935 to '36, there was little doubt that the efficacy of the League was a thing of the past and barbarism the in-coming wave of the

future. Instead of attempting to revivify the League and its federalist principles, many nations after 1936 withdrew further into isolationism and thereby capitulated to the fascists. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Great Britain where Chamberlain shamelessly espoused accommodation and permitted Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland in 1936, his annexation of Austria in 1938, and his conquest of Czechoslovakia in 1939. Chamberlain's most cowardly act was surely his pandering to Hitler in September of 1938 at the conference of Munich, though attempting to buy time to rearm England. The despot who slept with a copy of Machiavelli next to his bed and who invoked Nietzsche and Wagner was given exactly what he wanted in exchange for a few glib promises to leave the remainder of Europe alone. The collective will of Western civilization to resist the evil of power-hungry nihilists had atrophied and required Hitler's invasion of Poland in September of 1939 and the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 to revive it. The League of Nations, as Wilson and others had emphasized, was only as strong as member-nations were willing to make it in the interest of "public right." Far from constituting a failure of the institution and its Covenant, the demise of its efficacy reflected the loss of commitment to defend the fundamental principles of civilization.

From February to May of 1938 Thomas Mann traveled across the United States lecturing on the threat of fascism and its radical departure from Western values. Revolted by the crude materialism and the aesthetic and moral barbarism of the fascist regimes, Mann excoriates what he identifies as his own German inclination to regard "life and intellect, art and politics as totally separate worlds" and laments the trampling of "the traditional values underlying Western culture." Because Mann recognized in *The Coming Victory of Democracy* "absolute force" or the will to power as the core of fascism, his denunciations are equally applicable to communism:

> Democracy must understand this new thing in all of its thoroughly vicious novelty. Democracy's danger is the humane illusion, the virtuous belief that compromise with this new

> creature is possible, that it can be won over to the idea of peace and collective reconstruction by forbearance, friendliness, or amicable concessions. That is a dangerous mistake which is founded on the wholly different thought-process of the democratic and of the fascist mentality. Democracy and fascism live, so to speak, on different planets, or, to put it more accurately, they live in different epochs. The fascist interpretation of the world and of history is one of absolute force, wholly free of morality and reason and having no relation to them.

Mann's indictment concentrates on precisely the radical rupture that fascism posed for Western civilization. Fascism brought to the fore exactly those issues that Dostoevsky had observed in the nineteenth century. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Leszek Kolakowski, and Czeslaw Milosz observed the same ontological rupture at the core of the thought-process of communism. The disjunction was irremediable and has led directly to the collapse of communism. As Ibn Khaldun observed in 1377, a regime that uses "forced labour" and robs people of their property destroys "all incentive to cultural enterprise" and ruins its own civilization. This correlation of spiritual with material collapse is attested by the official atheism of both Machiavellian regimes.

With the return of belligerent nationalism and militarism, few perceptive observers during the thirties failed to sense the approach of a day of doom. Unlike prior to World War I, many people now feared for the existence of civilization, while others deluded themselves with such fantasies as the New York World's Fair of the summer of 1939. Statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic stepped back and allowed barbarism to fill the void. Even before the commencement of concerted hostilities, some observers, instead of dismissing collective security, began to consider ways of strengthening it. Despite all the limitations of the League, it was a step toward rational maintenance of order and liberty for all peoples. In late 1939 the US State Department formed a committee on the desirable shape of the postwar world,

the recommendations of which gradually moved toward some form of world organization. Franklin D. Roosevelt had accompanied the delegation of President Wilson to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and well understood the reasons for the creation of the League, as he made clear in his 1923 "Plan to Preserve World Peace." In his 1941 address on the State of the Union, President Roosevelt announced his Four Freedoms, which outlined his determination to defend the defining qualities of civilization. He also advocated the reduction of armaments, which had been part of the League Covenant, so that, as Roosevelt put it, "no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor." This articulation of collective security was reaffirmed by Roosevelt in August of 1941 in the Atlantic Charter, which both he and Churchill signed and which mentions "the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security." They further stated that "all of the nations of the world, for realistic, as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force." Indubitably the realistic reasons included the atom bomb, about which Einstein had written Roosevelt as early as mid-1939.

