

1961

The
COMMONWEALTH STRUCTURE
of
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

By

DR. A. K. FRYER

THE S.A. INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
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THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
JAN SMUTS HOUSE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG

1961

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

By

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An address delivered to the Witwatersrand Branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs at Jan Smuts House on Thursday, 13th April, 1961.

FOREWORD

It is human nature to appreciate most what one is about to lose and most South Africans only now are realising all the implications of membership of the Commonwealth. Leaving the Commonwealth will have many and far-reaching effects, often hard to trace and difficult to define and nowhere is this more true than in the field of international relations. It was for this reason that the Witwatersrand Branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs asked Dr. Fryer to deliver the address which the Institute is now publishing.

Dr. Fryer has, in this lecture, placed the Commonwealth in perspective by showing how it takes its place in the interdependency of states which is a principle of national survival in our time. This interdependency of national states has led to the formation of numerous groups and organisations which overlap and interlock to make up the predominant pattern of international relations in a world chastened by two great wars and threatened by nuclear fission. In these circumstances it is remarkable that a country with the strategic, economic and political potentialities of the Union should remain unattached to any groups except some United Nations specialised Agencies and C.C.T.A. in Africa. For South Africa Commonwealth membership has been a substitute for adherence to regional groups and organisations and it has in addition given South Africa invaluable indirect representation in the many groups to which other Commonwealth countries belong.

Deprived of this indirect representation and the information and opportunities for consultation that it provided, we must seek to find what substitutes we can. This will be difficult and may prove impossible, but we cannot even attempt it unless we know the nature and extent of our loss. For this reason, the South African Institute of International Affairs believes that the publication of studies such as this is both timely and important.

LEIF EGELAND

Jan Smuts House,
April 1961.

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Inter-state relations at the beginning of the 20th century, despite the proliferation of international law, of conferences and institutions in the 19th century, were primarily a matter of bilateral agreements prescribed almost exclusively by individual national or State interests. The vaunting of nationalism and of the concepts of "national sovereignty" and of the "right" of self-determination, all initially peculiarly characteristic of European peoples, did not seem to presage an early change in the nature of international politics.

Other developments seemed to support this conclusion. The expansion of European hegemony over the whole globe, and the assumption by Europeans that the pains and pleasures and therefore the thoughts of all men were in accordance with the historical experience and understanding of Europeans, or were comprehensible in a European system, had begun to be checked. There was a growing realisation, not only of the antiquity, but of the vitality of other cultures, which westernisation might modify but not overwhelm. The defeat of Russia by Japan in 1904 perhaps started it; and the laurels won by India in 1914-18 stimulated it further. Destiny was then obviously beckoning the re-emergent Asian states to redress the balances of the Western world.

President Wilson's 14 Points and the League of Nations buttressed the emergence of colonial peoples and new powers. This was the premonitory rumble to Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter of 1941, in which he forced Churchill to accept the principles of national self-determination and equivalence of status for all peoples, for implementation in the colonial empire as well as in the field of foreign policy.

Wilson, who so profoundly influenced the Covenant of the League and the Charter of the United Nations, believed, with Hobbes, that "all men seek peace and ensue it"; that war springs from unnatural causes of which the chief in modern times has been the "unnatural" subjection and desegregation of nationalities during the periods of dynastic empire-building and of neo-mercantilist colonial imperialism. But Wilson and the Covenanters tended to overlook the fact that complete delimitation of Europe into national states was both politically impractical and economically unwise. It is true perhaps that European peoples were only too ready to be beguiled by the principles of "national self-determination" and "sovereign independence", as a means to greater happiness and to European peace, but the bitter legacy of humiliation in the Great

War, the survival of traditional fears and competitiveness of the greater states, as well as the demographic and economic facts made nonsense of a bland reliance upon "collective security"; especially since few of the greater states were in the League. The slow realisation of this in Europe was, by 1945, to affect the rest of the world; but not at the cost of national independence. A new formula of international relations had to be worked out.

The principles of national self-determination, of equality among nations, and of collective security had, then, a great influence on international relations, and also within the Commonwealth. Despite the warning of Lord Balfour at the Imperial Conference in 1926 that equality of status did not uniformly extend to equality of function, the Commonwealth leaders did in fact grasp at the former principle, and erroneously assumed that in the era of collective security the practical inequality of function of states would not challenge their claims. In the result not only did they foster inconclusiveness in British foreign policy, but by their continual state of unpreparedness, because of their relative ignorance of international affairs, they played their part in undermining collective security. More generally, the period 1919-39 was a period of "phoney cold war". Peoples swithered between political "isms", between boom and slump, between bilateral security alliances and professions of faith in the League or Locarno Pact; and between self-righteous interference and equally self-righteous withdrawal. It was a period in which rulers could too easily use facile clichés like "national self-determination," in order to grasp the substance, but not the spirit of Wilsonian principles, while they exploited the incohesiveness of the blinkered democracies, and of the League, in order to conquer economic hinterlands. It was a period, too, in which it was easy to talk of the manifest destiny of superior peoples, and in which dictators could over-reach themselves.

