

STEPS ON THE PATH TO GLOBAL JUSTICE

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The achievement of historically significant goals is seldom, if ever, realized in one grand sweep. Typically, the path to success is long, tortuous, and marked by an alternation of setbacks and gains. Ultimate success can never be taken for granted. Many more attempts at shaping history end in failure than in triumph. Alexander the Great, Attila, Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin are but a few in a long list of would-be earth shakers whose careers bear witness to this truth. Soon, I would predict, the gang of neo-cons who have set our own country's current imperial agenda will join their ranks.

But, even when a movement's goal is obviously worthy, providing logical arguments in support of it will not suffice to insure its realization. Change agents must do more. They must outmaneuver those who benefit from maintenance of the status quo and they must also overcome one of the most powerful – and least recognized – political forces: the inertia that is born of apathy and ignorance. This requires careful and realistic planning, education (including salesmanship) and steadfast determination. Although world federalists have done well in putting forward logical arguments for world federal government, we have fallen woefully short in other respects and would be well advised to reassess our strategy to date.

Consider, if you will, the history of attempts to climb Mount Everest. While the conquest of that peak will probably not go down as one of the major achievements of the 20th Century, it

still has much to teach us. Let us examine that story.

Everest was recognized as the world's loftiest summit in the year 1852. For decades thereafter it is doubtful that mountaineers even imagined that it could be successfully ascended. Although Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak, had been climbed as early as 1786, Everest, at 29,028', rose almost twice as high above sea level. Mountaineering as a serious endeavor did not gain much of a following until the middle of the 19th century. Men might have dreamed of conquering Everest, just as they dreamed of reaching the north and south poles; but it was not until 1920 that a team of alpinists actually attempted an ascent. Approaching the mountain from the high plateau of Tibet, the expedition ended in failure. The ensuing decades witnessed six more unsuccessful expeditions (not counting three for reconnaissance only) and a variety of approaches to the summit were abortively explored. Several brave efforts ended in fatal tragedy.

Finally, in 1953 an expedition met with success; Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tensing Norgay of Nepal at last stood briefly at the apex of the world. While these two climbers are justly lauded for their achievement, they knew that their success would not have been possible without a great deal of teamwork. And it required not merely individual skill and stamina, but also careful planning at every stage along the way. No fewer than eight camps were established from the initial base up to the one at the South Col at an altitude of roughly 26,000 feet. Only from that key point could the final assault on the summit be made, via Everest's treacherous, but negotiable, Southeast Ridge. At each of the camps leading to the Col, stores of supplies were brought in and a strategy for further advance was formulated or modified as conditions warranted. Credit must also be given to advances

in technology, including oxygen tanks, radio communication, better insulated clothing, and improved mountaineering equipment. Thus, what may have truly been impossible in 1920 proved doable in 1953. Other routes were successfully negotiated in subsequent years, demonstrating that the way that worked first was not the only possible path.

World federalists can, I believe, learn much from the foregoing account. First, we should recognize the likelihood of repeated setbacks before our goal is reached and the probability that certain paths that appear most promising will not necessarily take us where we want to go. Additionally, the necessity for planning, teamwork and the efficient use of available resources is obvious. But, plan as we may, there is also the factor of luck to consider; some of the failures on Everest prior to 1953 were related to rapid shifts in the weather over which climbers had absolutely no control. Human history can be equally quirky and unpredictable.

Less obvious, perhaps, is the necessity to distinguish between our true goals and key steps en route to those goals. Listening to many world federalists, one would think that federal world government is our ultimate objective. I would maintain, however, that that is but a key step, very likely the key step – the *sine qua non* – on the way to what our true goal ought to be: a just, peaceful, democratic and ecologically sustainable world; just as reaching the South Col was the key step on the way to the summit of Everest.

Although peace activists are inclined to speak (as I did in the previous paragraph) of peace, justice, democracy and ecological sustainability as if they are separate objectives, in actuality such

rhetoric is redundant. If we make justice our over-riding goal, the others would logically be subsumed under that term. Without a high degree of justice and a strong commitment to its maintenance, there can be no enduring peace. Further, justice presupposes that government will be democratic. Finally, a society committed to justice will acknowledge its obligations to future generations and therefore feel obliged to become ecologically sustainable.

Our traditional emphasis on the goal of world peace through world government and law, which characterized organized world federalism in its early decades, was understandable in the aftermath of World War II. Justice, as opposed to government, did not loom large in the thinking of Clark and Sohn, arguably the most influential of all modern writers on world government. The need to avert a catastrophic World War III, fought with nuclear weapons, overrode all other considerations. Times have changed, however. The chief global needs at present are to deal with the obscene economic gulf between the world's haves and have-nots (and thereby, incidentally, to significantly reduce the threat of global terrorism), and to seriously address environmental threats to the very survival of our species.

But, if we are to succeed in addressing these and other pressing concerns, we will have to emulate the conquerors of Everest and move forward by pursuing a carefully planned series of attainable objectives, each setting the stage for further advance. In that way we will, over time, instill in a critical mass of the world's citizens growing confidence in our ultimate goals and an atmosphere of trust in the efficacy of ever-greater international cooperation.

Analogies, of course, can be pushed too far. While attainment of the South Col of Everest was the penultimate step in the initial ascent, we would be wrong to suppose that the creation of a world government would be the penultimate step in what ought to be a never-ending quest to promote and maintain global justice. And while ascents subsequent to the initial one via the South Col demonstrated that multiple routes to the summit were feasible, it is doubtful that enduring global justice can be attained without the prior creation of world government. But that does not mean that there is only one route from where we are at present to our cherished – if not final – goal of world government.

Among our most immediate objectives, I would endorse some on which CGS is already working: a standing UN rapid deployment force to preclude future acts of genocide, support for the ICC, an improved UN Human Rights Council, a major reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and the attainment of the millennium development goals. Beyond these, I would recommend several more on which I have written papers over the past decade or so: a more effective means of raising substantial revenue for the UN; a larger and more robust standing UN Peace Corps equipped to function in both peaceful and military modes; the creation of a UN Administrative Academy through which to build up a standing UN Administrative Reserve for service in failed states; a more realistic system of weighted voting in the General Assembly, with a concomitant GA capability to legislate on a limited (but expansible) set of vital global issues; and a fairer, objective and flexible system of representation in the Security Council. Further down the line would be a global Marshall Plan; restructuring the international financial and trade institutions; and the establishment of a popularly elected World Parliamentary Assembly, advisory at first, but ultimately with real legislative powers. This list is tentative and may be indefinitely expanded; and the sequencing is certainly open to debate. But a point

should come when people and many of their representatives will say, in effect: “Hey, this legalized global cooperation stuff really works! Things are getting noticeably better. The system may not be perfect, but it sure beats our fighting or exploiting one another. Moreover, it is in our power to improve it. Maybe a whole new UN Charter would be the way to go. Let’s give it a try and see what we can come up with.”

Is all of this a pipe dream? I don’t think so. Everest was conquered. Humans learned to fly. Men were sent to the moon. Women won the right to vote. Slavery and Apartheid were ended. The list of achievements of goals once thought to be unattainable goes on and on. World government will also come and in its wake global justice will be mightily advanced.

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