Throughout World War II other significant steps were taken toward forming world organization such as the United Nations Declaration of January 1942, which was the first use of Roosevelt's term for the countries leagued against the forces of fascism; the UN conferences on Food and Agriculture and on Relief and Rehabilitation in 1943; the International Labor Organization and the Bretton Woods conference on the International Monetary Fund in 1944. All these and other efforts toward rational world governance and toward recognition that the world had become one unified economy in all spheres of life achieved fruition at Dumbarton Oaks in August to October of 1944. This meeting of British, Chinese, Soviet, and American representatives produced the first draft of recommendations that eventually evolved into the Charter of the United Nations. The thorniest barrier to world organization proved to be the method of voting in the Security Council. At Yalta in the Crimea in February of 1945 Roosevelt,

Churchill, and Stalin finally agreed that all major powers would have the veto. The United States also insisted on having the veto, a fact impressed upon Carlos Romulo, the Philippine ambassador at the first United Nations Assembly in San Francisco in April to June of that year. After President Roosevelt's return from Yalta he addressed Congress on the first of March 1945 and presented the results of the long effort toward forming a universal organization:

> For the second time, in the lives of most of us, this generation is face to face with the objective of preventing wars. To meet that objective, the nations of the world will either have a plan or they will not. The groundwork of a plan has now been furnished and has been submitted to humanity for discussion and decision. No plan is perfect. Whatever is adopted at San Francisco will doubtless have to be amended time and again over the years, just as our own Constitution has been. No one can say exactly how long any plan will last. Peace can endure only so long as humanity really insists upon it, and is willing to work for it, and sacrifice for it. Twenty-five years ago, American fighting men looked to the statesmen of the world to finish the work of peace for which they fought and suffered. We failed them. We failed them then. We cannot fail them again, and expect the world to survive. I think the Crimean Conference was a successful effort by the three leading nations to find a common ground for peace. It spells—and it ought to spell—the end of the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances and spheres of influence, and balances of power and all the other expedients which have been tried for centuries and have always failed. We propose to substitute for all these, a universal organization in which all peace-loving nations will finally have a chance to join. I am confident that the Congress and the American people will accept the results of this conference as the beginnings of a permanent structure of peace upon which we can begin to build, under God, that better world in which our children and grandchildren—yours and mine, and the children and grandchildren of the whole

world—must live, can live....

The havoc of World War I had forced upon farsighted statesmen the only means of escape, and now the lesson had been repeated. Roosevelt's emphasis on the recurrence of the obligation of preventing war underscores the lesson that he and many statesmen drew from the immense devastation of World War II, from the slaughter of more than fifty million people. Isolationist elements in both the United States and Europe notwithstanding, the masses had also perceived to some degree the validity of the same lesson and longed for a cessation of war. Roosevelt's conception of world organization was more profound than Woodrow Wilson's ebullient optimism, which had led him to an unyielding position that kept the United States from joining the League of Nations. Roosevelt did not intend to make that mistake. Roosevelt's conception was not a luminescent New Jerusalem descending from heaven already perfectly constructed for the habitation of humankind. He recognized from the vicissitudes of the League that the evolution of world federation was a tumultuous process dependent on the will of humanity to work and sacrifice for peace. At Yalta he had expressed the tough-minded realization, as he had on other occasions, that world organization would not yet secure peace but might at least last for about fifty years. From that perspective, he reported to Congress that the universal organization was "the beginnings of a permanent structure of peace."