The lesson for the Commonwealth and for the world was that though equality of status was desirable and convenient in international law, inequality of function was both inevitable and in fact a means towards safety and progress. In this lesson lay the nucleus of the new formula of international relations.

From 1939 to 1946 great decisions were made by the major powers, frequently without reference to any of the smaller allies, even within the Commonwealth. The combined Chiefs of Staff, the Combined Supply Boards, the political chiefs of the great powers managed the war and policy matters themselves. This is not to say that they did not at all consult with the governments of smaller powers or were never influenced by them, but that they made the decisions. It was so when Britain guaranteed Poland,

Roumania and Greece in 1939; when Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to the Atlantic Charter; when it was decided that the German war should end with unconditional surrender; and when, to the chagrin of Australia and New Zealand, the European war was given initial primacy over the Japanese war. Finally, it was recognised in the Charter of the U.N., not merely in the membership of the Security Council, but in the effective executive powers given to it whenever the great powers should uniformly agree to exercise those powers, and issue orders to member Governments. People nowadays no longer, as did the Canadian Dandurand at Geneva in 1924, say that their people live "in a fire-proof house, far from inflammable materials". Nor do they believe in an amorphous global system of collective security. The United Nations has perhaps failed as a disciplinary concert of great powers to preserve peace for all peoples; but its role as a forum for discussion, and even for the representation of international pressure groups should not be despised. The U.N. is an organisation in which all those governments who are sensible of their inequality of function lobby and combine, in order to be given aid so that they shall be able to improve their functional status; so that they may become more politically stable and economically viable; so that, in brief, they may enjoy a generally easier relationship with all other states.

The "have-nots" demand aid; the "haves" recognise in the turbulence, poverty and military weakness of the "have-not" states a cause for war. The great powers recognise, too, the great economic and political potential of the under-developed states of Latin America, and of the Afro-Asian arc ringing the Indian Ocean. Taken together these states contain the greater part of the world's population and much of its natural resources. And the great powers tend to calculate their chances of survival according to the degree in which they can draw the under-developed continents and sub-continents into their respective systems. Nor is the task made easy, if one considers the population explosion occurring in those countries which tends to out-strip their economic development. The rich are getting relatively richer, and the poor poorer. South America, now with 170,000,000 people, demographers calculate might well have 500,000,000 by A.D. 2000.

Thus, in brief, firstly, the interdependency of states has become a first principle of survival; secondly, inter-state organisations of small powers, to rationalise their economies, to strengthen their status, and to attract aid, are now general. Thirdly, the great powers so as to rationalise their aid and security programmes, encourage international organisation regionally—the Marshall Plan is a classic example of this; and, finally, either globally through the U.N.,

or multilaterally as in the O.E.E.C. or its successor the O.E.C.D., or the Council of Europe, they seek to achieve a more orderly world and at least a moving equilibrium of international power groups, and a better distribution of the world's wealth.

Broadly, one might distinguish the emergence of three kinds of major groups: (a) the continental and sub-continental, e.g. the Warsaw Pact, the Organisation of American States, the Council of Europe, and the tentative Casablanca group of African states (Jan. 1961). In connection with these groups one might note the tendency of the northern hemisphere great powers to preserve the southern hemisphere small powers adjacent to them as their economic hinterlands and political associates. Thus not only does the French community politically and economically embrace a number of African states, as does the British Commonwealth, but the Council of Europe, in which France and Britain share, is currently fostering the concept of "Eurafrica", in an attempt perhaps to make Europe and Africa at least as interdependent as the states in the O.A.S. M. Philibert Tsiranana, the President of Malagasy, rightly declared last year "that the reality of international relations today turns upon the evolution of the world, in all respects, towards a concentration of means, especially when peoples, like the Malagasy, demand rapid progress and the ending of stagnation." "Reduced to our own resources," he said, "it would take us a very long time, and superhuman efforts to arrive at a result." "Not to have the means to pursue the policy one wants," he added, "is to risk, especially when one is isolated, falling into dependence upon very great nations." "Personally," he concluded, "I prefer the security of solidarity to this risk"—especially a solidarity founded upon consent. This he believed the French African Community, as well as France itself, had found in the European Economic Community, which, in assisting Malagasy so much after the devastations caused by the cyclone, had proved itself more of a family than a merely legalised body. (*Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, 16/1/60.) The Communist states, striving to frustrate this development, attempt to win Africa, South and S.E. Asia and Indonesia, for their own group.

