

# the United Nations in a new era

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# 1. current disillusionment with the UN

Governments, in all countries and of all political persuasions, still continually affirm, in as many as possible of their public statements, their undying devotion to the United Nations and its purposes and principles. They still express, as often as they decently can, as they have done for the past quarter century, their determination to uphold its objectives, to strengthen its effectiveness and to love, cherish and preserve it in every possible way. There is, however, an increasing desperation in the tone of such statements. They sound more and more like a form of auto-suggestion, whistling to keep the courage up. The words become an act of faith, an incantation which all feel obliged to pronounce, but in which none any longer feel great confidence. The paying of such obeisances is regarded as a necessary formality; but there is little inclination to take them too seriously; still less to act upon them. The underlying presumption is that the UN has "failed". It is "ineffective". It has contributed little to the solution of major problems in recent years. It must continue to exist, of course, like the House of Lords, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Daughters of the American Revolution and other decaying institutions; but little account need any longer be taken of it in the everyday policies of governments; Tory or Labour, here or abroad.

In some ways this general attitude of indifference, even contempt, is still more disturbing than those which prevailed in earlier years. Previously there was, among some, downright hostility to the UN; but there were many others who retained a faith in its potential rôle, and were therefore prepared to give it a significant part in policy making. Today there may be fewer who are covertly hostile to the organisation, or who regard it (as in the McCarthy heyday) as being a part of a world communist conspiracy; but there are also fewer who retain their earlier belief in its capacity to forge any substantial change in the traditional conduct of international relations among states. It is regarded today, not so much as an instrument for hostile and seditious forces, but as a bevy of ineffective busybodies; not as a threat, but as a mere irrelevance.

These feelings derive from a number of sources. In large part they are the result of wholly unrealistic expectations. The child who expects her new doll not merely to talk, but to answer all her questions correctly, the driver who expects his new car not merely to go at 100 miles an hour but to turn all corners automatically, will (unless they have bought unusually advanced models) inevitably feel cheated and disillusioned. Similarly, those who have traditionally regarded the UN as the solution to all the world's problems, as the modern manifestation of divine providence, a holy and impeccable supreme being, which can be called down from the skies, wave its magic wand and produce peace at a moment's notice, are inevitably disillusioned when they discover it is composed of frail and mortal human beings, with the same weaknesses and inconsistencies as other mortal creatures. Those who thought it only required the security council to meet and pronounce on every act of violence in any part of the world to produce instant concord have felt deceived and tricked when they find that even the most skillfully worded resolution is not invariably instantaneous in effect. The syllogism is simple if crude: The UN was created to bring peace; peace has not been assured; therefore the UN has failed. Even among those whose standards are somewhat less exacting, the sense of let down remains. Consciousness that the UN has failed to bring solutions to any of the main conflict situations of recent years (the Middle East, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Biafra and Czechoslovakia) creates a feeling that it is an increasingly marginal force in modern world politics: the real solutions, the serious negotiations, it is felt (on these, as on East West relations, strategic weapons, or monetary and trade policy) are undertaken elsewhere. The UN, on the other hand, seems ineffective in most of what it does. It provides, it is said, only words but not deeds; it is a focus for propaganda rather than for serious discussion and debate; it is dominated by a majority of very small, irresponsible nations who use their votes to steamroller through unrealistic resolutions; it flounders in endless and insuperable financial difficulties; it is a costly, inefficient and time consuming bureaucracy.



Some of these criticisms are plain untruths. It is not the case that the UN provides only words but not deeds. Even in the peace keeping field, the most difficult of all, the UN has established three major peace forces, which have done much to maintain or restore peace in three important conflict areas (the Middle East, the Congo and Cyprus), has established observer forces in a number of other cases, and has, almost entirely unnoticed by the world, successfully mediated in a number of significant disputes (for example, Cambodia/Thailand, Bahrain/Iran, and others). In other fields, especially economic and social, the deeds are even more manifest. Leaving aside the specialised agencies (which are part of the UN system and at present spend half a billion dollars a year in world social services, the value of which has been very widely recognised) extensive programmes of economic and technical assistance are provided by the UN proper. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is run and organised under the UN, spends a further quarter billion dollars a year on worthwhile programmes; and the UN is now beginning to undertake a whole range of new and important programmes in the field of population, disaster relief, narcotics control and the environment. These last, which are sometimes ignored altogether in assessments of its activities, are the areas of UN activity which today are developing at the most spectacular rate. (See, *The UN: an economic institution*, Fabian research 290 by Hamish Richards.)

Some of the other criticisms contain perhaps a core of truth. The UN has a cumbersome, and sometimes irresponsible assembly; is bureaucratic; has financial problems. The fact that the criticisms are made at all, however, and that so much is made of them, again makes clear the unrealistic standards which are created for the UN, and for the UN alone. It is recognised that national parliaments waste much time in idle debate, childish antics and sterile altercation; but this causes little more reaction than a shrug of the shoulders, and the assumption that this is a normal fact of life. It is accepted that in almost every national administration in the world there is inefficient and wasteful

bureaucracy (and in many, dishonesty and corruption as well, happily virtually unknown in the UN system); and this too is taken for granted. It is known that national and municipal governments have their financial problems; and this too is regarded as inevitable. It is only because many people have, if only subconsciously, a conception of the UN as something above and beyond reality, as a mythical Utopian entity that should be free of all mortal failings, that they condemn, with such violence, inadequacies which elsewhere they would accept as inescapable.

The UN indeed, as has often been pointed out, can never be anything but a mirror of the world as it is. If that world is a world of cold war, the UN will be a system of cold war (as in its first 15 years). If the world is one of rich/poor confrontation, so will the UN be also (as today). If the world is beset with nationalism, so too will the UN be. If there are conflicts and disagreements among continents, races, or ideologies, these will be manifest in the UN too. It is no use blaming the UN, therefore, for deficiencies which are those of the world it reflects.

When all this is said and done, however, it remains true that, for a number of reasons, the UN does not today, especially in the peace and security area, perform the rôle it was by many (however unrealistically) expected to play when it was founded. This is only partly for the obvious reasons, which have been operative for many years; the failure to create a security council force, the use of the veto, the "by-passing" of the UN through agreements outside it. These are themselves reflections of tensions and hostilities which would have made it difficult for the UN to perform effectively in this area in any case. Even if, for example, a security council force, as envisaged in articles 42, to 49 of the charter, had been created, even if the veto had been used more sparingly in the early years (it has only been used two or three times a year in the last ten years), even if every major issue had been brought first to the security council before discussions began elsewhere, it is unlikely that, in most of the situations it has confronted, agreement



would have been reached on effective UN action to halt the conflict. Here too, the difficulties were symptoms, rather than causes, of the UN's failure to play a more dominant rôle in world affairs. The difficulties have been those of world politics as a whole, which no international machinery, however perfect, can automatically dissolve or spirit away.

The underlying factors which have prevented the UN from performing the rôle which many originally envisaged for it are of a number of kinds.

First, the charter was based on the assumption that, while on matters *directly* affecting themselves, the permanent members would be able to prevent UN action through the use of the veto, there would be a wide range of other matters, affecting other parts of the world, in which they would normally be able to agree on the type of action required by the world body. The common belief that the founders of the UN assumed "great power unanimity" is an absurdity: the cold war had already begun at the time the charter was signed and few were so naïve as to think that there would not be serious disagreements on many of the matters which arose. What is true is that the shrinkage of distance made the disagreements far more all-pervading than expected. There has been no part of the world, however remote, which was not regarded as essential to the interests of some or all of the great powers: over Iran as over Lebanon, over the Middle East as over the Congo, over Guatemala as over Hungary, the organisation was split fatally. Over Vietnam as well, the world's most important trouble spot over the last ten years, the UN has been almost totally inactive, partly for the same reason. The entry of China increases the difficulties: over the India-Pakistan war of 1971, for example, the Soviet Union, the US and China took directly opposed views as to the action to be taken by the security council, with the result that no action was taken at all. Today there are very few issues, wherever they arise, on which there is not a major conflict of interest between the permanent members, and this will often prevent effective action being taken.

Second, a very large proportion of conflict situations in the modern world, are, at least nominally, internal problems. Most wars in the contemporary world are civil wars rather than international wars (or at least begin as such). Article 2 (7) of the charter, preventing interference in matters that are "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction" of a member state, can be used to prevent UN action over such situations, unless the government concerned actively demands it (as occurred over the Congo and Cyprus). On these grounds such issues as Biafra and Bangladesh (until it became the cause of international war) were not discussed in the UN at all; and it is largely on the same grounds that the wars in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Sudan, Burma, Chad, Burundi and other countries (in other words almost all the main conflict situations of recent years) have not been considered in that body at all. It seems reasonable to forecast that conflicts in the next decade or two will continue to be predominantly of this type. Unless there is a new willingness to bring them to the UN, they may continue to take place largely unregarded by that body.

