

if they did agree to a course of action. This frustration was brought about by the use made by the permanent members of the Security Council of the privileged position which they enjoyed under the voting procedure in that body, a position which is commonly described as the right to veto.

It was generally recognized, however, that the veto itself was merely symptomatic of the existence of unresolved issues among the Great Powers and of their unwillingness or inability to use the Security Council as an instrument for the settlement of disputes among them. The veto had been applied most frequently by the representative of the Soviet Union, and it was the U.S.S.R. which insisted most firmly that the voting procedures as they are now established must remain unchanged. The result was a growing conviction that the Security Council might fail to perform the functions for which it was designed, and that when a real emergency arose it would have neither the ability nor the experience to reach effective decisions.

The delegations which attended the opening meetings of the Second Session of the General Assembly knew that behind these problems of organization in the United Nations lay the political problems which had arisen since the end of the war between the eastern European states and the western democracies, and in particular between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the one hand and the United States on the other. The controversy between these two groups of states had now come fully into the open. It resulted in a persistent debate which reached into almost every activity of the United Nations, complicating and hindering the work of the organization.

Faced by these problems, many delegations asked themselves urgently what action could be taken to transform the United Nations into the effective organization which was originally contemplated. In a series of opening statements, it was made clear that many states would seek the means, during the Second Session of the General Assembly, to circumvent the obstacles which had fallen in the path of the United Nations.

The initiative in this regard was taken by the delegation of the United States. The Secretary of State, General Marshall, proposed