

FOREWORD

For the United Nations, 1965 was typical of the twenty years of its existence – a mosaic of agreement and disagreement, of peace-making and conflict, of advance and setback, of serious concern with unresolved problems and satisfaction with the solution of others. The Organization has enjoyed better years; it has also suffered worse. But if all the manifold activities that it undertook in 1965 are added up and fairly assessed, its successes seem to outweigh its failures.

One could have wished for more progress, of course, not only in 1965 but also in each of the years since 1945. Yet we must remind ourselves that twenty years is a very short period in the life of a great political institution like the United Nations. Our national parliaments took centuries to establish themselves and to draw up principles and rules for the orderly and democratic conduct of the nation's affairs. Why, then, should we demand instant perfection from an organization now composed of 117 independent and sovereign states and expect them, with their competing claims, interests and priorities, to live up to all the ideals and aims of the Charter within two decades? At the same time, we sometimes forget how far the United Nations has already travelled towards giving substance to its Charter; how it managed to survive the period of the Cold War, when it was difficult for it to function effectively as a force for peace; and how it has been successful in the past fifteen years or so in preventing the outbreak or recurrence of hostilities in many parts of the world, even though long-term solutions for the underlying causes of these disputes have frequently eluded its grasp. The past twenty years have shown that the United Nations can set certain limits to the rivalries of nations and direct these into more constructive and peaceful channels; but if it is to advance still further in this work, each of its members will have to give up something of its own interests and all will have to find new dimensions for co-operation with one another – a salient fact recognized by the United Nations when it designated 1965 as International Co-operation Year.

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