
THE LEGACY OF RALPH BUNCHE

— KINGSLEY MOGHALU —

At the entrance to the conference room of the United Nations Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York is a large-sized photograph of a 20-cent U.S. stamp. From that stamp, the keen, handsome features of the late Ralph J. Bunche, the first U.N. undersecretary-general for special political affairs (today known as peacekeeping) seem to gaze at everyone entering the room.

I see this stamp reproduction daily. But a few months ago, as the Hizbollah fighters in southern Lebanon and the Israeli army engaged in a destructive conflict that claimed many civilian lives, I wondered: Were Ralph Bunche's herculean efforts for peace in the Middle East a half century ago worth it? Could there indeed be such a thing as "peace on earth?"

As I pondered the answers to these difficult questions, I reflected on the life of a man who negotiated the first peace agreement between Israel and the Arab States. The Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, U.N. mediator in Palestine, was assassinated in 1948. Bunche, his deputy, took his place and negotiated brilliantly on the armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria in 1949. For this diplomatic feat, Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950.

As U.N. peacekeeping chalks up many unsung successes but grapples with its more famous "failures," I think of the man unquestionably recognized as the original architect and engineer of this useful but oft-misunderstood creation called "peacekeeping" — Ralph Bunche. And, as Africa faces the daunting task of securing a respectable place for itself in a rapidly evolving international system, my mind dwells on a man of African descent who worked hard for the freedom of colonized Africa and other countries in the earlier half of this century. Bunche single-handedly drafted the sections of the U.N. Charter that address decolonization and trusteeship.

Ralph Johnson Bunche (1904-1971), American scholar, U.N. diplomat and

Kingsley Moghalu is a Political Affairs Officer in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Secretariat, New York. He has served in U.N. peacekeeping missions in Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia. The views expressed in this article, however, are his personal opinions and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the United Nations.

international civil servant, is easily one of the most outstanding diplomatic personalities of the twentieth century. In a phenomenal career that spanned a quarter of a century, he interacted with such influential notables as Dag Hammarskjöld, U Thant, David Ben-Burion, Gamal Abdal Nasser, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Anatoly Dobrynin, Patrice Lumumba and Golda Meir. Yet, Ralph Bunche was not only an accomplished and acclaimed personality. He was also an outstanding human being. It was this combination that made him a unique man of his times.

This essay intends to show how Ralph Bunche contributed to the major events and processes of the twentieth century that continue to affect our world today—the sweeping wind of decolonization that fundamentally changed the composition of nations in the period from 1945-1975, the problem of Palestine, U.N. peacekeeping, and the issues of race, racism and civil rights in his native United States. In underlining his crucial role in these matters, it is the author's hope that Bunche's legacy will become clear and his place in history thrown into sharper perspective.

Early Years

Ralph Bunche was born on August 7, 1904, in Detroit, Michigan, to Fred Bunche, a barber, and Olive Agnes Johnson. His mother's family played a crucial role in shaping his life. "We were a proud family, the Johnson clan," Bunche wrote later. "We bowed to no one, we worked hard and never felt any shame about having little money."¹

Bunche's maternal grandfather, Thomas Nelson Johnson, whose father was a Baptist preacher and freed slave from Virginia, was one of the very few non-whites to graduate from Shurtleff College in Alton, Illinois, in 1875. He subsequently became a teacher. In 1875, Thomas Johnson married Lucy Taylor, the daughter of a house slave and Irish landowner from Sedalia, Missouri. They had five children, one of whom was Olive Johnson. Olive married Fred Bunche, a native of Zanesville, Ohio, in Detroit.

In 1910, Bunche started elementary school in Detroit. But several family relocations soon followed, first to Toledo, Ohio, later to Knoxville, Tennessee, and then to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He continued his elementary education in non-segregated schools at these towns. Olive Johnson Bunche died of tuberculosis in 1917 when she was 35 and Ralph was only 13 years old. His father, who had left Albuquerque in search of regular work before Olive died, remarried after her death. Father and son never saw each other again.

Bunche's grandmother, Lucy Taylor Johnson, took in Ralph and his sister Grace and moved the family to Los Angeles in 1917. For the rest of his youth, Lucy was the strongest influence in his life. Bunche was fortunate in this regard, for his grandmother was a spiritual, affectionate and authoritative woman who taught him to have confidence in his abilities and to be proud of his racial origins in the face of institutional racial discrimination.