Third, the increasing move in recent years towards the explicit acceptance of a sphere of influence policy has also weakened the UN. The West has not attempted to interfere in eastern Europe, even over the events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union was prepared to accept the dominance of the US over the affairs of Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, and, ultimately, in the Cuban missile crisis. The growth of western European and Chinese power, the increasing resentment in Africa and Latin America at great power interference, and the increasing reluctance of US public opinion to accept a continuing US rôle as world policeman, may increasingly bring about a world of continental regions, each concerned to regulate its own affairs. The Nixon and the Brezhnev doctrines, in different ways, point in the same direction. Even if such spheres are not held to imply an unlimited right of intervention by the neighbouring super power, that power may at least become increasingly reluctant to tolerate outside intervention, even by a body such as the UN. Where there are



regional organisations, such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) the Organisation of African Union (OAU) and the emerging European institutions, these too may often be held to have the primary rôle in solving local problems and disputes.

Fourth, a considerable number of the major issues of the modern world are questions of human rights, whether the rights are those of individuals (say, in southern Africa or the Soviet Union) or of large minorities (such as the Ibos in Nigeria, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Bengalis in Pakistan, or the Biharis in Bangladesh). The UN is a body of nation states, however, each concerned to preserve national sovereignty; and each probably having at least one such skeleton in its own cupboard. The assembled governments within that organisation, therefore, even though some may be genuinely concerned over a particular human rights issue, are usually reluctant to interfere too blatantly in the internal affairs of another state. The provisions of article 2 (7) are thus not only widely invoked by the governments accused, but are usually interpreted with some sympathy and understanding by its fellow members. Where the violation is a particularly gross one, and where there is a large number of nations which feels strong solidarity with the oppressed group (as over southern Africa), such objections may be overcome. In other cases, however, this happens far less often, even where basic political rights are denied (as in certain other parts of Africa, for example, or in totalitarian systems elsewhere).

Fifth, some of the great powers oppose a strong UN rôle. The communist countries in general, as a permanent minority group within the UN, and one pathologically suspicious of all external interference or even influence, have always been apprehensive that the organisation may be used against their interests by the majority (its present Afro-Asian majority as much as its former western majority). For this reason they have been consistently hostile to any steps which might have the effect of strengthening the organisation. They oppose increases in the organisation's budget and those of the agencies. They

oppose "strong" candidates for secretary general. They are particularly unfavourable to any extension of the UN's peace keeping rôle, as well as anything else which looks even remotely "supranational". It is not impossible that China, though seeking to win support and good will among the developing countries, may take a similar line. The US too, appears increasingly cautious in its approach to the UN, and is actively seeking to reduce its present financial commitment to it; Britain and France are little more positive. The permanent members have even combined together to urge a slower rate of growth in the organisation's annual budget.

Sixth, the increase in the membership of very small countries, exercising equal voting power with the very largest, threatens to weaken UN authority. The fact that majority votes in the assembly can now be passed by 90 governments representing well under 10 per cent of the world's population against the will of ten or twelve nations representing 90 per cent, makes its resolutions appear unrepresentative. It arouses resentment in certain quarters. It lessens respect for UN resolutions. It makes the largest powers particularly chary of giving any effective authority to the general assembly. It is true, and is often forgotten, that such resolutions are only recommendations anyway, and should be taken as simply an expression of opinion; but the opinion should still, it is held, be representative. The criticism has more validity when made about the security council, whose resolutions can have mandatory force. When, as recently, half the members of the council are very small states (whose total contributions amounted then to only 0.25 per cent of the UN budget) it is not surprising that the largest countries come to regard its resolutions with less than total veneration.

Seventh, the development of super-power politics, bilateral dealings between the US and the Soviet Union, and now increasingly between the US and China, as a means of resolving important issues accentuates this down grading of the UN. Not only do the big powers look less to the UN to solve their problems; they have devised new channels of their own which



can replace it. So a new form of "by passing" develops. The feeling grows that the major issues will only be decided through such channels; and so again the UN begins to appear increasingly irrelevant.

Eighth, the somewhat disappointing record over questions of peace and war over the last few years is cumulative in effect. Few people any longer expect the UN to be able to deal with such matters effectively. This itself encourages efforts to solve such problems outside the UN. Countries which are themselves threatened or attacked become more sceptical about turning to the UN for assistance. This too, with the continuing financial problems (which inhibit new peace keeping operations), promotes growing disillusion.

Ninth, the increasingly glaring economic disparities between rich countries and poor create pressures and tensions of a new kind which the UN has not yet found a means of resolving. To the rich countries the UN begins to look more and more like a glorified begging bowl, directing ever more onerous demands towards them. To the poor, it seems to provide an increasingly inadequate response to the legitimate claims they make upon it. Either way, images of the UN and of its proper rôle increasingly diverge, and become the source of more and more misunderstandings.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamental of all, the old Adam of national sovereignty will not go away as obligingly as the UN's founders perhaps may have hoped. Indeed, nationalist feeling, in some parts of the world at least, becomes more powerful than ever. Governments that are strongly influenced by these sentiments do not easily respond to the urgings of an international organisation, which in any case has no ultimate means of enforcing its wishes. Most governments support the UN where the UN view is identical with their own. Just as the West could make a virtue of supporting the UN in the 'fifties, when what the UN wanted was what the West wanted (except on colonial issues), so now the Afro-Asians can present themselves as powerful supporters of the UN, since what the UN wants means what they

want. Where the UN's wishes conflict with those of individual nations, however, there is little the UN can do to enforce conformity. Most nations, third world as much as western or communist, are not yet ready to surrender any significant part of their independence of action to an international organisation; and especially not on the basic questions of peace and war where this surrender is most necessary.

These then are a formidable array of difficulties. In the light of such problems, the UN has now to consider alternative methods of expanding its authority and activity in the new world that has come into being since its creation.



## 2. the implications for the future

All of these difficulties are real ones, and there is nothing to be gained by blinking them. In considering how the UN could or should evolve in the future, it is necessary to bear them constantly in mind. Indeed, it is worth taking them each in turn to consider the implications they have for the UN's future.

First, the fact that in the modern world events in any part are felt to be of vital importance to each great power does not necessarily mean that the UN is made helpless. It certainly means that no great power will be indifferent to what happens, even in the remotest areas. There will thus be no easily mobilised five power consensus, such as is sometimes said to have been foreseen when the UN was created, even on events in deepest Asia or darkest Latin America. Such five power agreement will normally have to be *manufactured*. Each power will have its own views, its own interests, its own client governments to defend, its own face to save. What this means is that agreed solutions will only come about by careful and patient negotiation to secure them. The UN can still have an important rôle in promoting and guiding such negotiations.

Second, the fact that so many conflicts are internal, again, does not in itself preclude a UN rôle. A considerable number of civil war situations have in fact been discussed by the UN since its foundation: those in Greece, Lebanon, Laos, Yemen, Congo and Cyprus, among others; peace forces were sent in the last two cases, and observers in the others. Representatives of the secretary general sought to resolve civil conflict in the Dominican Republic, and to perform humanitarian rôles in Biafra and Bangladesh. In other cases of civil war, however, no attempt has been made to involve the UN in any way at all. This is not always because of the resistance of the government chiefly concerned. Often it is simply because no outside government has ever thought to raise the matter; or because some other government has objected to it being discussed (as the Russians objected to discussion of Vietnam). In many of these cases, if outside countries had been more persistent in asking for discussion (for

example, of the civil war in Guatemala in 1954 or in Nigeria between 1968 and 1970, above all of Vietnam), it might have been difficult for the countries opposed to maintain their objections. At least steps to halt or reduce external intervention might have been taken. In practice, however, outside countries have usually been cautious, to the point of timidity, in avoiding raising contentious issues of this kind. Here again, what the UN can achieve above all is to promote or encourage negotiations among the parties mainly involved in a civil conflict, or even set in train some form of mediation. If this had been done over Vietnam at any time after 1965 and specific proposals made by the UN, for mediation, a conference on internationally supervised elections, it is possible that the war could have been brought to an end far sooner.

Third, the increasingly explicit acceptance of the concept of spheres of influence among the great powers, though it certainly creates some problems, in other ways can make the UN's rôle more important. The benefit (if any) of the sphere of influence concept is that it may discourage distant super-powers from interfering in areas where they have no overriding interest. Its danger is that it may *encourage* the nearest super-power to interfere in such a zone, in the confident expectation that all other major powers will keep their hands off. This is what happened in Hungary and Guatemala, in the Dominican Republic and Czechoslovakia. Even regional organisations cannot act as a useful counter-force in such situations if they are themselves dominated by the super-power concerned, or by an ideological majority hostile to a minority state: this has sometimes destroyed the relevance of the OAS or the Warsaw Pact in meeting such situations. It thus becomes all the more essential for the UN to be available as a long stop, or perhaps rather as an umpire, to be appealed to if necessary by a small nation which feels it has not received fair play from the regional organisation concerned. Though the UN may reasonably call on a regional body to examine a particular dispute or to act on its behalf, it must retain the ultimate responsibility.



