

(C.W.B. April 14, 1965)

share the fate of its predecessor?...Or are we going to revalue the role of the United Nations, to give it the authority, the responsibility and the support which it must have if it is to play its proper part in a rapidly changing world? If we do not want history to repeat itself, these are questions which we must ask ourselves in this twentieth year of the existence of the United Nations....

UNFOUNDED ASSUMPTIONS

When the United Nations came into being it was assumed that its effective operation would depend upon the great powers acting in harmony with one another. It was assumed that the United Nations would be supported and sustained by the strength of the great powers. And that assumption applied, of course, with particular force to the functions which the United Nations was expected to discharge in the matter of keeping the peace. In the event, these assumptions failed to materialize. Instead of drawing on the strength of the great powers to bring situations of conflict and instability under control, the problem for the United Nations became one of insulating such situations from great-power involvement. Needless to say, in those circumstances much of the machinery envisaged in the Charter for maintaining or restoring international peace and security proved, in practice, to be inoperable.

DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS

Then, of course, there has always been a difference of view among the great powers as to the latitude they were prepared to give the United Nations as the focus of an evolving system of world order and security. As a senior official of the United States Government recently defined it, the United States approach to this question has been "that the Charter of the United Nations is a treaty obligation and affords the framework for an evolving system of international law and order which should be upheld and expanded by custom and by extension as world conditions permit". But that has not been the approach of all the other great powers. And, in particular, it has not been the approach of the Soviet Union. The Soviet view of the United Nations has always been much more restrictive. It has not been prepared to see the United Nations evolve into that "dynamic instrument of governments" which the late Dag Hammarskjöld envisaged and which alone can do justice to the conception of an evolving world community....

In a recent article, Professor Hans Morgenthau suggested that there was an "insoluble contradiction between national sovereignty and an effective international organization". Now perhaps, if we think in terms of world government, that may be so. But I do not myself think the two are irreconcilable in practice. Nor was that the view of the framers of the United Nations Charter, who explicitly assumed that the organization would be "based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members". The real point, surely, is this: the United Nations is an organization composed of sovereign states; as such, its effectiveness depends on the willingness of its members to co-operate freely and responsibly in the realization of its purposes and objectives.

PROBLEM OF NEW NATIONALISM

Now I think it is fair to say that, when the Second World War ended, there was a broad disposition to do that, to work together for the achievement of a more rational world order. To some extent this disposition has continued. It is certainly at the base of what we have been able to accomplish over the past two decades in working together internationally towards common objectives. But, in the intervening 20 years, the world has changed. In many countries, recovery and reconstruction have led to a resurgent sense of national identity. And in scores of new countries the current of nationalism which propelled these countries to independent nationhood has continued to flow strongly.

I am not here concerned with an assessment of nationalism. I am inclined, in fact, to think that the pendulum may have swung, that nationalism may have entered into a new phase. Certainly, the constructive impact it has on the nation-building process cannot be seriously discounted, particularly in the new countries. What I am concerned to argue is that the conditions prevailing at the end of the Second World War - conditions in which men tended to focus their hopes and aspirations beyond the national horizon - no longer apply in quite the same measure today.

There is another consideration which I think is relevant to any analysis of the present position of the United Nations. When the United Nations came into being in 1945, it had 51 founding members. Today, 20 years later, its membership is 114. The vast majority of the new members have different problems and preoccupations from our own. Of course, they are concerned with peace no less than we are. But they are also concerned with racial equality, with the eradication of colonialism and, above all, with the yawning and widening gap between rich and poor in the world. They need an environment of peace if they are to carry forward their economic development with any prospect of success. But they would argue, conversely, that there cannot be true peace or true stability in the world unless the sources of conflict, the sources of instability, are removed. And that, in their view, requires an imaginative international approach to their problems. And they remind us that, in the Charter of the United Nations, we pledged ourselves not only "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" but also "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

CORE OF CRISIS

These, then, are some of the factors that have led to the present crisis in the affairs of the United Nations. The core of that crisis relates to the matter of peace keeping. In the face of great-power deadlock, it became clear that the type of enforcement action provided for in the Charter could not realistically be contemplated. And so the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations developed along different lines. Essentially, they involved the injection of United Nations forces into situations of conflict or potential conflict with the consent of the state or states concerned. They involved "holding the fort", as it were, until longer-term solutions

(Continued on P. 3)