In Los Angeles, Bunche was enrolled in the predominantly white Thirtieth Street Intermediate School. He had initially been relegated to "practical" cours-

es for Negro children on the assumption that he would not move on to university education, but his grandmother insisted that he be enrolled in academic classes that would prepare him for college. He graduated with honors in 1918. Bunche then attended Jefferson Memorial High School, where he graduated with honors and was valedictorian of his class in 1922.

UCLA, Harvard and Howard

The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), where he enrolled on a scholarship, was the turning point in the life of Ralph Bunche. It was there that his intellect, personality and leadership skills came to full bloom. His years at UCLA were an all-around success in scholarship, athletics, social organization and public speaking. He held leadership positions in the student council and debating society and wrote articles for the university's student newspaper, while augmenting his scholarship with a variety of jobs.

Bunche identified international relations as his main interest while at UCLA. In various remarks and speeches, he began to articulate his thoughts on the "isms" of his time—imperialism, colonialism, racism—and his general vision of mankind's future. Many of his views were heavily tinged with idealism, but he would have opportunities in his later career to transform his beliefs into practical action.

In 1927, Ralph Bunche graduated *summa cum laude* from UCLA with majors in political science and philosophy, and served as valedictorian at commencement ceremonies. His graduation address was titled "The Fourth Dimension of Personality." In this speech he outlined two principles which were to guide him throughout his life: that knowledge must be combined with social action, and that *vision* is essential to the full development of the human personality. According to Bunche, the "visionary dimension" of personality encompasses the "bigness" of soul and enables man to understand and love his fellows. This quality, in addition to spirituality, imagination and altruism, is essential for "the great man—the leader, the socially valuable man."

This early speech is of critical importance in appraising Bunche. It incisively expressed his personality and contained elements that reflected his approach to the numerous challenges he faced in his later life and career. The theme of combining knowledge with social action also illuminates his later career transition from academia to the world of policy and diplomacy, from radical scholar to statesman.

As an African-American, he was subjected to institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination, which led him to write prolifically on the subject of racism.

If the foundation for Ralph Bunche's future role was laid in his undergraduate days at UCLA, the intellectual pillars of his greatness were built at Harvard University. He enrolled at Harvard for graduate study in political science with the grant of a tuition fellowship and further financial support from a black women's civic club in Los Angeles. At Harvard, Bunche, as usual, left his mark. His friend and fellow Harvard graduate Robert Weaver, the eminent economist who later served as the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Lyndon Johnson, painted this portrait of Bunche at Harvard:

Bunche was extremely attractive, quite vocal, articulate and approachable . . . What impressed me most about Ralph in those days was his optimism. I soon realized that it was not rooted in wishful thinking, as is often the case, but rather based on a long history of overcoming obstacles and an uncanny ability to produce stupendous amounts of work over long sustained periods of application. I watched his capacity grow in proportion to the critical nature of the issues. It maximized the impact of his knowledge, the brilliance of his personality, and was in my opinion the key factor in his spectacular career.²

Bunche completed his M.A. in 1928 and accepted an appointment as assistant professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C., one of America's leading black universities. He organized and chaired Howard's first political science department. Concurrently, he continued doctoral study at Harvard with an Osias Goodwin Fellowship and the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, completing his Ph.D. in government and international relations in 1934. He was awarded the Toppan Prize for the year's best dissertation in this field at Harvard. The dissertation, "French Administration in Togoland and Dahomey," was a comparison of French administration in Togoland, a League of Nations mandate territory, with that of Dahomey (now Benin), a colony.

From 1928 until 1941, Bunche pursued an academic career at Howard, and was promoted to associate professor in 1933. The colonial status of African countries engaged his deep attention, and he traveled extensively in east, west and southern Africa, establishing himself as an intellectual authority on colonialism. As an African-American he was subjected to institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination in the United States, and the political, social and economic conditions faced by his race in the United States and Africa led him to write prolifically on the subject of racism. In the process, Bunche became a progressive activist and helped found the National Negro Congress in 1936. That same year he published his classic monograph, *A World View of Race*. Bunche later assisted the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal in the groundbreaking study of the status and life of African-Americans which was later published as a book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*.

In 1930, Bunche married Ruth Ethel Harris, a native of Montgomery, Ala-

bama. They had met during Bunche's first year at Howard, where Ruth was a student.