Fourth, the dominance of human rights issues creates more difficult problems. At first sight there is a basic conflict between the human rights provisions of the charter, asserting the UN's interest in this field, and the provisions of article 2(7), excluding interference in questions "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction" of member states. A reading of the charter as a whole, however, makes it clear that the former provisions prevail over the latter: indeed there would have been no point in inserting any human right provisions at all if it was intended that any future Hitler would be enabled to set about massacring millions of his own population in the confident knowledge that he could exclude any UN interest by invoking this article. Moreover, the judgment of what issues are "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction" of member states is itself a subjective one; and one which varies from one generation to another. It is rather the caution of the membership than the provisions of the charter which have inhibited more widespread discussion of such issues. Even the Human Rights Commission, which was set up precisely for this purpose, has in general avoided discussing specific violations of human rights, as against general principles; when a timid start was made with discussing the relatively uncontroversial issues of Greece and Haiti four or five years ago, the objections of various governments with especially sinister skeletons of their own to conceal soon put a stop to the experiment. It is for similar reasons that the proposal for a high commissioner for human rights, which has been raised regularly in the general assembly for many years, has consistently been talked out. If the UN wishes to increase the respect in which it is held, and to appear to take seriously the commitments in the field of human rights contained in the charter, it will need to make a new start in this field. The main essential is that it should at last embark on examination of specific cases as well as abstract declarations of principle. The process of legislation on human rights questions, of drafting wide and woolly conventions and declarations affirming impeccable good intentions in this field, to which governments will gladly put their

names whatever their real intentions, has now gone as far as it reasonably can. The time has come for the UN to turn from this to techniques of implementation; measures to ensure that the standards laid down are being effectively maintained, such as are already being put into practice under the Council of Europe. In some cases more specific standards are required; for example, concerning the right to travel abroad, the right to emigrate, the right to communicate by letter free of censorship, standards on the treatment of prisoners, a minimum time of waiting before a prisoner is tried, and so on. In others, new techniques comparable to those used in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for questioning and examination, to discover how well such standards are being implemented, are what is needed. In others again, new institutions may be required; for example, an international commission to ensure respect for human rights (of prisoners and civilians) in time of war.

Fifth, the negative attitude of the Soviet block and some other powers in the UN towards the strengthening of international authority is a factor that must be constantly taken into account. One important implication is that it is most unlikely that any changes in the system will come about through charter revision. The Soviet Union has made clear its opposition to any attempt to introduce amendments to the charter (other than purely nominal changes, for example in the size of various UN bodies) or even to hold a review conference, on the grounds that the present charter is the best she could possibly expect to get. Other permanent members are almost equally cautious. This does not, however, mean that no other changes in UN structure or procedures can be introduced. Significant reforms can be made, including an improvement in the UN's peace keeping capacity, without any formal amendment of the charter. Already changes in procedure (the acceptance that an abstention in the security council does not represent a veto, the development of the UN's economic rôle, the establishment of new assembly committees, and the development of peace keeping forces) have come about



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without changes in the charter. A great deal more could be done in the same way. Some account must be taken, however, of the susceptibilities of groups, such as the communists, which are in a minority and apprehensive that all changes must be to their disadvantage. Any reversion to the tactics of 1945 to 1955 and of simply bulldozing important changes through without regard to the objections of such groups (as was done in the uniting for peace resolution in 1950) is counter productive, and could simply make the Soviet Union less willing than ever to cooperate with the UN. It is equally pointless to go on continually passing resolutions that are known to be unacceptable to important groups. In this field, as in others, it is by negotiation and persuasion that progress is made.

Sixth, the decline in respect for resolutions, where the majority consists largely of very small states, is a fact of life and, with the further influx of tiny states into the UN, it is a problem that will get worse before it gets better. The often proposed solution, the introduction of a system of weighted voting, is most unlikely to be implemented. The majority of over represented small states are hardly likely to sign away their present privileged position with a stroke of the pen. Nor would even the basic principles of any such scheme be at all easy to agree. Would it be based on population, on contributions to the UN, on gross national product, or what? Each of these obviously bristles with difficulties of one kind or another (such as giving huge power to China on the one hand, or the US on the other).

The most likely possible solution would be the introduction of some kind of additional, or bonus, votes for the largest powers. The Soviet Union in effect already has three votes in the general assembly (through the representation of the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia). The US, China and India might be given three votes by a similar device. Countries with populations of 20 to 150 million might have two. But even this is a very doubtful starter. In fact the number voting for assembly resolutions is of far less importance than is sometimes believed.

There is something to be said for taking altogether less account of voting figures; but of taking more of who votes on each side. The important thing would not be to force through a vote by a bare majority, but to negotiate a resolution which was acceptable to the states most concerned and, if possible, to the major powers and groups within the membership. Indeed the one advantage that may come from the increasing number of very small states is that less and less importance will be attached to the passage of a resolution in itself, unless it also secures the consent of the powers directly involved, especially the larger powers.

Seventh, the cumulative effect of the UN's failure to solve earlier disputes cannot be altogether undone. It is already the case that there is less readiness to turn immediately to the UN for the answer whenever a conflict occurs anywhere. The one bonus from this trend is that somewhat less exacting standards may come to be demanded of the UN. If it becomes more widely accepted that in many situations the UN can act, if at all, only to promote and encourage negotiation, not only will less be hoped of it, but there will be less reason to fear "UN interference" among the parties to disputes. There may then be a willingness to turn to the UN more often, especially when membership becomes fully universal. This would demand some changes in the UN's own procedures, however. For example, the security council should perhaps view its own rôle rather differently. By assuming whenever it meets that its first and main task is to pass a resolution, it wastes precious hours in negotiating the exact terms of a document that may in any case have little impact on the outcome and be forgotten in a week. By concentrating more on the idea of *mediation*, of bringing the parties together, even without a formal resolution being passed, the council could often enhance its own rôle. By failing, in the case of the Middle East, to bring about any effective negotiation between the parties, even indirectly, it has in effect denied itself any influence on the outcome altogether, and reduced the influence that resolution 242, which each party eventually accepted, might other-



wise have had on the situation. The consequence is that no progress has been made on the issue at all. Similarly, if, over Vietnam, it had sought simply to promote negotiations, rather than to pass formal resolutions, objections to a UN rôle might have been less strenuous. Once the idea that the main object of the UN's existence is to pass resolutions, is abandoned, the opportunity for its *effective* influence may be enormously widened.

Eighth, the development of super-power politics, while it complicates the UN's rôle, need not eliminate it. On many issues there is scope for both bilateral and multilateral discussions side by side. The latter can sometimes provide the framework and the guidelines for the former. Third party influence is brought to bear, but only on questions of general principle; the details are left to the parties themselves, or "the powers," to resolve between them. Super-power diplomacy makes this influence more, not less important. Without it, the major issues of the day could be resolved by the great powers over the heads of many smaller ones, which may be intimately affected by the result; small powers would then feel increasingly that they were simply pawns and puppets, dependent on the doings and dealings of the great with each other. The discussion of such issues as strategic arms limitation, or the future of South East Asia, within the wider framework as well as the narrower, may help to remind the larger powers of the need to take careful account of the interests of smaller countries which have an interest, and so a right to a say in the outcome.

Ninth, the increasing economic confrontation between rich countries and poor is merely another of those realities of the world which are inevitably reflected in the UN looking glass; but, because the issue has become the most important confrontation of the modern international community, it exerts an even greater impact than most on the politics of the UN. Polarisation takes place on very many questions that are not exclusively economic: the environment, the budgets of the specialised agencies, the authority to be attributed to international law, and so on.

One effect is that the super-powers of East and West, especially the US and the Soviet Union, are increasingly brought together on the same side on a number of issues. China, on the other hand, seeks to establish her leadership of the developing peasantry against the international bourgeoisie, of the countryside against the cities, within the UN forum as elsewhere. None of this need inhibit the effectiveness of the UN, especially in questions of peace and war. It increases the need, as always when large blocks are involved, for objectivity by members of each group when issues affecting one of their number arise. At present, alignments of other kinds, ideological, regional or historical, are still sufficiently significant to prevent a total polarisation on an economic basis. Here once more, however, the main lesson is that the existence of two interest groups, coming into conflict with each other over a whole range of issues, underlines the need for more effective *negotiating* procedures. So far these have been more productive than those of public debate and mutual diatribe. The Geneva disarmament committee and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)—in its committees but not in its conference—have made a start in this direction.

Tenth, the persistence of the demands of national sovereignty is the difficulty least easily brushed aside. This is the problem perhaps most basic to the purposes of the UN and its potentialities for peace. Governments still, in general, favour international action when it promotes their own country's interests, but resist it when the reverse is the case. Since they are *national* governments, it could scarcely be otherwise, and since they know that in the final resort the UN cannot enforce its demands, they will probably continue to ignore them when this suits their convenience. This is the real challenge which the UN faces. It does not, at present, and will not, for the foreseeable future, possess superior *power* to that available to its members. It must therefore depend for the extension of its authority on the development of its *influence*. This is not necessarily impossible, but it requires somewhat more sophisticated methods

and techniques than those which have been adopted in the past. It would require the UN to develop the techniques of pressure and persuasion, by private as well as by public channels, of a kind little used so far. It would require it to develop a coherent set of principles of national behaviour to be applied consistently in its consideration of the issues coming before it. It would require scrupulous objectivity in applying these principles and rules to individual cases, regardless of national, regional or ideological interests. It would need the evolution of techniques of mediation, conciliation, and the settlement of disputes not yet adequately developed. It might also require the gradual enhancement of UN authority by its leadership in a number of fields, economic and functional, where political antipathies and tensions may be less serious and international supervision often welcomed.

These are not easy goals to achieve ; but it is in this way that possibly the authority of the UN might gradually be built up, so that it could finally make headway against the stubborn resistances of national sovereignty.



