

U. N. Building's International Status Causes Odd Problems

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. (AP)—One U.N. admirer informed the secretary-general that he would like to get married in the General Assembly hall.

Another thought it would be nice if his wife could give birth to her baby in the headquarters building. A third wrote that when his time came, he wished to be buried in the U.N. rose garden.

Among the thousands of communications the U.N. receives each year from crowned heads, chiefs of state and tribal leaders is a scattering of such requests by sentimental souls and eccentrics.

The harried U.N. legal department takes time out in most cases to send back a polite but firm turnaround.

Several years ago a rumor swept the corridors that a woman had been rushed to the clinic suffering labor pains. The rumor, which proved false, touched off queries as to what a child's nationality would be in such a case. The legal experts said a baby born on U.N. soil would be a U.S. citizen, no matter what the parents' nationality.

Several persons, including two delegates, have died at the

U.N., but there were no requests for their burial on the premises.

"Anyway," said a U.N. official, "if you were to dig down more than a couple of feet anywhere on the grounds, you might go crashing down into the basement garage."

When Dag Hammarskjold died last year, proposals were made to bury him on the 17-acre domain of U.N. headquarters. A delicate decision was averted when his body was returned to his native Sweden.

Some queries are so bizarre that the U.N. staff deems it wisest to ignore them.

About a year ago, an enterprising individual proclaimed himself sovereign of the lands beneath the sea and requested admission to the U.N. as a member state.

"He even sent his so-called prime minister here for an audience, but he never got beyond the information booth," a U.N. employee said.

A legal question that has long intrigued Hollywood and some novelists is whether a fugitive seeking haven in the U.N. would receive asylum.

One movie dealt with a stateless person who stowed away

on an American-bound ship, then took refuge in the U.N.

"He'll be on international soil," said one of the characters. "Nobody can touch him there."

One fiction thriller involved a murderer who raced across town and ducked into the U.N. building, leaving frustrated cops at the gate.

"This nonsense stems from traditional concept of international law," said Oscar Schachter, chief of the U.N.'s general legal division.

"It is true that under the U.N. headquarters agreement with New York City, legal summonses cannot be exercised without consent of the secretary-general," he said. "That's partly to keep process servers from swarming all over the place."

How about an accused spy wanted by U.S. authorities on political grounds? The secretary-general would probably cooperate. If, for some reason, he decided not to turn over the accused, a complex legal problem would result.

Usually such agitators are hustled out of the chamber, questioned and ejected at the gate. However, when a mob invaded the security council during a Congo debate two years

ago and attacked several guards, the ringleaders were turned over to New York authorities.

During the loyalty probes of the early 1950s, reports circulated that the FBI had sent agents into the U.N. to examine the files on American employees.

"This is not true," said Schachter. "Secretary-General Trygve Lie merely allowed federal agents to question people here, the same as they would in a private company."

"Lie also let the Civil Service Commission fingerprint U.S. employees of the U.N. here as a matter of convenience. Hammarskjold stopped the practice when he took office."

In one instance the United Nations decided to enact its own law.

In the early years, the U.N. was bone dry on election day, like the rest of New York. Thirsty delegates grumbled about their rights.

In 1951 after a lively assembly debate the U.N. decided to serve drinks as usual during the balloting hours.

"As a result, characters from all over town show a sudden interest in the U.N. each election day," said one staff guard. "At least it has kept the delegates happy."

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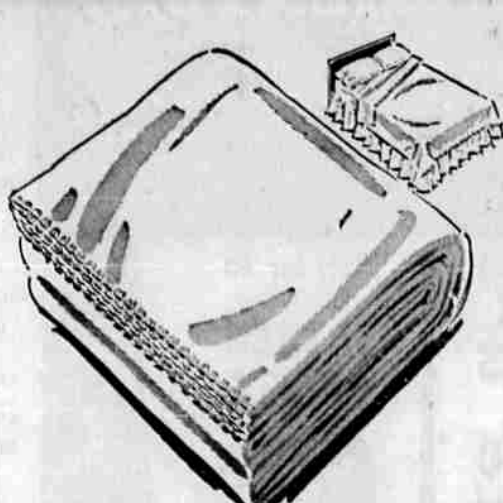
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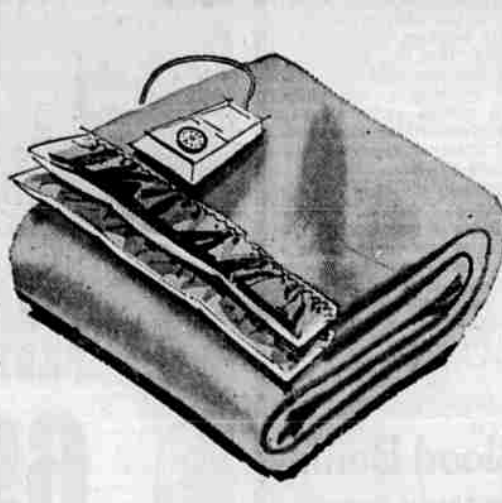


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