American Public Service

Ralph Bunche made the transition from life in the ivory tower to public service in 1941, when he accepted an invitation to work as a senior social science analyst in the Africa and Far East Section of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. He was later promoted to head of the section. His academic career of the previous decade had been excellent preparation for this position; indeed, his reputation as a specialist on Africa earned him the job. Bunche made several excellent contributions to the U.S. war effort, among which was his authorship of background papers on Africa for the use of U.S. soldiers deployed to that area during the war.

As Brian Urquhart notes in his biography of Bunche, one of the major effects of Bunche's entry into public service was his realization that, while he retained his convictions on the burning issues of the day and could express his opinions in private circles, the obligations of public service required him to be restrained and discreet in his public statements. This is a dilemma familiar to anyone who has made the career switch from academia to public service—both paths have their advantages and limitations. Ralph Bunche had the opportunity to experience both, and arrived at the opinion that his years in public service were the most useful in his life. The pull of academia, however, remained strong. Several years later, while working as a staff member of the U.N. Secretariat, Bunche was appointed a full professor with tenure at Harvard. He accepted but postponed, then assumed the post but eventually resigned, choosing to continue his service with the United Nations.

On December 8, 1943, the U.S. Department of State formally requested Bunche's transfer to that department, and on January 4, 1944, he became an officer there. His responsibilities covered the colonial territories for which the Allies were then formulating policies, including the concept of trusteeship, that would be implemented after the war by the soon-to-be-established United Nations Organization. He became an increasingly influential member of a select team of American officials that laid the groundwork for the San Francisco Conference on International Organization.

In April 1945, Bunche participated in the San Francisco Conference as a

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member of the U.S. delegation headed by Secretary of State Edward R. Stettin. Bunche was a member of the American team on the Committee on Trusteeship at the Conference. Trusteeship was the most controversial topic at the Conference because of the European powers' opposition to policies that threatened their colonial empires, and Bunche was at the center of the drafting process for the sections of the U.N. Charter dealing with that topic. He drafted most of the following parts of the Charter: Chapter XI, "The Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories," and Chapters XII and XIII, "The Trusteeship System."

The signing of the U.N. Charter in San Francisco was a momentous event in twentieth-century international relations, and Ralph Bunche was not only present at the creation; he was one of the creators. The three chapters of the Charter on dependent territories and trusteeship, in the words of Urquhart, "gave a momentum and a legitimacy to decolonization which allowed the process to be completed within 30 years of the San Francisco Conference, putting an end to the long era of colonial empires, and radically changing both the geopolitical map of the world and the membership of the United Nations. Bunche was to continue to play a historic role in this process."³ After San Francisco, international service in the new organization beckoned irresistibly.

World Statesman—United Nations Service

On April 22, 1946, Bunche joined the U.N. Secretariat on temporary loan from the State Department for six weeks as acting director of the trusteeship division. Several extensions of this arrangement followed until December, when U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie of Norway requested that the United States release Bunche for a permanent appointment in the Secretariat as the Director of the Trusteeship and Decolonization Division. The request was honored.

Bunche welcomed the opportunity of the truly global scope and possibilities a senior post in the United Nations would give him. The prospect of moving away from racially segregated Washington, together with his belief that New York would offer his family a much better cultural and educational environment, also influenced his decision to leave the State Department and become a U.N. staff member.

Palestine and the Nobel Prize

The appointment of Ralph Bunche by U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie to the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947 set the stage for Bunche to apply his diplomatic skills and talents in a manner that was to bring him worldwide acclaim. Palestine was a League of Nations mandate territory that never became a U.N. trust territory; the United Kingdom was the mandatory power. Following the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which established a Jewish homeland in Palestine, tensions between Arabs and Jews in the area had intensified.

UNSCOP comprised representatives of 11 states—Australia, Canada, Czech-

oslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. The Committee had serious difficulties in arriving at a final report, and it eventually fell to Bunche to draft both its majority report, which contained a plan for the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews (although the partitionists could not reach agreement on precise boundaries and the status of Jerusalem), and the minority report involving a plan for a federal state with the Arab and Jewish states as its provinces and a common capital in Jerusalem. There was also a unanimous recommendation that Palestine should be administered by the United Nations for a two-year transitional period. The dexterous simultaneous drafting of two opposing reports, each with its own cogent arguments, was another exhibition of the draftsmanship that was a key skill in the diplomatic career of Ralph Bunche.

Although the partition plan, which the Arabs strenuously opposed, was adopted in the U.N. General Assembly, it proved impossible to implement on the ground. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. The following day, Egypt communicated to the Security Council that its forces were entering Palestine "to establish security and order instead of chaos and disorder."⁴ Military forces from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria soon joined the Egyptians.