### 3. realism and reform

In considering the way the UN could develop over the next decade and the action that member governments could best take to promote reform, it is essential to distinguish clearly between what the UN can reasonably be expected to do, given the existing state of international relationships, and what it cannot; in other words, to take careful account of the *limits* to its power. Only by clearly recognising these limits, will it be possible at the same time to identify those areas where it can (given the necessary will on the part of member states) acquire a more effective rôle.

First, the UN cannot normally stop a war after it has already broken out. The belief that it should be able to do this, and the disappointment when it does not, is yet another example of the unrealistic expectations which have done so much to breed disillusion with the UN. It is futile to expect that, in a situation where fighting is already taking place, the UN has only to issue a call for a cease fire, to pass a resolution, or to make other imploring noises, to bring instant peace. There have been a few occasions where such calls have, in fact, been followed relatively rapidly by a cessation of hostilities: over the Suez incident of 1956, the India Pakistan war of 1965 and the Israel Arab war of 1967, resolutions of the council or assembly demanding a cease fire were accepted or at least rapidly complied with (though it would be rash to assume that the cease fire was a result of the UN resolutions). These are, however, not entirely typical, and there have been a good many other cases where such calls have been ignored. Thus, even if the resolution of December 1971 calling for a cease fire in the India Pakistan war had not been vetoed, it is most unlikely that it would have brought about a cessation of fighting. Sometimes in such situations the UN can initiate action which later leads to a settlement: it can appoint a mediator, call a conference, or promote negotiations under the auspices of the secretary general.

The more obvious conclusion, however, is that the UN must seek to influence disputes *before* they reach the stage of conflict. Once war breaks out, the UN has already failed. Yet in a large proportion

of the cases in which wars have occurred in recent years, the UN had made virtually no attempt even to consider the matter until conflict erupted. This was true of Vietnam, of the India Pakistan war of 1965, of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of the India Pakistan war of 1971 and of all cases of civil war. In the India Pakistan dispute of 1971 a situation of bitter civil war, of increasingly tense border confrontation, and a desperate refugee problem, had been allowed to continue for six months, altogether ignored by the security council, until war finally erupted, when, not surprisingly, it showed itself totally ineffective. If the UN is invariably called in only after wars have broken out, it will be scarcely surprising if it is regarded as a permanent failure.

Second, the UN cannot in most cases impose settlements, on the basis of a majority vote, on unwilling disputants, whether big powers or small. It can lead the horses to the water, but it cannot compel them to drink the peace potions offered them if they are determined not to do so. In certain cases the UN can set out the general *guide lines* which it believes should be applied in a settlement; this is what the security council did in its resolution 242 on the Middle East. It can appoint a mediator to seek to promote such a settlement; as it did in the same case, over Kashmir and over other incidents. Occasionally, moreover, on matters of fundamental importance, on which the co-operation of the mass of the membership can be relied upon, it can seek to impose sanctions, economic or otherwise, to bring about the implementation of the particular solution it has endorsed; as it has done over Rhodesia. In most cases, however, its task will be to encourage and facilitate rather than impose settlements.

Third, it is unrealistic to hope that the UN can "solve" basic disputes, especially among the major powers. Here too, it will reflect reality, rather than remoulding it altogether. What the UN can do in such cases is to provide the *channels* through which such divisions can be discussed. It can secure greater understanding of the positions and interests of others, and a point of contact and communication for



discussing them. However, if the UN is really to replace alternative means of resolving conflicts, the channels it provides must be private as well as public. Where, as at present, communication (on the substance, as opposed to the terms of resolutions) is largely public, it is used mainly for condemnation and abuse; and it is doubtful whether the dispute is not more likely to be intensified than resolved in this way. If the UN is really to be able to pacify the underlying conflicts, it must be able to provide informal and private channels of communication to supplement those which take place in the debating chamber; and to discuss matters of substance, as well as the texts of resolutions.

A fourth, and more obvious limitation to the UN's power, concerns its capacity to enforce its will in internal matters. Much UN action is directed at influencing the policies of member states in their own territories; for example, seeking to secure better respect for human rights as in calling for an end to the policies of apartheid in South Africa. The effectiveness of these depends ultimately on being able to influence the general climate of opinion, both within the state concerned and elsewhere, which in turn depends on the extent to which resolutions appear representative of widespread opinion. They will, however, also depend on their realism and credibility. If, for example, they appear to threaten sanctions which important members are not prepared to fulfil; or make demands far beyond those likely to be met, they may serve in the long run only to emphasise the UN's impotence. Such pressures must therefore be formulated in the form which will be most effective. Every nation and government today is concerned about its image, its place in the world community; and there is no evidence that South Africa, Portugal, the Soviet Union or any other nation is an exception in this respect. The real weapon the UN can utilise over such issues is publicity; the impact it can exert on the internal policies of member states will depend, not on the violence of the language employed in its resolutions, but on the effectiveness with which it can publicise flagrant denials of fundamental human rights, wherever they occur, and

the revulsion such denials cause to most of the rest of humanity, in the West as much as in Afro-Asia.

If these are the limitations on UN power, however, it also has assets: things it can do, sometimes more effectively than it does today.

First, if the UN cannot normally stop a war after it has started, it can at least more actively anticipate conflict situations before they have reached the point of no return. This would require a far greater willingness to initiate discussion in the UN, at an early stage, either in formal council meetings, or in informal negotiations about possible sources of conflict. One of the reasons why this does not normally occur today is that it continues to be assumed that only the nation directly involved in a dispute has the right to bring it for discussion there. Yet article 35 of the charter explicitly states that "any member of the United Nations may bring any dispute on any situation . . . to the attention of the security council, or of the general assembly." Because the parties directly concerned often have good reasons of their own for wishing to avoid publicity (as the Soviet Union and the United States over Vietnam, or India and Pakistan over Bangladesh), such situations may never be raised unless some outside party does so. Similarly the secretary general may need to become much more active in bringing issues before the council (under article 99) than he and his predecessors have been in the past.

Second, even if the UN will not normally be in a position to impose settlements in international disputes, or to determine the outcome of negotiations, it could often more actively *promote* negotiations among the parties. This is a technique that has been used by the organisation in the past. Trygve Lie organised discussions on the Berlin blockade in the UN secretariat in 1949. Hammarskjöld presided at successful negotiations to formulate the principles of a settlement of the Suez Canal dispute in 1956. It is a pity that this deliberate promotion of private negotiations within the UN building has been less often attempted in recent years.



It might well have produced useful results over the Middle East in the period since 1967, over Bangladesh in 1971, even over Vietnam (where public confrontation as in Paris, without any third party influence at hand, has proved singularly unproductive). Even when the UN does not organise such contacts itself, it can *call* for negotiations among the parties, and even provide a point of contact among countries that have been in dispute (the negotiations which eventually took place between India and Pakistan during 1972 and the peace talks on Vietnam might have been promoted in this way, *and far earlier*, if the security council had been active on the matter). Or, in appropriate cases, it can call a conference to discuss a particular issue (as has been proposed in the case of the Middle East).

Third, the UN can, in a much more general way, seek to establish some of the basic pre-conditions for peaceful relations among states. In a sense it attempts to do this already; by its regular consideration of a whole range of issues that divide nations, or are common to all nations, ranging from the sea bed to the protein shortage, population to pollution, development to drugs control. It does it also in the long term process of codifying international law, which is undertaken by the sixth committee of the assembly and by the International Law Commission. Yet it is arguable that what is required is a more systematic attempt to define a code of conduct in international relations, not necessarily so precise or explicit as legal conventions and treaties, nor so vague as the UN charter, but perhaps more closely related to the realities of the contemporary international system. To take an example: one of the most common types of conflict in the modern world is that which originates in civil war, but increasingly draws in external powers (Vietnam is a classic case). Yet the rules concerning external intervention in civil conflicts are among the most nebulous and hotly disputed within the whole field of international law: the international lawyers of the US have spent ten years in dispute concerning the legal rights and wrongs of US intervention in Vietnam. A systematic and deliberate effort to formulate more clear

cut rules in this respect might alone do something to reduce the dangers of this type of situation, and act as a more effective inhibition on unilateral action. Similarly, a clearer definition of the situations in which governments are justified in intervening to protect their own nationals abroad might help to clarify another disputed issue in international law, also occasionally used as justification for armed action by states. This is only to say that the international society, like any other society, needs a body of customary rules of inter-action amongst its members, if the conditions for a stable co-existence among states are to be created.

By these means the UN might be enabled to become, far more effectively than today, what the charter rightly proposes: a "centre for harmonising the interests of nations." It is precisely such a centre which it can be, and should be enabled and better equipped to be. For the UN is not yet, whatever was once hoped, a world government which can "decide" what nations should do and instruct them accordingly. It cannot yet run the world on the basis of majority votes. It has not yet even fundamentally transformed traditional relations among states. What it can do, if properly used, is to *modify* those relations by maximising the asset which it does possess: *its influence*. It can act as a guide, as an authority, above all as a focus for discussion and contacts. If it uses the authority it already possesses in the most effective way, therefore, it might bring significant long term changes in the policies of governments.



## 4. changes in UN structure and procedure

If this is the general direction in which the UN should seek to move, what are the specific changes in structure and procedures which would be required to bring it about?