Barely had Roosevelt returned from Yalta before the will to unity of the major powers began to falter. Stalin soon violated many of the agreements reached there, most flagrantly in regard to Poland. Churchill and Roosevelt himself had separately worked out exclusive alliances with Stalin on certain particulars, while Stalin had not even bothered to read before the meeting key documents from Roosevelt on world organization. With the death of Roosevelt in April of 1945, shortly after his return from Yalta, the responsibility of ending World War II and the future of the United Nations passed to Harry Truman. Even before the United Nations Charter was ratified in June of 1945 ominous signs were apparent

throughout Eastern Europe, and, once the Soviet Union began to abuse the veto, in the United Nations as well. The shape of the future was set. In March of 1946 Churchill's speech "The Sinews of Peace" warned the free world of an iron curtain of barbarism descending upon Eastern Europe. In March of the following year President Truman praised the objectives of the United Nations and rightly committed the United States to helping "free people to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes." In little more than a couple of years the world had gone from a hopeful new beginning toward finding "a permanent structure" for peace to ominous alignments that, as Roosevelt told Congress, "have been tried for centuries and have always failed."

World War II brought the greatest affirmation of world organization the world had ever known and rendered impossible any full retreat into the traditional isolationism of the United States. With the Marshall plan simultaneously combating economic ruin and, in effect, communism, the world economy soon took off and entered a long period of unprecedented prosperity. Poets and artists throughout the West continued to feel nauseated by the spiritual banality of modern society, which sank to further record depths of crude materialism after the war. Yet most writers actually embraced the general pattern of mass culture by withdrawing into their own solipsistic lives, supported only by the narcissistic anodynes of nihilism. No one, not even Sartre in *No Exit*, gave better expression to the virulent cynicism than Samuel Beckett. Sensing the ontological void at the core of world civilization, Beckett celebrated it with a vengeance, reveling in the nihilism that had become de facto public and private cultus. His play *Waiting for Godot* in 1952 concurs with and advances the perception of Henri Bergson and the modernist artists that "time has stopped," engulfing everything in a flood of relativity and synchronicity, in the blather of half a century. In *Endgame* in 1957 Beckett goes to the heart of the matter: "The Bastard! He doesn't exist!" The despair, alienation, and grim fortitude with which his personae greet the loss of all ideals constitutes an attempt at affirmation of

the individual in the face of the devolution of everything for which Western civilization had once stood. His personae closely resemble Nietzsche's decadent anti-hero Zarathustra—minus the "gay wisdom." Such angst had as much to do with the ontological dislocation as with the new pressure of the fear of its ultimate expression through the atom bomb.

In *Herzog* in 1964 Saul Bellow connects the rupture that became evident during the Renaissance with the manifestation in the political realm of a brutal drive toward power and revolution. Moses Herzog, an intellectual in the middle of a nervous breakdown, desperately writes such letters as the following one to various historical and fictional persons in an attempt to understand the personal crisis of his divorce and the public decline of "post-Christian America":

> In the seventeenth century the passionate search for absolute truth stopped so that mankind might transform the world. Something practical was done with thought. The mental became also the real. Relief from the pursuit of absolutes made life pleasant. Only a small class of fanatical intellectuals, professionals, still chased after these absolutes. But our revolutions, including nuclear terror, return the metaphysical dimension to us. All practical activity has reached this culmination: everything may go now, civilization, history, meaning, nature. Everything! Now to recall Mr. Kierkegaard's question....

Herzog, "a specialist in spiritual self-awareness," seeks to comprehend the demise of "the passionate search for absolute truth" and its replacement with the crude materialism of modern times. In a manner reminiscent of Thomas Mann, Herzog perceives that barbarism is making the rupture explicit by revealing the bankruptcy of Western civilization. Because everything stands threatened, the "metaphysical dimension" returns. Kierkegaard's question, "the great earthquake" of his life, was whether or not the prosperity of his family was a sign of God's blessing or curse.