The Security Council, on May 21, announced the appointment of Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden as the U.N. Mediator in Palestine, an office the General Assembly had established on the same day Israel proclaimed its statehood. Trygve Lie appointed Ralph Bunche as the chief representative of the secretary-general in Palestine and deputy to Bernadotte.

As a mediation effort was impossible amidst continued fighting, the Security Council called on the Israeli and Arab sides to observe a truce for four weeks. Bernadotte set a deadline of June 11 for its entry into effect, which the parties accepted. Bunche wrote detailed proposals for the truce. The same day, military observers arrived in Jerusalem to monitor the truce, and Bunche had the responsibility of elaborating the doctrinal basis and practical operating procedures for their work. This group of truce monitors became institutionalized as the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), and remains in place to this day. As Urquhart described it:

This was the first U.N. military-observer group—indeed, the first U.N. peacekeeping operation—and there were no precedents for it. The first and most basic principle was strict impartiality and objectivity. Bunche also insisted that the observers should be unarmed, something alien to the traditional military mind. He believed that this was vital for the observers' own safety and would put them above the conflict they were monitoring, whereas carrying individual weapons would only endanger them. Bunche's rule became the accepted practice in all U.N. observer missions.⁵

Bernadotte's assassination in Jerusalem on September 17, 1948 changed the Middle East situation and Bunche's role in it. Following Bernadotte's tragic

death, Bunche was appointed Acting Mediator. He was faced with the task of working out an armistice agreement between Israel and the Arab States. Again, he had no precedents to consult. Bunche, therefore, approached the impending armistice talks with much improvisation and innovation. Many analysts agree that his early decision to control the negotiation situation from the outset was the key to his subsequent success. He achieved this strategic goal by first, choosing the island of Rhodes and the Hotel des Roses as the site for the talks (the hotel was just unpretentious and spartan enough to make the negotiating delegations wish not to tarry too long there), and second, his strategy

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of separate, one-on-one mediations between Israel and each of its Arab protagonists, as opposed to negotiations with the Arab States as a group. Third, Bunche did not speak to the media throughout the negotiations, and he persuaded the delegations to follow this practice.

The armistice negotiations in Rhodes were a grueling diplomatic marathon, lasting for over four months in early 1949. Outside Rhodes, the world watched with bated breath. Bunche reported on the negotiations' progress constantly to U.N. Secretary-General Lie and the Security Council in New York. Negotiations between Egypt and Israel—potentially the most difficult—came first. Bunche persuaded, cajoled, charmed and occasionally bullied the opposing parties. On several occasions, the negotiations were nearly torpedoed over strategic details. On February 24, 1949, the Egyptian and Israeli del-

egations signed the armistice agreement. Similar agreements between Israel and Jordan, and Syria and Lebanon followed in the next few months. Congratulatory messages poured in for Bunche from all over the world. He returned to New York a hero in American popular culture and the world over, the new “colossus of Rhodes.”

Ralph Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in September, 1950. The Korean War was in progress, and the Cold War had by then emerged as a major threat to international security, with subsequent adverse effects on the effectiveness of the United Nations.

Those who have sought to diminish Bunche's formidable achievement in Rhodes have portrayed it as a fluke: he simply happened to be at the right place at the right time. There is no doubt that fortuitous coincidences frequently placed Bunche in the middle of historic events. But, such coincidence and ability are not mutually exclusive. Bunche was known as a hardworking statesman who mastered the details of a problem, applied himself conscientiously to the search for solutions, and followed up on his successes to the greatest extent possible. As Benjamin Rivlin noted, Bunche “proved to be not

only in the right place at the right time, but the right person at the right place at the right time."⁶

The Development of U.N. Peacekeeping

In 1954, as part of a reorganization of the U.N. Secretariat by the secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden, Bunche was one of two individuals appointed to the rank of undersecretary-general without portfolio (the other was a Russian official). This was the highest rank in the Secretariat below the secretary-general. Bunche's responsibilities were special assignments of an interdepartmental nature, and in the process he became the principal trouble-shooter for the dynamic Hammarskjöld. Consequently, in 1957, he was appointed undersecretary-general for special political affairs, with primary responsibility for U.N. peacekeeping.