The changes to be made are unlikely to come through a revision of the UN charter. Member governments are at present being consulted on their views about amendments to the charter or the calling of a review conference: under article 109 of the charter such a conference could be called at any time, by a two thirds vote of the assembly members, and a vote of nine members of the security council. However, since the Soviet Union has made clear its opposition to charter amendment, and since any amendment is subject to veto, the exercise is not likely to get very far. The present enquiry does, however, provide the opportunity for a consideration of general changes in all the methods and procedures within the UN and, if sufficient impetus is generated, could bring about pressure for a number of moves short of full scale amendment.

First, if it is accepted that one of the main aims of the UN should be to promote negotiation, rather than the passing of resolutions, there are changes in security council practice which would necessarily follow. When a dispute is brought before it, there need not necessarily be an immediate attempt, or rival attempts, to draft a resolution. Considerable time could be given for private discussions both within and outside the council chamber, to negotiate the basis of a settlement, or to examine the causes of a dispute, before the stage of drafting a text is even begun. In other cases a simple resolution asking the secretary general to promote negotiations between the parties under his auspices might be sufficient. In others again, a small group of three or five council members might be established to act as a conciliation team between the parties principally concerned; this was a procedure sometimes used in the early days, for example over Palestine and Indonesia, but is now rarely resorted to (article 29 provides that the security council "may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the per-

formance of its functions"). In other cases again, a committee might be set up to perform a fact finding rôle; this was recently done over the case of attacks against Guinea from Portuguese Guinea. When a substantive resolution is finally required, instead of simply waiting for a succession of highly partisan texts, each representing an extreme point of view, each of which will either be amended out of recognition or vetoed; a broadly based drafting group to negotiate the text of a resolution could be set up. On this basis the security council might (as provided for in article 38 of the charter) "make recommendations to the parties with a view to a specific settlement of the dispute." Finally, in some cases there could be delegation of a dispute to a regional body which might be better equipped to undertake the delicate negotiations required, under the influence of closely associated states.

Second, there should be more private meetings of the council. Public confrontations in front of the press and the television cameras, as in most security council meetings, is the worst possible way of arriving at settlements; propaganda is stimulated, and negotiation eliminated. For the type of deals that are often needed, for concessions and counter-concessions to be encouraged, for face saving proposals to be successful, confidential discussions are essential. Under article 28(2) the security council is supposed to "hold periodic meetings at which each of its members may, if it so desires, be represented by a member of the government or by some other specially designated representative." This has rarely been attempted. Regular private meetings, with no clearly defined agenda, were initiated in 1970 on the proposal of Finland, but only one took place, and this was not a great success. Where there is no specific issue for discussion it is inevitable that, even in private, representatives will merely rehearse long held positions or discuss the world situation in general terms on predictable lines. If, when the council meets in normal session to discuss some emergency situation, however, it was more commonly proposed that a private session should be held, at



least for part of the time, it would be far easier to arrive at the compromises that are often required. At present, there is considerable corridor discussion; the president may call for a recess, and behind the scenes consultation may then take place; but this is not really a substitute. It is more cumbersome than a private council meeting, since usually only two or three meet at a time, and then further meetings have to be held to reconcile their conclusions. There is no gradual establishment of a consensus as might happen at a private meeting of the whole council. Third party influences have little chance to operate. Above all, they usually take place only after all the public wrangling has been exhausted, and during that process the dispute is exacerbated and private accommodations made more difficult. Private meetings *in place* of the futile public wrangling, and in which the whole council were involved, are what is really required.

Third, to ensure that disputes were discussed before they had erupted in open war, it might be useful if the secretariat were to institute a more systematic system for monitoring political situations all over the world. A stronger research and advisory staff within the secretariat for this purpose might be needed to keep potential conflict situations under permanent review. Better facilities for the secretariat to gather information on the spot might also be required. Hammarskjöld adopted the practice in certain cases of sending a personal representative to a particular trouble spot (Laos, Jordan, Guinea) to keep him fully informed about the exact state of affairs in those countries, and to exercise some restraining influence. This is a practice that might well be revived. It is one that can be fully justified, if challenged in the terms of the charter, as Hammarskjöld himself justified it: as being necessary to enable the secretary general to exercise his powers under article 99. Reports of this kind would enable the secretary general to judge exactly whether the moment was right to bring a matter before the council. Inter-governmental bodies could sometimes perform the same function. There still exists in theory a peace observation

committee, a body of fourteen members set up in 1950, precisely to keep troubled situations under review, if necessary by on the spot visits. This too, or something similar, could be resuscitated, and could help the council to keep under permanent supervision situations all over the world which seemed likely to threaten the peace. Reports could be issued regularly to the council. Thus, instead of merely waiting until it is confronted with a crisis situation when one of the parties chose to raise it, as today, the council could be in a position to keep under permanent review the general international situation.

A fourth, much needed step would be to impose some kind of minimum size of population for a country qualifying for UN membership. The smaller the size of states admitted the less is the respect given, not only to UN resolutions but to the UN as a whole. The security council has a committee on the admission of new members, which, at the suggestion of the secretary general, considered this matter in recent years. A minimum population of 100,000 was proposed, but it has never been adopted; and there are in fact two states at present which have populations of less than this size (the Maldives Islands and Qatar). There is much to be said for maintaining this limit in the future. Smaller states could be given associate membership, with all the privileges of membership except that of voting rights.

Fifth, changes in the voting system itself might also be introduced. If they are to carry weight UN resolutions must be made more representative of populations than they are today. One or two possible changes have already been suggested in relation to the assembly: negotiated resolutions, rather than voting victories; possibly some limited element of weighting. It is in the security council, however, that the fictional "sovereign equality" of members is more serious in effect, for their resolutions are of far greater importance, and can incorporate binding obligations on all members. Here it is important that the regional groups, in electing members to the council, should elect mainly the larger and more important members of each group: at least one of



the two members which most groups elect should be of this kind. There is even a case for seeking to have this laid down by charter amendment (the present provision on this subject is lamentably vague), since this is one amendment on which most of the permanent members would probably be agreed. There is even a case for creating a new category of semi-permanent members, assured of membership of the council in alternate terms. This would include West Germany, Japan, India and Brazil; or perhaps better, a semi-permanent seat could be given to each continent (say for Brazil and Argentina in Latin America, India and Japan in Asia, West Germany and Italy in Europe, Nigeria and Zaire in Africa). If this could only be brought about by increasing the size of the council, this need not necessarily be resisted if the purpose is to give greater representation to large powers. In Europe, it would theoretically be possible for Britain and France to share their permanent seats with West Germany and Italy, but it seems highly doubtful if they would consent to do so.

A more radical step would be to accord a type of veto, or at least *de facto* veto, to each of the continental groups. This could be done either by granting permanent seats (with veto) to particular countries (say Brazil, Nigeria and India) so that Latin America, Africa and South Asia, at present without permanent members, each held a veto; or by giving it to the group as a whole to be exercised by its current members. Similarly Britain and France might become willing to share their vetoes with West Germany and Italy, or with western Europe as a whole. A still more radical change, but ultimately the most logical, would be for each representative on the council to represent a group of states whose representative it would be; and to cast votes on behalf of all of them, weighted according to population. It would have to keep in close consultation with all members of its group and try to represent their views. This would be similar to the system already used in the World Bank, where most members of the executive board represent a group of states, and are supposed to consult them before deciding how to cast their collective votes.

At first sight such an increase in the number of permanent members and of vetoes would be a retrograde step, making it less likely that the council will be in a position to reach agreement in crisis situations. Yet, by ensuring that resolutions are not passed which are totally unacceptable to major areas of the world, council resolutions would in the long run be given greater force and greater authority. More important, the possibility of veto would act as a strong inducement to effective negotiation among all members on the terms of each resolution. Though the passage of resolutions would be made more difficult, each would become more realistic and more authoritative. In this way *effective* resolutions might be passed. There is also need for reforms of the day to day business of the assembly and the council. The main things required here are: better prepared and more strictly observed time tables of business, stricter chairmanship, shorter speeches, fewer meetings and conferences, shorter documents, a more punctual start to meetings, and stricter rules of relevance. There is a case for the general committee to act more continuously as a steering committee for the assembly as a whole, checking on the progress of business within each committee; and possibly steering committees for each committee. Another reform required is a reorganisation of the committees of the assembly. There should be a special committee on science and technology to consider the increasing number of subjects of this kind, and a new division of labour between the second committee (economic and financial) and the third (social, humanitarian and cultural), so that the agenda of the third committee were not so overloaded as they are today.

Sixth, a new framework should be found for peace keeping. The committee of 33, which has been considering this question for a number of years, has made slow progress so far, partly because major nations, especially the Soviet Union, are approaching the question primarily from a constitutional rather than a practical viewpoint; they are concerned above all to defend long cherished positions of principle. This does not mean that when a new crisis arises, a new force could not be



established. It probably could, on an *ad hoc* basis; but this does not remove the need for securing agreement in principle on the form these forces should take and how they should be controlled. There are certain general points that would be widely accepted today. Future peace keeping operations will normally be authorised and controlled by the security council; they would always play a neutral political rôle within the country where they were operating; financing would be voluntary where possible, or through a special peace keeping fund, but not on the regular budget; day to day control would be by an advisory committee, in which those who had provided finance and troops for the force would be specially represented and those who refused to do so would be excluded (this would be a strong inducement to contribute to the financing of such a force). Contributions of forces from the permanent members need not always be excluded: such a contribution has already been made in Cyprus, and in the context of a Middle East settlement there would be something to be said for a force that included contingents from the major powers. Where small western countries, such as Canada, contributed, there might also be contributions from some smaller East European countries, such as Poland or Czechoslovakia. The possibility of a permanent peace keeping fund to which some or all members might contribute should at least be explored: if there were strong resistance, such a fund could be established on a voluntary basis, even if necessary, outside the UN. Meanwhile the voluntary earmarking of forces would continue, and greater co-operation and co-ordination of the training of such forces could be brought about. A core of trained military observers available for immediate use, could be built up in various countries and trained regularly together. In the disarmament field, some attempt might be made to bring the SALT talks and similar great power initiatives more fully under the auspices of the Geneva conference. The co-chairmanship of the conference should be broadened to include China and possibly India, or even rotated among all the membership. There should be new attempts to encourage disarmament in the conventional field. A UN

registry of armaments held all over the world, and perhaps of all international sales of arms and nuclear fuels, might be established, as has been more than once proposed. Studies should be undertaken of the possibility of extending non-nuclear zones to Asia and Africa.