Despite the feeling that "everything may go now," Herzog denounces what he calls the wasteland outlook and declares he is "Very tired of the modern form of historicism which sees in this civilization the defeat of the best hopes of Western religion and thought." Bellow's ability to draw on the accumulated store of tradition allows him to oppose the dominant mode of despair and to affirm the quintessential values that distinguish civilization. With the world wars and mass killings in mind, Herzog chastises his friend Shapiro for his knee-jerk nihilism:

> We mustn't forget how quickly the visions of genius become the canned goods of the intellectuals. The canned sauerkraut of Spengler's "Prussian Socialism," the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about Inauthenticity and Forlornness. I can't accept this foolish dreariness. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice—too deep, too great, Shapiro. It torments me to insanity that you should be so misled. A merely aesthetic critique of modern history! After the wars and mass killings! You are too intelligent for this. You inherited rich blood. Your father peddled apples.

What began as a legitimate criticism of the bourgeois banality of the nineteenth century has deteriorated into a mechanical mouthing of negation, as in the mimicking of Beckett and Robert Lowell. These reductions have been accomplished by a steady narrowing of "the whole life of mankind" to the alienated subjective consciousness. The disease has remained constant since Baumgarten—aestheticism—which Mann pointed out was responsible for Nietzsche's "glorification of barbarism." By repudiating "A merely aesthetic critique of modern history," Herzog proclaims, as Mann writes, "to go beyond this age means to step out of an aesthetic era into a moral and social one." The aesthetes who went home to listen to Bach and Beethoven after a hard day's work incinerating human beings at Auschwitz proved

the everlasting inadequacy of aestheticism, of what Martin Heidegger in "The Age of the World View" approvingly called "the process by which art comes within the horizon of aesthetics." "We are," as Herzog reflects in regard to the Holocaust, "on a more brutal standard now, a new terminal standard, indifferent to persons." This inhuman indifference is exactly the same spirit of barbarism against which Zhivago attempts to affirm individual life. Herzog confronts this anti-human spirit because he continues to think and care about belief, continues "to believe in God."

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* in 1969 Bellow again confronts the spirit of modern times, the lawlessness of Raskolnikovs. During the twenties and thirties Artur Sammler, a Jew, knows many Bloomsbury intellectuals and detects the unraveling of the social bonds of the West. Just before World War II his wife and he return to their native Poland, where they are shot and dumped into a mass grave. He alone survives and escapes to the West to live with relatives in New York, where he again detects the continuing collapse of civilization:

> Like many people who had seen the world collapse once, Mr. Sammler entertained the possibility it might collapse twice. He did not agree with refugee friends that this doom was inevitable, but liberal beliefs did not seem capable of self-defense, and you could smell decay. You could see the suicidal impulses of civilization pushing strongly. You wondered whether this Western culture could survive universal dissemination.... Or whether the worst enemies of civilization might not prove to be its petted intellectuals who attacked it at its weakest moments—attacked it in the name of proletarian revolution, in the name of reason, and in the name of irrationality, in the name of visceral depth, in the name of sex, in the name of perfect instantaneous freedom.

Noting as had Dostoevsky the inability of liberal ideas to defend themselves, Sammler brings the diagnosis up to date. The undermining of civilization by Marxism is particularly brought

home to Sammler during a lecture he gives on his Bloomsbury days when a New Left radical shouts him down as an "Old Man" whose "balls are dry." On Sammler's way home a thief accosts him and exposes his penis to him as a totem of barbarous power. After such experience Sammler dryly remarks, "liberation into individuality has not been a great success" but has often resulted in license and exhibitions of decadence. Sammler shares Herzog's detestation of the wasteland outlook but concedes, as had many observers of the late Hapsburg monarchy, "it is in the air now that things are falling apart, and I am affected by it." Through a concerted effort of will, Sammler persists in affirming "human qualities" and thereby the standards of decency and civilization.