Nowhere in the U.N. Charter is peacekeeping mentioned as one of the techniques for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Nor was it even envisaged. The only use of military troops provided for in the U.N. Charter is enforcement action in response to acts of aggression, under Chapter VII of the Charter. But, peacekeeping has been ingeniously interpreted as coming under the purview of Chapter VI, which empowers the Security Council to take various peaceful measures to help settle disputes that are likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mention has already been made of Ralph Bunche's role in the establishment of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization. In that operation, Bunche devised an important operational practice in U.N. peacekeeping—the use of white-painted vehicles with the letters "U.N." painted boldly in black. This remained standard practice in all subsequent U.N. peacekeeping operations. Bunche developed this rule in response to the dilemma presented by the fact that the blue U.N. flags that were to be mounted on the UNTSO vehicles were the same color as the Israeli flag.

While UNTSO was the first U.N. peacekeeping mission, it was a mission of unarmed military observers. There is a distinction between this type of operation and a full-fledged peacekeeping force, which involves the use of armed troops serving under U.N. command for the duration of the operation's mandate.⁷ In this context, the first full U.N. peacekeeping operation was the U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF) established in 1956 in response to the Suez crisis. Again, Bunche directed the establishment and operation of the mission, this time mostly from the U.N. Headquarters in New York, with subsequent visits to the field. UNEF was a major challenge as it was the first large-scale U.N.

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operation requiring deployment of armed military and logistical elements to the field.

Bunche coordinated the selection of countries contributing troops for this operation. In the process, certain general rules guiding the selection of troop-contributing nations for U.N. peacekeeping operations were established. One of these rules is that countries which had, or were perceived to have, vested interests in a conflict could not participate in a peacekeeping mission established in regard to that conflict. UNEF worked successfully until the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab States in 1967 destroyed its effective existence, much to Bunche's dismay.

In June 1960, Bunche was attending the independence ceremonies in the then-Belgian Congo (now Zaire) as the representative of Dag Hammarskjöld, when civil disturbances broke out against Belgian presence and as a result of disagreements within the Congolese government. As the disturbances quickly spread and a breakdown of law and order ensued, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 143, which authorized a U.N. peacekeeping operation in the Congo. Hammarskjöld quickly appointed Bunche as special representative of the U.N. secretary-general in the Congo. Bunche spent the next three months in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) working day and night for a ceasefire and a political settlement to the conflict. Simultaneously, he directed the establishment and deployment of the peacekeeping mission known as the *Organisation de Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC). Bunche subsequently continued to direct the Congo operation for the next four years from New York.

ONUC's mandate was to provide the Congo with technical assistance in security administration, using U.N. forces to help stabilize the situation, and to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of emergency food shipments. In this respect, ONUC was a forerunner of the multidimensional "second generation" peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations in recent years in Cambodia, Mozambique, Haiti and other places. These operations were established after the end of the Cold War. Such missions went beyond classic military interpositions between ceasefire lines in Bunche's days to providing "transition assistance"—a combination of traditional military peacekeeping tasks, humanitarian assistance, and the organization of elections—to countries in civil war situations.

Bunche also directed various other U.N. peacekeeping operations including the U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which was established in 1964 and was the first U.N. peacekeeping operation to use international civilian police monitors in addition to a military component. UNFICYP has remained in place over the past 32 years, and has successfully maintained the ceasefire between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island of Cyprus.

The role and achievements of Bunche in the development of U.N. peacekeeping are of special relevance today. Maintaining international peace and security remains the *raison d'être* of the United Nations, and U.N. peacekeeping operations have proven to be the most innovative and successful aspect of the organization's work in this area. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize in

1988 to U.N. peacekeeping operations is a major recognition of this fact. Certainly, peacekeeping has encountered setbacks, as in Somalia, but these have been far outweighed by its benefits and successes in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Namibia and other theaters of operation. At the time of this writing, there are 17 U.N. peacekeeping operations deployed around the world. These operations currently have 26,000 military and civilian police personnel from 70 countries.⁸

Race and Civil Rights

Any discussion of Ralph Bunche without mention of the role of race and racism in his life would be superficial. Although Bunche in many ways transcended racial divisions during his lifetime, the fact that he was of African ancestry undoubtedly defined him and affected him throughout his life.

Bunche was principled in his opposition to racial discrimination and forthright in condemning it. In 1953, he rejected an appointment to the position of U.S. assistant secretary of state by President Harry Truman because he did not want to live under Jim Crow conditions in Washington, D.C. He was unimpressed by the fact that he would have been given special privileges as a result of his position. Despite the strength of his views on racism, he was neither bitter nor engaged in reverse racism in response to the stifling civil rights situation in the United States.

