
Rotary as a Factor
in World Stability

*to
M. Duperrey*

An Address by
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Pamphlet No. 51
November, 1937

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

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MR. PRESIDENT, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Rotarians,

I am glad that I have the privilege and the honour to speak to the members of the Founder Club of Rotary. Your club is not only "Old Number One," it is not only the largest

Rotary club in the world, but it is the one from which much of the inspiration; many of the practical suggestions for the development of our world-wide organization have come.

How much Rotary International owes your club and especially its pioneer members! I am happy that my own government, the Government of the Republic of France, recently recognized the achievements of two of your members—Paul Harris and Ches Perry—by conferring the Legion of Honour upon them. The names of those two men are known and respected wherever there are Rotary clubs. You also have in your membership other members of the secretariat staff whose services mean so much to the welfare of Rotary International. And then you have among you as one of the original "1905" Rotarians, our good friend "Rufe" Chapin, the eternal treasurer of Rotary International.

Members of your club gave Rotary its emblem; introduced singing as a feature of Rotary programs. And it was the far-sighted wisdom of your early members that established for Rotary the principle of non-interference in politics and religion.

Basis of Rotary's Spread

From the small beginning at Chicago 32 years ago, Rotary has spread over the face of the globe. That startling development is largely due to the fact that Rotary has a restricted program which is limited to fundamental principles on which all men agree irrespective of race, religion or political practice. The seedling of Rotary, which has been transplanted from Chicago to many varied climes, has everywhere taken root and flourished. That is because Rotary is adaptable. Wherever Rotary exists, the fundamental principles remain the same, but the externals, the application, differs according to the habits and customs of the country.

This address by M. Maurice Duperrey, president of Rotary International, 1937-1938, was delivered upon the occasion of his visit to Club No. 1, the Rotary Club of Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., October 26, 1937.

The message presented here is one of a series delivered by President Duperrey on a tour of visits to Rotary clubs in South America, Cuba, the United States, and Canada during September, October, and November, 1937.



In America Rotary started as a close friendship of men of different businesses and professions. And thus to the leading men of four score countries you have provided the means for establishing new and lasting friendships. While the development of friendship is a fundamental principle of Rotary, the way in which it is manifested differs. In countries where that is the custom, Rotarians address one another by their first names or by nicknames. In other countries the same close friendship is indicated by the use of the family name without the designation of Mister or Doctor or Professor, or it is indicated by the use of the pronoun "thou."

When an individualistic Latin visits an Anglo-Saxon club he is often overwhelmed by the thoroughness of the reception committee. Every possible or probable desire is anticipated from the moment he is given a visitor's card to fill in, to the time he is escorted to a seat and introduced to his table companions. And it has occurred that when an Anglo-Saxon visits a club in a Latin country he feels there is a lack of organized reception. To give an example: An Anglo-Saxon Rotarian came to attend the meeting of a Rotary club in my own country. No reception committee greeted him when he went into the meeting room; no one escorted him to a seat. He hovered about for a time and then when everyone else was seated and no one made any move to recognize him, he left the meeting place and lunched elsewhere. Accustomed to Anglo-Saxon procedure, he had got the feeling he was not wanted.

The president and the officers of the club, on the other hand, accustomed to a procedure which permits the individual to make his wishes known, felt that that visitor evidently did not like the club because he made no move to present himself to any member of the club, but held himself aloof and then finally left without attending the meeting.

And so in Rotary we learn that our habits are not the habits of all mankind; and we learn to try to adapt them, so that we can fit in.

Club Service Activities

You of the Chicago Rotary Club not only gave Rotary friendship to the world, but you also initiated and developed the vocational service and community service phases of Rotary. Clubs in North America and Great Britain are very active in those phases

of service and Rotarians from English speaking countries are sometimes inclined to criticize Rotary, for instance in Europe, because they feel European clubs are not sufficiently active in vocational service and community service.