Seventh, any serious attempt to improve the UN must include the improvement of the secretariat. Although recruitment based partly on the principle of geographical distribution cannot, and probably should not, be abandoned, it is essential that rigorous minimum standards of selection should be maintained. The proposal, made by one of the inspectors of the joint inspection unit, for a system of examination for appointment has much to be said for it, and should be supported. Certainly unless member states show themselves as exacting in ensuring that such standards are maintained as they are in ensuring that their own nationals are recruited, there is little chance that any noticeable improvement will come about. There is, however, another change that is equally necessary, if a higher calibre secretariat is to come about. This is that recruits entering service should be assured of the possibility of promotion up to the very highest levels. At present many member states (including the United Kingdom) insist on nominating temporary appointees, usually from their diplomatic service, to a number of the most senior posts. This means that the normal secretariat staff are deprived of the chance of promotion to these posts. This is a deplorable habit which both has the effect that top staff may not be fully international and lowers morale among the regular staff; and the problem of the secretariat is one of morale as much as, or more than, of calibre. Though there may well be a case for reserving senior posts to particular nationalities, such countries could promote to these jobs those of their own nationality already within the secretariat. There are other improvements in service conditions which are needed if the best calibre staff is to be attracted and retained, including more rapid promotion in early years, interchange among the secretariats of different UN bodies, including the agencies, better staff relations and better training facilities.



Eighth, new efforts are required to resolve the UN's financial problem. A concentrated effort to assure new voluntary contributions to meet the deficit on past peace keeping operations may be needed, as the new secretary general has proposed. Over the long term, however, it is above all a new political will, especially among the larger members, that is required. The problem could be solved immediately if the US and the Soviet Union would agree to make voluntary *ad hoc* contributions to pay off the debt, without prejudice to their long term positions of principle, as Britain and France have already done. A more efficient way of reviewing and controlling the regular budget is also needed.

The UN budget at present is arrived at largely by adding together the programmes of different subsidiary bodies and activities, without any effective effort at securing an overall balance between them. Still less are the quite separate budgets of the specialised agencies effectively co-ordinated, for example, by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the fifth committee, or the assembly, even though both go through the motions of doing so. Part of the reason for this is that at present, except in the body of officials, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), the agencies have no direct representation in the co-ordination process, whether this is conducted by the Committee on Programmes and Co-ordination (CPC), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), ECOSOC or the assembly; they are thus not particularly co-operative (to put it mildly) in the whole process. What is required, therefore, if co-ordination is to be made more effective, or any degree of long term planning introduced, is the creation of a new high level body representing the UN, the agencies, UNDP, and their membership, whose task it would be to review the overall programme for the system as a whole, and to eliminate overlap and duplication.

Ninth, now that China has become a member, there is a need for further steps towards universality. There is now a reasonable chance that both the Germanies will be admitted to the UN within a year:

in this case East Germany would presumably also acquire membership of some or all of the agencies. It is to be hoped that this will be followed by a more systematic effort to secure membership for both halves of the other divided countries, Korea and Vietnam. It is certainly to be hoped that partisan efforts to allow one half of such countries to take part in certain activities but not the other (as in the somewhat puerile effort by the West to exclude the German Democratic Republic from the environment conference) should by now be abandoned. It is even possible that this trend might finally overcome Switzerland's reluctance to assume full UN membership.

Tenth, some steps could be taken to breathe new life into the International Court of Justice. This has, throughout its existence, been called into action far less than its predecessor between the wars. In the last two or three years it has been particularly inactive and has often had no cases on its books at all. Even if contentious cases are not brought to it, it could be used more frequently for securing advisory opinions on UN issues. Something could be done to follow up recent proposals for regional chambers of the court, to consider matters affecting a particular region. The use of the summary procedure of the court, virtually never used till now, might overcome criticisms, sometimes heard, that the court is slow and cumbersome in its procedure. Finally, the permanent court of arbitration could more frequently be invoked to hear cases which were not eligible for submission to the court itself. The assembly could also attempt, in a more systematic way, to develop international law and rules of conduct among states. The principles on friendly relations among states, promulgated at the 25th anniversary assembly of the UN, though somewhat amorphous and imprecise in parts, constituted the first halting steps in this direction. The UN commission on international trade law is doing a useful job in another area of this kind.

There are many other fields, however, where the same process is required. This will not happen unless a deliberate impetus is given to it by member states.



## 5. the real growth point

However, there is no doubt that the biggest opportunity for expansion in UN activity lies in none of these fields. The main trend of evolution in recent years has lain in the assumption by the UN of an increasing range of responsibilities in many functional areas hitherto undertaken by national governments, or not tackled at all. Examples of this are the steady expansion of UNDP, now spending over a quarter of a billion dollars a year (not to speak of the phenomenal growth of the World Bank, now lending ten times as much); the establishment of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), rapidly increasing its own programmes and assisting governments to develop their own birth control campaigns; the setting up of the UN Fund for Narcotics Control, in an area where international action is clearly essential; the new institutions being set up to deal with the problems of the environment; the proposed international agency to take over responsibility for the sea bed (though this may not come directly under the UN); the activities of the new commission on natural resources; and a number of similar programmes, ranging from the new unit concerned with disaster relief to the surveys by earth resource satellites, which are now being discussed at an international level.

Still more extensive than all these are the growing activities of the specialised agencies, with their budgets at present doubling every eight years, and already spending over half a billion dollars a year. The UN system as a whole, including UNDP, now spends over a billion dollars a year (while another 2.5 billion is committed in World Bank loans every year) for programmes in an ever widening number of areas. Those who are really concerned to see an extension of the rôle and effectiveness of the UN should do everything possible to encourage the further development of activities of this kind. These not only strengthen international authority, in relation to national, in a variety of fields, they transform the image of the UN in the minds of the public. Instead of a noisy and ineffectual debating chamber, the UN becomes the source of a wide spectrum of services and activities, rendering tangible benefits to ordinary people all over the world.

If the expansion and strengthening of these activities are accepted as a major aim, certain conclusions follow.

First, the petty and cheese paring attempt to cut back the budgets of the UN and its agencies at every possible opportunity should be abandoned by Britain and other major donors: as in the so called Geneva group, the club of rich countries which meets to plan campaigns to hold back budgets every year. Well conceived and practical programmes of an international nature within the UN system should be given every possible support. British governments should even seek to propose new initiatives of this kind. The Maltese government won considerable good name for raising the sea bed issue in the UN in 1967, just as Sweden did for raising the environment in 1968. Britain might win similar credit for proposing a new programme of international action in some comparable field. One area of this kind, where joint international action appears increasingly necessary and a new initiative may be needed, is a programme for the surveying of world natural resources and their production and consumption, expert studies of the rate of depletion, and the establishment of a permanent watch on resource use. This is a task undertaken by most governments within their own territories, but is becoming increasingly necessary now within a shrinking world, which is seemingly rapidly exhausting its materials and fuels.

Second, every effort should be made to ensure that as large a share as possible of development programmes are channelled through UN multi-lateral agencies. Multi-lateral programmes not only reduce the dependence of the recipients on individual bilateral donors, but reduces the effect of political factors in determining the distribution of aid and makes possible a more rational co-ordination of all programmes. While many countries have already made moves in this direction, the proportion of British aid going to such agencies is far smaller than that from most countries.

Third, British policy towards the UN system as a whole should be better planned and co-ordinated among government de-



partments. Usually today different departments are responsible for looking after different agencies (the Department of Education and Science for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Department of Employment and Productivity for ILO, the Department of Health and Social Security for the World Health Organisation (WHO), and so on). There is a need for a clearly formulated overall plan for the system as a whole, and for regular consultation among the departments concerned about the policy to be pursued within the agencies. The prime responsibility will undoubtedly remain with the individual departments, but if it became a deliberate aim of British policy, on foreign policy grounds, to seek to enhance the rôle of the UN and its agencies, this would affect the policies to be pursued by delegations within each agency, and demand a greater degree of co-ordination and planning. At present the only common policy that is discernible is a consistent effort to hold back increases in budgets.

Fourth, the institutions of the European Economic Community (EEC) should seek to formulate a common policy towards the UN. Britain should promote consultation over policy on such matters with other western European countries. There should be a specially close link with the Scandinavian states and Ireland (which share a common and positive attitude on UN affairs) so as to establish a coalition devoted to strengthening UN capabilities. One form this could take would be an effort to co-ordinate action for the earmarking of forces for peace keeping; the Scandinavian countries already do much in this line, but Britain should seek to join the system. Another need would be much closer co-operation between UN delegations in New York.