In his early days, Bunche's intellectual approach to racism was more radical. He viewed colonialism and slavery as manifestations of racism mixed with economic motivations, and he believed that the subsequent effect was to make Africans an economic and political underclass, both on the African continent under colonial rule, and in the United States as a result of the institution of slavery. In his later years, Bunche did not yield his principled opposition to racial discrimination, but devoted more energy to the advocacy of public policy solutions to the "Negro problem" than to an intellectual search for its causes.

Bunche used his U.N. position to continue to speak out against racism, and his international career and reputation widened his role from fighter against injustice in America to that of a champion for justice on a global scale. To that end, he made skillful use of the provisions of the U.N. Charter. Although his position as an international civil servant dictated discretion in his public pronouncements, Bunche had understandings with U.N. secretary-generals Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant that he could express himself freely on the sub-

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ject of racism. He continued to be active in the American civil rights movement, maintaining a demanding schedule of public speaking, and he was a mentor to the great civil rights leader Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1965, while still in the employ of the United Nations, he participated in the historic civil rights march led by King in Selma, Alabama.

Bunche was in many ways a trailblazer for his race, both domestically and internationally. Among numerous firsts, he was the first African-American to receive a Harvard Ph.D. in political science, the first to become a professional officer in the U.S. State Department (Frederick Douglass, the freed slave who served as U.S. minister to Haiti in the nineteenth century, was a political appointee), and the first to win a Nobel Prize.⁹ Bunche, however, disliked being identified as the "first" black. He saw himself as intellectually equal to members of any other race and thought that placing undue racial emphasis on his achievements detracted from his merit.

The Legacy of Ralph Bunche

On December 9, 1971, Ralph Bunche died in New York City. Earlier that year, poor health had compelled him to retire from the United Nations. The world mourned Bunche's death. Tributes poured in from heads of government, diplomats and statesmen, the media, and ordinary people.

In his lifetime, Bunche was awarded 69 honorary doctorate degrees (including one from his alma mater, Harvard, in 1949), and authored more than 10 books and monographs, about 30 academic papers, and countless speeches and unpublished memoranda. He was a board member and trustee of various American organizations and universities, including Harvard University, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Red Cross and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Why was Bunche so great a man, and what is his legacy? Bunche himself once wrote, "Greatness, more often than not, is the product of the combination of ability and the accident of time and circumstance"—an observation that mirrors his own life. Bunche had an astounding capacity for hard work and perseverance, as well as the mental virtuosity to apply his abilities to sudden opportunities and take charge of the situation. With his compassion, humor and hard-headed pragmatism, he fit the ancient Roman description of the ideal statesman: *suaviter in modo; fortiter in re* ("soft in manner; strong in action"). Shabtai Rosenne, a member of the Israeli negotiating team at Rhodes and later ambassador of Israel to the United Nations, described Bunche as "one of the greatest men I ever had the honor to work with, and against."¹⁰

Ralph Bunche left several legacies: the trusteeship system and decolonization helped make virtually all the world free—although still practically divided between the North and the South; the Middle East peace process, still an unfinished business; peacekeeping, which, freed from the shackles of the Cold War, blossomed with great expectations that have collided with the realities of global *realpolitik* and the inherent limitations of human nature; and, finally, the struggle against racism and for racial equality and civil rights, which has

been won to a large extent in the world's constitutions but remains unfinished in the minds of men and women.

These multiple legacies can be summed up in one overarching legacy—the United Nations, the organization for which Bunche labored most of his life. His multidimensional career as a world statesman makes him a figure of major historical and contemporary importance. He was not only a man of his times; he was a man for our times. As former U.N. Secretary-General U Thant eulogized upon Bunche's death, Bunche was "an international institution in his own right."

Notes

1. Handwritten note, July 15, 1967, quoted in Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: an American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 23.
2. Robert Weaver, quoted in Benjamin Rivlin, ed., *Ralph Bunche: The Man and His Times* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 6.
3. Urquhart, 122.
4. U.N. Document S/743, May 15, 1948.
5. Urquhart, 161.
6. Rivlin, 16.
7. In several U.N. peacekeeping operations in recent years, both unarmed military observers and armed military units have been components of the same operation, but with separate functions.
8. U.N. Document DPI/1634/Rev. 2, March 1996.
9. South Africa's Chief Albert Lutheili, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and South African President Nelson Mandela have been subsequent recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.
10. Shabtai Rosenne, "Bunche At Rhodes—Diplomatic Negotiator," in Rivlin, 185.



