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GENERAL SURVEY

The constitutional issues raised by past peace-keeping activities of the United Nations came to the forefront in 1964 in the guise of the financial question and the consequent immobilization of the nineteenth session of the General Assembly. While these developments were disturbing, they also revealed in clear terms how much the United Nations is valued by its members. It was quite apparent throughout the discussions on the financing issue that the overwhelming majority wished the United Nations to continue in existence as an effective instrument for peaceful co-operation. No one walked out because of the financial crisis, none showed any disposition to give up the United Nations and no irrevocable split arose among the membership on the issue of financing peace-keeping operations. The two principal adversaries, the United States and the Soviet Union, continually affirmed their desire for a negotiated settlement which would strengthen the United Nations rather than weaken it and, although they explained and defended their respective positions with energy and determination in the General Assembly, both agreed to the formation of a Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations as a forum for further discussion. In refusing to allow a test of strength by confrontation over Article 19, they and all members recognized and tacitly acknowledged that a confrontation would be sterile and self-defeating. The dispute had been building up over the previous several sessions; nothing would be gained by attempting to despatch it in one session. Time was required to solve the issue and time was bought.

It was also significant that, while the financial or constitutional issue cast a shadow over the United Nations, it was not so long or so dark that it appreciably affected the work of the Organization during the year. While many issues including disarmament and colonialism were denied the General Assembly as a forum, the Security Council was able to discharge a heavy load of business in 1964, the Economic and Social Council continued to deal with the variety of questions put before it, and the conferences, committees and commissions of the United Nations continued to be convened and to do useful work. Most importantly, whatever their views on the