Fifth, the sea bed issue provides one of the most important opportunities for any real expansion of international authority likely to be met in the near future. Here the possibility exists of establishing an international authority with direct control over important world resources, such as no international body has at present. Almost all UN members within the sea bed

committee have accepted the principle of establishing such a sea bed agency. What remains to be decided is the area of the sea bed, and so the value of the resources which will come under its control, and the form the agency will take. There is at present a great danger that the coastal states, including Britain, will seek to grab for themselves as large a proportion of the area and its resources as possible and leave little for the international system; many of them are trying hard to do this at present. If a genuinely international system is to be secured, and any significant degree of redistribution achieved as a result, it is important that the limit of exclusive coastal state jurisdiction should be relatively narrow; say 200 metres in depth or 50 miles from the coast. If absolutely necessary, the US idea of an intermediate zone between the national and the international area, where the coastal state retains some control, could be accepted; but only if its outermost boundary is not too wide (say not more than 100 miles), and if substantial revenues were provided from the area for the international system (much larger than the US has yet suggested). It is to be hoped that licences will be granted to individual companies directly subject to the international authority, rather than allowing national states to come in as middle men, so weakening the authority's bargaining power. Finally, it is important that the authority should be given sufficient powers to undertake effective control of pollution, conservation and safety.

The environment represents a sixth area where an increasing measure of international authority and action is urgently required. The pollution created by one country can affect many others, and some of the areas affected, the seas, the Antarctic, the atmosphere, are themselves international zones. The drawing up and enforcement of effective rules concerning the pollution of the seas, dumping, and conservation of resources and the natural ecology can only be done on an international basis. A system for monitoring the state of the environment and providing the essential information for action also needs to be international in scope. The Stockholm conference has at least laid the



groundwork. If western governments, including the British, really wish to demonstrate their devotion to the environmental cause, the best way to prove it would be by showing themselves ready to contribute generously to international programmes in this field.

The sea bed and the environment are only two examples of many subjects in the field of science and technology which increasingly require discussion in an international forum. Thus, point seven, special committees of the assembly may be required to consider such questions, which should be attended mainly by people of scientific training. There have also been proposals for the establishment of an international scientific council, a body of scientists which could generally formulate advice and provide some co-ordination in this field, and supervise the work of the more specialised scientific unions. Such a council could make recommendations to governments and to international bodies as to the action required in particular fields. It might eventually take over some of the functions which UNESCO now undertakes in the scientific field; functions which many scientists feel that organisation is not equipped to fulfil adequately. The establishment of international laboratories in certain fields could also result in stimulating valuable scientific exchanges and cross influences. At present two of the agencies, the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), run such laboratories on an international basis.

The WHO has centres studying particular subjects in particular countries, for example a cancer research centre in Lyons, but these are not really run on an international basis. The imaginative project for an international medical research institute, perhaps to be based in Edinburgh, which was discussed in the WHO some years ago, has not yet come to fruition, mainly because of the hostility of the medical profession in some countries, especially Britain. This is the type of project which, under the policy here proposed, should be given every possible support by future British governments.

An eighth new field in which the UN may have an important rôle in the future relates to disaster relief. Responsibility for undertaking work of this kind at present rests largely with individual governments, and big international voluntary agencies such as the Red Cross, Oxfam, and others. There is an urgent need for better co-ordination of such action, and for more preparatory work so that the necessary supplies are available and can be quickly shipped to the area where they are required in a time of emergency. The recent appointment of a UN under secretary general to co-ordinate such work is a beginning; but he needs to be equipped with greater resources and authority than he now has if he is to be able to perform these functions effectively. His mandate should, for example, cover man made, as well as natural, disasters. Similarly, in the field of refugees, a far greater effort is needed if the millions of refugees, especially in the Middle East and Africa, often at present living in appalling conditions, are to be effectively resettled and found work. For this the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the United Nations Relief and Works Administration (UNRWA), would require a far greater volume of resources than they have at present if they are to be able to perform their task effectively. An improvement of the UN capacity in this field would, incidentally, do much to improve its image in the eyes of the general public.

Ninth, the scope for expansion for the specialised agencies is even wider. The World Bank, including the International Development Association (IDA), which already lends over a quarter of all aid, should become the major source of non-grant aid in the future. The main criticism raised against the bank, the dominance of the major western countries over its affairs, is usually greatly exaggerated.

Representatives of developing countries are now in a majority among the executive directors. Since votes are virtually never taken, the majority in voting power of the developed states (which is itself declining and is now little over 50 per cent) counts for little. Almost all decisions are by consensus, which in practice prevents



the kind of neo-colonialism of which the bank's more strident critics accuse it. The bank will, however, need to increase the proportion of soft loans which it grants through IDA and to find new means of overcoming the increasingly urgent debt servicing problems, perhaps by allowing wider rescheduling. There is also a need for an overall co-ordinating body in the field of aid, to devise an overall world development plan. This might include the president of the World Bank, the administrator of UNDP, representatives of some of the other agencies, of the major donor countries, and of the recipient countries.

Tenth, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is another body performing a vitally needed world rôle. The development and extension of the system of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) could give the IMF a still greater rôle than today, as the authority responsible for the management of international currency arrangements. This would reduce the resentment at present felt among developing countries at the domination of the group of ten, and the rôle of the Organisation of European Co-operation and Development (OECD). The new group of twenty, recently established by the IMF, may help in this. The establishment of a direct link between SDRs and aid (that is, the allocation of additional SDRs to the developing countries as a form of purchasing power, an important reform, now endorsed by UNCTAD, which Britain, almost alone among the major western European countries, has not yet supported) may still further increase the IMF's central monetary rôle.

Eleventh, the IAEA could usefully expand the rôle it is already playing in imposing safeguards on the transfer of nuclear materials, and policing the non-proliferation treaty. It could seek to establish more effective controls to prevent the diffusion of plutonium and other fissile materials having potential military applications. There are proposals that it should, in addition, organise or supervise programmes of peaceful nuclear explosions for engineering purposes. These have already received qualified support from its governing body, and would widen the IAEA's already diverse activities.

Twelfth, almost all the other agencies have programmes in a variety of fields which could usefully be expanded if the main contributors would agree to increase their budgets. The ILO's world employment programme, designed to relieve the pressing unemployment problems faced by so many developing countries, could be expanded, and its valuable work in the field of technical and vocational training and many other activities to assist developing countries in the labour field could be multiplied many times. WHO's remarkable achievement in wiping out malaria and smallpox from many parts of the world, and improving public health and other medical services in innumerable countries; the activities of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in supervising and assisting the organisation of navigational services and codifying air law; the work of the International Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation (IMCO) in preventing pollution of the seas and improving the safety of ships; the achievement of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in organising the world's meteorological system, the world weather watch, and internationally planned weather forecasting research, could all be usefully extended and expanded. It is these largely unpublicised activities that are, almost unknown to the general public, gradually forging a more integrated relationship among states, that should surely be given the maximum support. At present Britain's total contribution to the budgets of the UN and all the agencies is about 1 per cent of her defence budget. It would not bankrupt her to spend ten (or even 100) times as much as at present in supporting such activities as these all over the world, and would arguably do more than our current defence effort to transform future relations between nation states.

The habit of co-operation in these functional fields may not have the automatic "spill over" effect in securing peace that was once hoped by the "functionalists," but it undoubtedly does have some long term impact on habits of mind and on public attitudes, both towards other nations and the UN itself. The habit of thinking multi-laterally, of looking at pro-



blems from a common world viewpoint, rather than from a narrow national perspective, is promoted. Even the direct effect in improving standards of living has some marginal effect over the long term. Activities that raise the standard of living in poor countries are certainly not altogether without influence upon the likelihood of war in those countries in the future. It is an undoubted fact that a considerable proportion of the world's wars today take place in countries with very low standards of living, while none at all take place in the richest areas, such as North America, Australia, and western Europe.

This is no reason for totally discounting the political bodies of the UN. The preservation of peace must still perhaps be counted a more vital task than reducing poverty. The solution is not to abandon the political activities in favour of the functional. It is to build up both together, so that international authority as a whole is enhanced and begins to appear both more acceptable and more effective than in the past. The political authority of the UN proper, though important, would then be placed in its proper context; as part of a complex system of international government that already affects every major area of human activity. It is the building and extending of that structure which represents the chief challenge to mankind during the next 50 years.

*[The text in this column is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a continuation of the article or a separate column of text.]*



## 6. conclusions

It is in this wide range of practical fields, therefore, that the growth of UN authority is likely to be most dramatic in the future. Still further steps may be necessary; for example, the need to conserve the earth's diminishing resources, which rapid economic growth and universal industrialisation are rapidly eating away, the need for better management of the world's economy, the need for more effective population policies, the need to make joint decisions on weather control, the need to administer international regions such as the Antarctic, the sea bed and space, intensified efforts to preserve the world's environment, all of these are going to require still more developed international institutions in the future,

It is a pity that, in general, when people speak or think of the UN, they almost invariably think of the political organs and activities, rather than of these wide ranging, important and highly valued tasks, which increasingly become the UN system's chief rôle. Nor are they altogether irrelevant to the UN's primary task in the field of peace and international security. They all affect the fundamental character of relationships among states. The ITU's activities in planning a world network of telephone, cable and other channels and allocating radio frequencies, the task of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) of running the world's postal system, the assistance of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to developing countries in the agricultural field, the world food programme, the UN Fund for Population Activities (already spending over 20 million dollars a year) the new fund for narcotics control, the UN youth corps, all of these affect the fundamental character of relations among states. On the one hand, they provide the co-ordination and direction of activities which a rapidly diminishing world finds ever more necessary. On the other, because they are financed on a progressive principle (that is, because the rich countries pay the greater share of the cost, while the poor countries receive the greater proportion of the benefits) they serve, just like welfare services within states, to effect some marginal redistribution of wealth and welfare throughout the world.