Collapse and decay are in the air, and everything is affected. Most of the sixty-odd years since World War II have witnessed an erosion of real commitment to the principles underlying the United Nations, while the fear of nuclear annihilation has not yet managed to weld the nations together. Despite the largely successful intervention of the United Nations in Korea, the Suez, the Congo, Cyprus, and, at times, the Middle East, the world community often drifted further from implementation of the UN Charter. Until the Gulf War in 1990 there was, as the Secretary-General of the UN in 1973 remarked, "an ominous drift back to nationalism." The world cannot now circumvent the fundamental issues which were involved in the formation of the League and UN or prudently move only halfway toward them. As Dag Hammarskjold stressed, the United Nations rose out of bitter experience—experience which can be repeated and which has been insufficiently understood. Similarly Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar warned in May of 1986, at The University of Michigan, against ignoring "the basic lesson driven home so brutally by two world wars: that international co-operation is a functional response to the complex interdependence of the modern world. To treat it as an optional matter is a deadly mistake." The reasons for the founding of the League of Nations and the United Nations have not disappeared but have become all the more compelling and urgent—as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the chaos of Rwanda, and

the disintegration of Yugoslavia have shown. In *The End of the Nation-State*, Jean-Marie Guéhenno in 1995 wrote, "Legitimacy demands the multilateral framework of the community of nations." Both organizations grew out of the cataclysm of total war that filled insightful statesmen with fear and trembling for the stability of civilization. Both world wars demonstrated that rabid nationalism is a cause of horror and not beneficent progress.

After World War II the West had to accept the maintenance of a volatile status quo: the postwar abandonment of Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Yugoslavia, East Germany, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, the Berlin blockade of 1948, the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the re-subjugation of numerous Marxist satellites, and the oppression of Afghanistan and Nicaragua. This very incomplete catalogue of offenses by the Movement of the Left to the family of nations represents a ruthless program of military aggression and brutalization of millions of human beings. It has been too often forgotten that Churchill in his 1946 "iron curtain" speech, "The Sinews of Peace," did more than lacerate what is now the former Soviet adventurism. He also invoked the sole hope of civilization in the face of all forms of tyranny and chaos by calling for the concerted implementation of Chapter VII of the UN Charter:

> A world organisation has already been erected for the prime purpose of preventing war. UNO, the successor of the League of Nations, with the decisive addition of the United States and all that that means, is already at work. We must make sure that its work is fruitful, that it is a reality and not a sham, that it is a force for action, and not merely a frothing of words, that it is a true temple of peace in which the shields of many nations can some day be hung up, and not merely a cockpit in a Tower of Babel. Before we cast away the solid assurances of national armaments for self-preservation we must be certain that our temple is built, not upon shifting sands or quagmires, but upon the rock. Anyone can see with his eyes open that our path will

> be difficult and also long, but if we persevere together as we did in the two world wars—though not, alas, in the interval between them—I cannot doubt that we shall achieve our common purpose in the end.... The United Nations Organisation must immediately begin to be equipped with an international armed force. In such a matter we can only go step by step, but we must begin now. I propose that each of the Powers and States should be invited to delegate a certain number of air squadrons to the service of the world organisation. These squadrons would be trained and prepared in their own countries, but would move around in rotation from one country to another. They would wear the uniform of their own countries but with different badges. They would not be required to act against their own nation, but in other respects they would be directed by the world organisation. This might be started on a modest scale and would grow as confidence grew. I wished to see this done after the first world war, and I devoutly trust it may be done forthwith.

Churchill's 1946 counsel to equip the United Nations with the international Force provided for in the Charter went unheeded. It is a great irony of history that Churchill, who had recognized the necessity of an international Force at the end of World War I and after an even more devastating war, lived to witness the means of escape again relegated to the sidelines of history. Yet no responsible statesman, as Churchill rightly understood, could finally "cast away the solid assurances of national armaments" when it was highly doubtful whether all member-nations shared the fundamentally democratic principles of the UN Charter.

President Roosevelt's Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius attested that the President thoroughly realized the United Nations would not maintain peace forever but might result in a fairly stable balance of power that would buy time in which the Soviet Union might slowly evolve away from its harsher objectives, reminiscent to my mind of Alexander Hamilton's observation in *The Federalist Papers*: "I never expect to see a perfect work from imperfect man."