In most European countries vocational matters are so regulated by legislation that there is neither the same need nor the same opportunity for vocational service that may exist, for example, in North America. That does not mean that Rotary in Europe does nothing along these lines. On the contrary, due to the initiative of the European advisory committee excellent work has been done in the matter of bribery and secret commissions and much study and attention has been given to international economics. In France the governor of the district asked each club to study unemployment, analyzing the causes and proposing remedies. A dozen of the most thorough and helpful of those reports were published in book form, thus providing a very valuable contribution to the combatting of unemployment.

In community service, too, there is only limited opportunity for Rotary activity in Europe. The highly developed social legislation of most European states ministers to practically all needs. In a number of countries boys work on the part of Rotary clubs is impossible because the state regards the training and influencing of youth as a monopoly of the state.

When we come to the development of the newest phase of Rotary—international service—the position is reversed. I can well imagine that the members of a small club in the central part of North America wonder what they can do in international service. Yet in Asia, South America and especially in Europe, the opportunities for international service constitute the main attraction of Rotary membership.

Rotary as an International Factor

I shall endeavor to stress what Rotary is in a position to do in bringing about intellectual and moral cooperation among the different countries. Many among you are undoubtedly of the opinion that it is rather ironical to speak on such a topic at the present moment. On my part I am convinced that it is never more indispensable to consider such a problem than at the very moment when

this cooperation appears to be forgotten—indeed rejected by most governments.

As a matter of fact, we are still bearing the consequences of the World War; a doctor might say that we are suffering from the aftermath of the acute crisis wrought by the World War. After nearly two decades, not only has this aftermath failed to disappear, but in many parts of the world it seems to be rooted and aggravated by an exclusive nationalism grown more virulent under the influence of the economic and population problems of our times.

This situation has been brought about, in my opinion, by the sort of regimentation imposed upon intellects during the war years. During that period you will recall that everywhere intelligence was mobilized on the same basis as other national resources. Of course, as early as the Napoleonic wars, a few intellectuals had already engaged in action according to their means, enlisting to serve not with the rifle or the sword, but with the pen. But after all, their services were in a measure voluntary, whereas from 1914 to 1918 we witnessed a drafting "en masse," a conscription of intellects; the struggle was as fierce in the field of ideas as on the battlefield.

It must be acknowledged that this mobilization of intelligence was not effected with impunity. On both sides of the frontier it has been realized that intelligence was the first casualty, and that while it fought in both camps, each blow struck by one camp against the other was in reality a blow inflicted upon intelligence itself.

Every day, nations are exposed to the danger of being drawn into wars which they have not wanted, and which they will wage, as they have before, without knowing why.

Positive, Constructive Effort Necessary

To be opposed to conflicts that are ever possible is not in itself sufficient, for that is a negative endeavor. There remains a positive constructive effort to be made.

The statement made by Leon Bourgeois, while he was Secretary General of the League of Nations, was entirely justified when he said that "intellectual activity, is, by its very nature, international; its fruits are a benefit to all nations and it can bear all of its fruits only with the assistance of all

nations." I consider that this intelligence, the common patrimony of all nations, and the mutual understanding which springs from it, are alone capable of checking disintegration and chaos, and the violence which these inevitably bring.

Intelligence must be more vigilant than ever, at a time when violence itself is being organized and when the manifestations of the selfish and destructive side of human nature assumes a sort of methodical and scientific character. André Maurois says: "The international life of tomorrow must be organized. It is easy to understand that present day conditions lead to an impasse. But we can escape from it only by being willing to apply in the field of international relations the methods of collective action which experience has shown to be more and more indispensable in the domestic life of each country."

The Rôle of Rotary

I come now to the exposition of what I conceive to be the role of Rotary in this problem. Obviously, Rotary cannot pretend to develop and achieve in this respect a program like that which devolves upon the League of Nations and its affiliated organizations, such as, since I have mentioned this point, the Institute for International Cooperation. As a result of their official status, these organizations are better qualified to take resolutions which are of the province of the governments themselves. Moreover, it should be noted that these resolutions are often too abstract, too academic in their nature, and thus would not be compatible with the work of Rotary, which must have a more practical and objective purpose.

