

# Appointment with Destiny

An Introduction to World Citizenship

by

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In ancient times the little country of Palestine found itself continually involved in a struggle for mastery between East and West, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Armies crossed and recrossed this strip of land, clashing in great battles, burning, pillaging and slaying.

## An ancient vision

The experience gave rise to a vision, the imagination of a peaceful world in which nation would cease to lift up sword against nation, neither would they learn war any more. They would beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks.

For more than two thousand five hundred years that vision has encouraged enlightened individuals to labour in the cause of peace, and in modern times more desperately and earnestly as engines of war of more and more destructive power were invented and the number of nations affected vastly increased. After two very nearly world wars the position has now been reached when the weapons created so tremendously excel in death-dealing capacity that their employment could blot out life to an extent that would effectively cripple if not extinguish the human race. Realisation of the risk has, as it seems, done more to put a restraint on the belligerency of the chief possessors of these weapons than has either international organisation to prevent war or the multiplication of peace societies labouring fervently to abolish it.

## Some false hopes

If we are really honest with the facts we will dismiss the prospect that the United Nations or any of the Peace Campaigns is going to convert this negative situation into one of such positive goodwill between states that an era of harmonious relations will ensue. All the ancient causes of war continue to be present, and are even intensified by modern means of propaganda and mass communication. One may indeed say that, so long as frontiers remain—whether of states or of colour or of creed—which restrict human intercourse and foster self-interest, there can be no substantial progress towards the goal of the noblest human aspirations.

Do we therefore have to say that our chances of survival are slender and those of rapid progress small? Let us go on working away to realise the age-old dream, because we are made that way and must do something, and while there is life there is hope. No doubt that kind of attitude is better than despondent inertia; but it is neither manful nor intelligent. It does not face up to the challenge of our time.

## The long road ahead

One of the reasons why the people of goodwill have proved so inadequate is their lack of science comparable to that of the forces which breed conflict. They tend to be hypnotised by numbers and authorities or incline to indulge in vain gestures and pronouncements. Commonly, they are insufficiently analytical: they are uncreative and unwilling to accept responsibility, prone to blame governments and demand impossible initiatives from them. They are often sectarian and unco-operative, continually attracted by what appear to them to be short-term policies, because they are impatient, shortsighted and lacking in endurance.

Yet these are the people who are custodians of the vision, those who must be taught, disciplined and inspired to seize the opportunity on which the fate of mankind may depend. If they will make it so, the supreme crisis of mankind marks the moment of new beginning, not of a tragic and catastrophic ending. But let no one look for quick results. The road will be long, hard and painful, with many setbacks.

What is to be begun? What is our task, and how do we set about it?

## A new nation

These questions can now be answered precisely because all the research work was completed some years ago, and action has been proceeding to put the resultant plan into operation. What had to be discovered was a means of using nationhood, the highest natural form of collectivity, in the service

of world wholeness, the ideal of universal brotherhood. It was evident that some part of mankind would have to integrate in a manner that would give concrete expression to the principle of world unity and promote its attainment by experimentation and example.

There emerged clearly the concept of an independent and impartial *Servant-Nation\** consisting exclusively of *World Citizens*. This nation would be without territory, because the world was its homeland, without armament, because its people could never make war on their fellows in any circumstances, without compulsive power, because its function was the antithesis of domination and oppression, without partisanship, because its mission was mediation and reconciliation.

In order to build such a nation as a working-model of harmonious universalism, it had to be assumed that there were a sufficient number of individuals prepared to set about it. They would require to be people of all races capable of transcending state loyalties and identifying themselves with the needs and the well-being of every part of mankind, people who could overcome bias, prejudice, antagonism and fear, people who could be steadfast and persistent in their efforts, not looking for the spectacular, not swayed by emotion and transient enthusiasms, not reacting sharply to international troubles, people able to see what was to be done they must do themselves.

#### **The republic of world citizens**

Humbly and without illusions a handful of people took the decision on November 11th, 1950, to found a *Commonwealth of World Citizens*. Their means were slender, their faith great—great enough to enable them to smile when told that what they were attempting was fantastic and impossible. By 1952 they had fellow-citizens in 14 countries, by 1954 in 25 countries, by 1955 in 30 countries, by 1962 in 60 countries. In August, 1956, it was possible to hold a General Assembly to adopt a Provisional Constitution and proclaim the new nation in being *de facto*. In 1958 the first General Election was held to elect Deputies to the Commonwealth's first Parliament, which met in Vienna in May, 1959. It established the **Mondcivitan Republic** (Mondcivitan, from the Esperanto for "World Citizen"). An Acting-President was chosen, a Government was formed, including Ministers for Mediation and World Service, operating from London, Venice, Stockholm, Buenos Aires and Saigon. Later the nucleus of a Diplomatic Service was created, with Special Envoys able to travel widely. A World Service Trust had earlier been instituted to render some aid to nations in circumstances of need arising from natural disasters or other causes.

The Republic is integrated through area Communities of Mondcivitans, of which there are four in Great Britain, and which exist in every Continent. There are citizens in eastern Europe as elsewhere. Basic revenue is obtained by a small tax, equal to about  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. of individual income.

The status of the Mondcivitan Republic is not questioned by the Governments of states. As a result it has been possible not only to put forward constructive proposals on various international problems, which are studied with respect, but to take action which has led to the adoption of important Resolutions by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Such accomplishments are not paraded: they are the fulfilment of our obligations.

#### **A revolt into sanity**

All this is but the beginning of the adventure, perhaps the most far-reaching ever undertaken, to change the whole complexion of our planetary affairs. It prospers because of its inherent rightness and unambiguous purpose. There is no questing around for what to do and how to do it. Each step forward is taken methodically. In one way or another it comes to the attention of those who have been waiting for such a development. No one is ever asked to become a Mondcivitan, since to engage in this enterprise is a matter of deliberate personal choice. But whether the choice is made or not, there can be thankfulness that such a revolt into sanity has manifested itself, as it was bound to do, at the psychological moment in human history.

This is our assurance that the vision of a world at peace is no delusion. The time of its realisation may tarry; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie.

\* The idea of a "Servant-Nation", first formulated by the Second Prophet Isaiah, is the subject of a study in the 1963 Adult School Study Handbook, pp. 224-229—Ed.

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