Sixty-odd years later in the light of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and in the USSR that belief must be acknowledged as prescient and wise indeed. Brian Urquhart, former Under Secretary-General of the UN, significantly observes in his 1987 autobiography that "The Soviet bloc had never shown any real willingness to assist in developing an active and effective international system, and in the Secretariat we had long ago learned not to expect much help or support from the Soviets." The Soviet regime has been swept aside and through a conscious act of historical memory, the causes and upheavals that led the community of nations to world organization in the first place can lead to a revitalization of the UN. Such memory is exactly what motivated the heads of state at the UN Security Council summit meeting in January of 1992. They requested the new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to submit a plan to strengthen the United Nations "within the framework and provisions of the Charter." In July of 1992, Boutros-Ghali offered the member-nations of the Security Council his outstanding recommendations for post Cold War world security in *An Agenda for Peace*, with a *Supplement* in 1995 and his *Agenda for Democratization* in 1996. Despite the tragic betrayals and deceptions Boutros-Ghali documents in his 1999 book *UNvanquished*, there can be no longer any reason to doubt that the United States and the Russians, indeed all of humankind, must continue to learn to cooperate under the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to learn, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan has emphasized, "The collective interest *is* the national interest." Recognizing that fact, Senator Alan Cranston wrote in *The Sovereignty Revolution*, "The looming task is evident."

The responsibility for succeeding or failing to grant the United Nations the commitment it requires "to protect future generations from the scourge of war" depends on the will of all the statesmen and peoples of the world. Roosevelt understood this fact when in 1944 he stated, "Peace, like war, can succeed only where there is a will to enforce it, and where there is available power to enforce

it." He knew unilateral disarmament was a chimera. But the will and power to enforce peace has often escaped us and can still bring for a third time, even after the momentous changes in Eastern Europe, what the Charter describes as "untold sorrow to mankind." As an historian once remarked, "If one scrutinizes the tragic blood-stained history of humanity one must needs realize that the epoch-making changes have always involved incalculable agony and turmoil, both mental and physical, to weld together formerly antagonistic peoples and nations." The global havoc of World War I resulted in the first great affirmation of world unity, and the global havoc of World War II brought the nations together as never before. Roosevelt himself emphasized that Wilson's experience at Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, which both he and Churchill had attended, taught the futility of attempting to lay global foundations after the cessation of hostilities. Roosevelt therefore saw to it that the United Nations was established before the end of the common purpose given the nations by the tempest of total war. Only as the war worsened did the new structure for world organization evolve out of the debris of the League and out of the various conferences and forums of international consultation. Many observers have testified that the United Nations now has much of the basic machinery in the Charter needed to become a truly representative and democratic system of world governance. A sense of realism requires the recognition that the United Nations itself is not up to the task, often has failed for lack of wisdom, political will, and the ability to act during a crisis, while the United States and other nations have been more interested in using it as a tool of their foreign policy, keeping it undeveloped and unsupported in numerous ways, justifiably at times because of the tendency to impractical radical views and political theories.

While the ontological fissure continues to manifest itself in the political and spiritual realms, the unequivocal development of civilization from the first elected assemblies of ancient Greece and Rome; from the British Magna Carta, Habeas Corpus, the Petition of Right of 1628, and the Bill of Rights of 1689; from the

American Mayflower Compact, the Massachusetts "Body of Liberties," the New England Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address has been toward triumphant affirmation of individual human dignity and of universal authority consecrated to the oneness of humankind. In the secular realm nowhere have such values been affirmed more fully than in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Far from the risible conception of history advanced by Marx, this dynamic process of evolution from rockhard experience toward universal peace and human dignity has its roots in the most noble and trustworthy traditions of Western civilization—despite what is now clearly the spiritual failure of some aspects of capitalism and democratic liberalism. The further implementation of the UN Charter will signal the consummation of this epic process, heralded by seers and poets of all ages and nations, and will constitute another step toward the healing of the ontological rupture which shall gradually follow upon the resolution in the political realm of the Greek-like tragedy of the twentieth century, so reminiscent of that recounted by Thucydides.