Socialists in Britain and elsewhere who are really concerned about the redistribution of the good things of the world, would do well to devote as much of their concern and effort to securing more adequate effort at the world level as they do to trying to achieve it, within their own borders. For the disparities which need to be redressed within the wider world are infinitely more glaring, and the cause of infinitely greater hardship, than those which exist within states. Unless, however, the resources devoted to this end are increased many times from their present low level, and continue to rise more rapidly than the increase in the wealth of the rich, their impact will have no effect whatsoever on reducing inequalities, since they will be more than counteracted by the widening gap between *per capita* income in rich countries and poor. Since the main inequalities in the modern world are between nations rather than within them, it is not illogical to argue that the development of effective institutions to remedy those inequalities should today be the supreme task of true socialists. Eventually, world social services may begin to perform something of the same function in securing redistribution between regions as well as between individuals, which governments do within states. International socialism might then become a meaningful reality instead of just an empty slogan.



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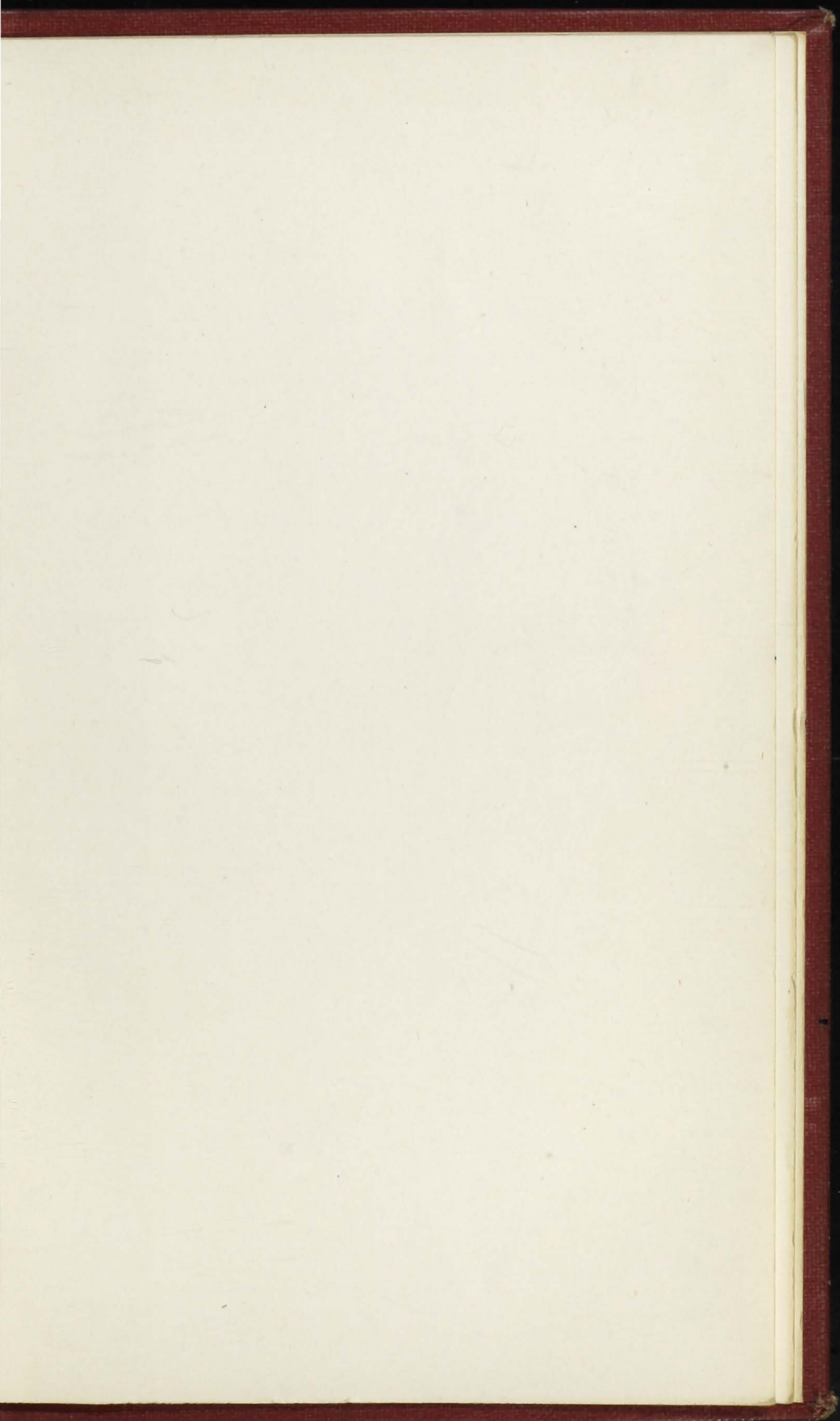
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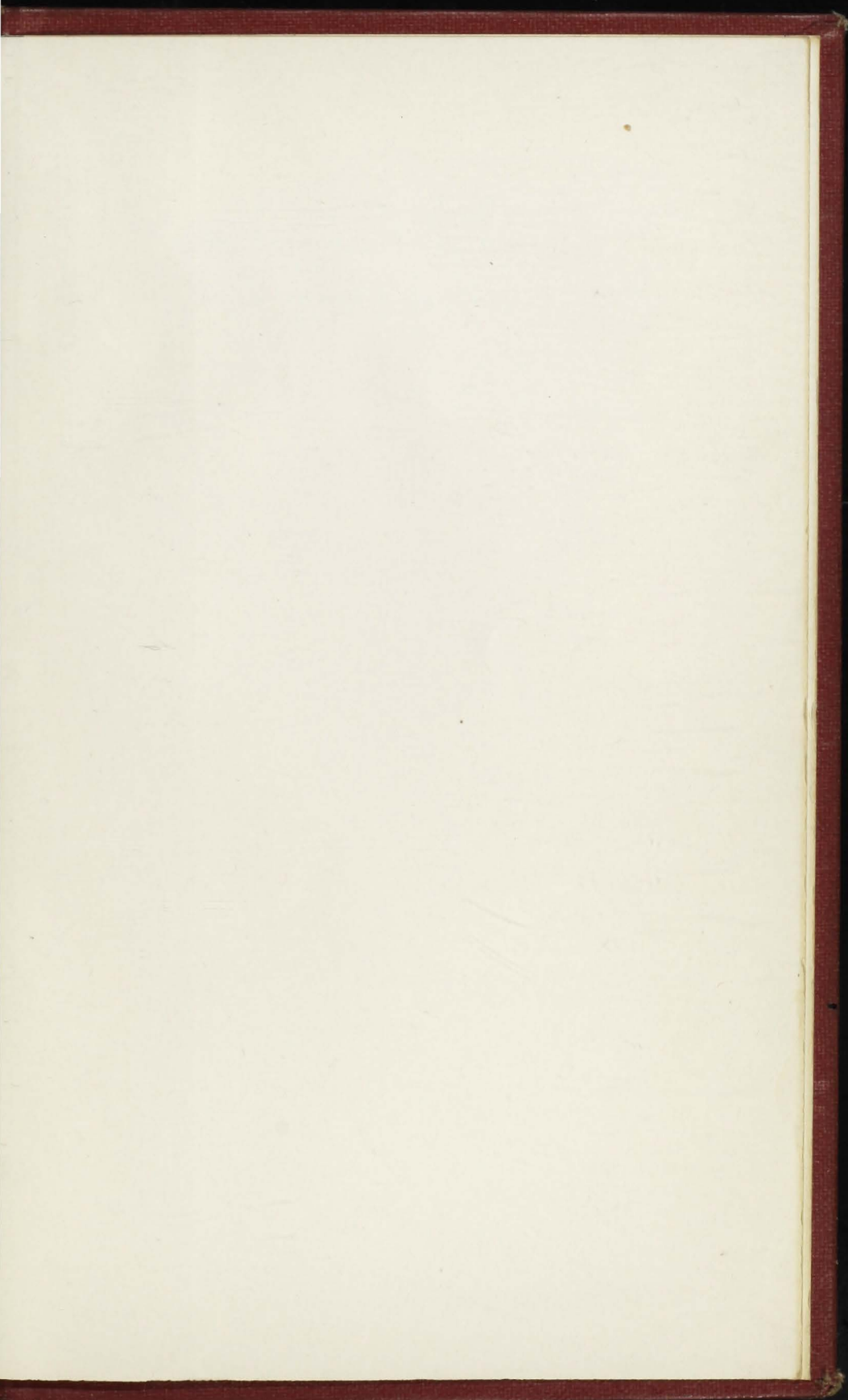














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