Rotary is in a position, however, to exert a beneficial action in preparing the ground for solutions based on understanding and conciliation. Moreover, it can be helpful by directing its influence on problems which circumstances place within its reach. I have often said that the action of Rotary is founded less upon a system than it rests upon the exercise of good judgment and the ability to seize favorable occasions. In addition, to insure the efficacy of its action Rotary has every reason to advance progressively without attempting projects too pretentious or too theoretical to yield positive results.

Rotary must go forward much in the manner of the elephant who puts down his fourth foot only after he has made sure that the other three are secure. That is the only way to avoid disappointment. It is obvious that when we set up our international committees, when we encourage the exchange of young people between various countries, our endeavors are perhaps less dazzling than if, for example, we should promise the creation in Europe of an international committee intrusted with sovereign powers to regulate economic or political life in that part of the globe. But I believe, and I am sure you agree with me, that it is a more practical procedure and one where we are more likely to succeed.

We should recognize, also, that it is much more difficult to set up organizations in the realm of ideas than in the realm of material things. That is why, even though Rotary should above all things seek to prepare the intellectual foundation indispensable to create a spirit favorable to the peaceful solution of international problems, it is, nevertheless, in the practical realm that its action is most effective.

The Rotarian Program

In order to meet the conditions which I have just sketched, the Rotarian program, as I conceive it, in the International sphere, may be briefly defined as follows:

In the first place, it consists in developing between individual countries personal contacts and, as a result of this, exchanges of ideas among Rotarians. The consequences which may be anticipated from such a procedure are by no means limited, for our groups constitute really select bodies, an elite, whose influence within their respective countries should not be under-estimated.

I believe, also, that we should encourage and bring to realization to the greatest possible extent close relationship and co-operation in the activities of Rotary now carried on in the different countries. This has already been achieved, for example, in Europe, Rotarians of most countries have arranged small inter-country committees consisting of three or four Rotarians from each of two or three neighbouring countries. These committees are charged with the task of developing closer relations between the Rotarians of the countries concerned. The first

such committee to be organized is the one consisting of German and French Rotarians. That committee was designated in 1930 and has functioned for seven years. At the Regional conferences at The Hague, Lausanne and Venice, German and French Rotarians met in fellowship dinners. And this summer over 400 German and French Rotarians and their ladies attended the Franco-German luncheon at the Nice convention. That committee has arranged for leading French Rotarians to visit and speak to clubs in Germany and for leading German Rotarians to visit and speak to clubs in France.

German Rotary Clubs Disband

Unfortunately, as you are aware, since I left Paris the German Rotary clubs have decided to disband as a consequence of the decision taken by the National Socialist Party to instruct all its members to sever connection with Rotary.

I am very deeply concerned at this sad event, as I have personally many friends in Germany and shall never forget that it was a German who first nominated me at the Nice convention for the presidency of Rotary International.

As a veteran of the World War, I may say that I hate more the war than I fear it, precisely because I have gone through it, and I have always done my best to improve the relationship between my country and Germany. Despite the decision of the German Rotarians, I assure them that if they are no longer Rotarians they still remain our friends.

Exchange Visits Develop Understanding

The Rotarians of The Netherlands and Belgium arranged for exchange of visits—Rotarians and their families of the one country spending weekends in the homes of Rotarians of the other country.

The Rotarians of border clubs in Austria and Hungary agreed to exchange information concerning annoying or petty application of border regulations—those little “pin-pricks” which so often develop into serious misunderstanding. The Rotarians of Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary arranged a committee to consider common economic interests.

Rotary a few years ago played a big part in the development of a better understanding between Italy and France. And a year and a half ago, when an

accord was signed between these two countries, the head of the Italian Government, Premier Mussolini, recognized the rôle Rotary had played by conferring honours on four French Rotarians.

Only a few years ago relations between Jugoslavia and Bulgaria were very strained. But when the Rotary Club of Sofia, Bulgaria, received its charter forty Jugoslavians Rotarians and their ladies journeyed to Sofia to attend the charter presentation meeting. And thus in the friendly atmosphere of Rotary a close contact was established between leading men of those two countries. That contact developed into mutual understanding, with the result that this year, after more than two decades of hostility, a treaty of friendship was signed between those countries. It is interesting to note that the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jugoslavia, who was largely responsible for that treaty, is none other than our dear friend Milan Stojadinovic, past director of Rotary International. And it is especially interesting to know that it was he, as Governor of the Jugoslavian Rotary district, who led the group of forty Jugoslavs who journeyed to Sofia some years ago to attend the charter meeting. Thus out of that meeting and through Rotary there developed friendly contacts and a mutual understanding which will have a big effect on the destinies of two countries.

