

But the U.S.S.R. spurned the United Nations, which then could only mobilize public opinion - though this itself was important - in order to make the nature of Soviet aggression clear to the world, and to put the Russians morally on the spot.

This United Nations action, inadequate as it must have seemed to many, may, however, have had some effect on Soviet policy. The argument that the Russians don't care at all about international opinion does not hold water. They gave every indication last autumn of anxiety over the international reaction to their actions in Hungary and even seemed to have been reluctant for this reason to do what they eventually did. This reluctance was not, of course, based on moral considerations, which have no effect of any kind on Russian policy, but on a feeling that their action might have an adverse effect on their prestige and, therefore, on their diplomacy especially in Asia and Africa. Although United Nations pressure did not save Hungary it had some effect - and what it had was good.

AFRICAN - ASIAN GOVERNMENTS

Another criticism of the United Nations is that it is increasingly dominated by a majority of African and Asian countries allied from time to time with the Soviet bloc and Latin America; a majority which is alleged to be irresponsible in its attitude to international problems, which is dominated by an irrational hatred of Western "colonial" countries, and unwilling or unable to contribute to the wide-ranging technical and economic aid measures which it so often proposes to others. It is alleged that this situation is growing more acute, accentuated by the admission of a large number of new members last year, and that it will soon be entirely out of hand.

That there is an element of truth in the charges can hardly be denied. But it is not the whole truth, or even a major part of it. The Africans and Asians, with or without the Soviet bloc, do not dominate the Assembly. If - and this is a big "if" - they all vote together they can prevent the necessary 2/3 majority being obtained for any resolution. Their power at its strongest, therefore, is a power not to impose, but to frustrate; not positive, but negative.

What has happened is that the Western Powers themselves no longer have that dominating influence on the actions of the United Nations which they had in the past. It by no means follows, however, that the West is now automatically frustrated in its efforts to secure a necessary majority for its measures. It does follow that it must work harder to get support for them.

The fact is that there is no "Afro-Asian bloc" at the United Nations. As one Asian representative to the United Nations said recently to a member of our delegation. "The Afro-Asian bloc does not exist but many European countries are doing their best to create it." These countries themselves are careful to speak of their "group" not their "bloc", and there