In his speech on Puskin Dostoevsky argues "to become a true Russian . . . means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universal man." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has also testified to what constitutes the core of a thousand years of Russian experience. In the long battle of history, Pasternak implies, though he remained sympathetic to an esoteric interpretation of the 1917 revolution, that universal man will overcome the vacuous pieties of Marxism. Unlike the foremost Russian writers whose dire experience has forced upon them the essential conflicts of human nature, most Western writers malinger in the shadows of the wasteland outlook, regurgitating Baudelaire, Eliot, and Beckett. Much can be learned from Thomas Mann who was perhaps seduced by the German Empire but later fled Hitler's barbarous consummation of the disease. In his 1947 lecture at the Library of Congress, "Nietzsche in the Light of Recent History," Mann correctly appreciates the implications of modern history for poets and artists, as well as the limits of "legal institutions":

What we really need is a new order, new relationships, the

> recasting of society to meet the global demands of the hour, certainly little can be done by conference decisions, technical measures, legal institutions. World government remains a rationalistic utopia. The main thing is a transformation of the spiritual climate, a new feeling for the difficulty and the nobility of being human, an all-pervasive fundamental disposition shared by everyone, and acknowledged by everyone within himself as the supreme judge. To the genesis and establishment of that disposition poets and artists, imperceptibly working through the depth and breadth of society, can make some contribution. But it is not something that can be taught and created; it must be experienced and suffered.

Such a "transformation of the spiritual climate" is all the more urgently needed by the global community given the "demands of the hour." Far from debasing artists into propagandists, Mann is calling for a fundamental reaffirmation of humane values. With all the tragic wisdom of his own intense mental agony engendered by the upheavals of the German Empire and the Third Reich, upheavals also crucial to Stefan Zweig, Mann acknowledges the establishment of the new disposition requires the experience of suffering to become a reality in the city of man. Poets and writers must dispose of the canned sauerkraut that has been sustaining us for so long, as no better than the imposed literary manacles of socialist realism. Rather, what Heinrich Böll called "a new realism" must renounce the formalistic sophistry of both East and West and seek to discover in the fundamental experience of humankind, not in abstraction, what it means to be alive at this most glorious juncture in human history.

Fundamental changes in the literary and political realms have always been contingent on the ontological universe. The universality of perspective itself now marks a step toward the resolution of the ontological conflict. The upheavals of our century are increasingly becoming explicit through international crisis and are thereby allowing and necessitating new modes of diplomatic

and artistic endeavor. As vast changes in the outlook of the international community continue to manifest themselves, the human race remains on the path toward consummation of its highest hopes and visions. Though the hour might again become dark and threatening, with the world teetering on the edge of the Middle-East abyss, though the odor of decay lingers in the air, though many setbacks have been and will surely be experienced, the means of escape stands almost fully formed at the door and awaits complete and unqualified implementation to accomplish what all high-minded human beings throughout history have longed and hoped for. While the possibility of crisis from unexpected quarters continues to loom large, threatening the twenty-first century, while I cannot discern the exact steps, the direction of the international community is irrefutable, and there are clarifying tendencies that are struggling to grasp the opportunity of the hour and to establish what Tennyson called "the Federation of the world" on the quintessential values and traditions of civilization. Then shall the world become, as E. B. White once wrote, "A federation of free states, with its national units undisturbed and its peoples elevated to a new and greater sovereignty." Then shall the nations learn, as Jean Monnet wrote, "to live together under common rules and institutions freely arrived at." Then shall dawn that long awaited reconciliation of the tensions that first advanced themselves in the Renaissance and that have plagued civilization ever since. Then shall arise that glorious civilization animating the hopes of all peoples from the earliest days of recorded history.