Northern Europeans Work Together

The Rotarians of the Northern European countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, work closely together. Periodically, they hold conferences of Northern Rotarians and they have merged the interest of their separate Rotary reviews and now only publish one Rotary review for the Rotarians of those five countries.

A close association has developed between the Rotarians of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and they, too, hold inter-country Rotary conferences.

Thus, the great accomplishment of Rotary in Europe is that it provides the opportunity for the leading men of those countries to meet together in a friendly atmosphere and in an endeavour to understand one another.

All this is an evidence of the splendid adaptability of Rotary. But that adaptability of Rotary is only possible, practically, because within the framework of its pact with other Rotary clubs, each

Rotary club is an autonomous unit. True, we need an international administration for the purposes of co-ordination, guidance and supervision. But what Rotary does depend on is what the individual Rotarians and the individual Rotary clubs do. And thus we cannot emphasize too strongly that the unit of Rotary International is the Rotary club and the corner-stone of our world-wide organization is the autonomy of the individual club. The complex and helpful machinery of our international organization exists for the sole purpose of assisting clubs and their members to develop and apply Rotary and to encourage and foster the objects of Rotary.

The Strength of Rotary

And so we realize the strength of Rotary—agreement on definite, limited, generally acceptable fundamental principles—principles which are adapted and applied by autonomous clubs according to the customs of the country or community concerned.

You and your club have made a great contribution to the progress of mankind in giving Rotary to the world. May the Founder Club of Rotary ever continue its pioneer work.

Now I should say a few words about my trip. For the past two months I have had the pleasure of visiting many of the countries of South America, and I have been very much impressed to see, for myself, that in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela they are just as enthusiastic about Rotary as I know you are here.

Rotary Spreads in South America

The Rotarian movement is rapidly spreading out in South America. To give you an example of this fact, I shall just mention that in Chile eleven clubs have been formed in the past few months. Chile now has seventy-one Rotary clubs, and after the United States this country (Chile) has the largest number of clubs in comparison to its population, which is only five millions of inhabitants.

On my visit to these South American countries I was everywhere accorded a hearty welcome, and I wish to express my sincere appreciation of all the kindness and courtesies bestowed on me by our South American friends.

At times I think of Rotary as a vehicle. This is a fact: that Rotary is a vehicle of good will, understanding and peace. To give you a few examples of it, I wish to remind you that during the Chaco War the Rotarians of South America looked after the prisoners on both sides, and they also did their best to promote the armistice which ended the war.

In Uruguay and Argentina, when there was a certain tension between the two countries, the Rotarians did their best to wipe out the misunderstanding and get the two countries closer to one another by exchanging their sons.

During my trip I was also very much impressed when attending, at the border of Chile and Peru, a ceremony which took place there between the clubs of Arica and Tacna. The Rotarians of both these clubs affixed a plate on a monument which was erected after the war, and which is named "Concordia." On the said plate is engraved the following words in Spanish, which I translate:

"So long as the sun will shine, so long as there will be a star to guide us, friendship will endure between Chile and Peru."

When in Ecuador I was also taken to a monument in the form of a pyramid which was erected with the help of Rotarians on the very equator line; and in this line I can see a symbol. It encircles the earth. So has Rotary done during the past thirty-two years.

The Future

There isn't time today for me to say anything about the splendid development of Rotary in North America nor of the remarkable acceptance of our movement and its objects in Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the many countries of Asia.

We now have over 4,400 clubs spread out in 83 countries or geographical regions, and we may say of Rotary what used to be said of the empire of Charles V—that the sun never sets upon Rotary clubs.

I feel sure that the Rotary movement will continue its extension all over the world, and I am convinced that our Rotary ideals will lead us towards a better future, made of peace, brotherhood and sincere co-operation, to the benefit of the whole of mankind.