Thus (b) there is a second kind of major group: the trans-oceanic: the Communist-led Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) loosely falls into this category, so does the Colombo Plan Group, SEATO, CENTO and NATO.

Finally, (c) there are the global organisations, notably the U.N.O. and the Commonwealth of Nations.

If one analyses these groups one notices some significant common features. Apart from a general reluctance to render and receive aid through simple bilateral treaties because of the universal

wish to avoid seeming to accept, or to seem to be indulging in, dollar, sterling, franc or rouble imperialism, there is a preference, dictated by convenience, to work through the existing systems of international aid and co-operation. Multilateral systems are therefore preferred because the aid then given is relatively anonymous and non-political, and because the co-operative organs in one system are related to those in other systems, as shall presently be made clear. Secondly, it is evident that politically colourless multilateral agreements or organisations are not absolutely preferred either; that is to say that political and economic kinship based upon custom and well-worn convenience as in the Commonwealth or the French Community, based too upon the intelligent desire of the principals in these kinship systems to foster them, counts for much. Thus it is a notable fact, as the General Secretary of the Council of Europe has recently shown, "that multilateral assistance granted to the underdeveloped countries through the medium of the United Nations and the specialised agencies amounts only to one-tenth of the total assistance received by those countries". (*Europe and Africa, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1960, p. 13.*) The greater part of assistance, then, flows through organisations or groups with a "family feeling"—the western hemisphere group, the North Atlantic group, the Eurafican groups, the Commonwealth group and the Communist group—though the United Nations diplomatic, financial and technical aid is an important ingredient in most of the planning in the free world.

Thirdly, one notices that almost nowhere in these groups does one find an alliance of the old military type. With varying degrees of perfection and imperfection, but always significant, are the social, cultural and economic terms of the agreements, as well as the military and political. The Colombo Plan, of course, involves members in neither military nor political obligations; and NATO is in practice primarily a military organisation which depends upon related organisations to foster social, cultural and economic unity. But CENTO nicely combines both trends in international combination. Like the other organisations it is an elaborate structure, shared in by the U.K., Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and indirectly by the U.S.A., which has separate agreements with the individual members.

Its structure has a bearing upon our subject. There is a Council of Ministers and a Permanent Secretariat. The latter is divided into five divisions—political and administrative, economic, security, counter-subversive, and military planning. The Council has four committees which reflect the same interests. The economic committee has attached to it a Co-ordinating Committee of Econo-

mic Experts, and five sub-committees: for communications and public works, trade, agriculture, health, and security. Technical experts, education, and much money is provided by Britain and America to improve overall the health, wealth, and happiness as well as the political stability and military strength of the peoples of the CENTO group.

Fourthly, in analysing these groups you will notice the tendency towards, if not the fact of supra-nationality; that is to say, the preparedness of governments to recognise the separate existence of the multi-national institutions which they set up for special purposes. The clearest example is, of course, the EEC, which possesses its own Legislature, executive and judiciary.

Fifthly, one observes that the membership of the groups overlap. Take CENTO: Pakistan and Britain are also members of the Commonwealth, of SEATO, and the Colombo Plan; and Turkey and Britain are members of NATO. All are members of UNO. Naturally, therefore, the Secretariats and Councils of all these groups attempt to co-ordinate their various development programmes, especially where there is an overlap of ministerial personnel in the controlling bodies. The British Foreign Secretary with his attendant experts is to be found now in Wellington, now in Bangkok, or in Teheran, Montreal or Washington. Thus, when he, or, for example Ayub Khan, reports to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference on Middle Eastern or S.E. Asian affairs, he does so as an active participant on several international regional bodies, and not simply as an official in Whitehall or in Rawalpindi. Their special experiences and knowledge, and indeed that of Nehru, the Tunku Abdul Rahman, Menzies, Holyoake and of all the others, and of their advisers, is pooled in the Commonwealth. One might note, too, that it is not only the Prime Ministers and their colleagues and assistants participating in these organisations who today enrich themselves in experience and knowledge, but a new kind of permanent international expert has come into being—the Secretaries-General of these organisations, who, like that of UNO, not only have great responsibilities as the chief executives of their groups, but also as advisers on planning and policy formulation. To facilitate their tasks, the Secretaries-General keep in touch with one another.

Finally, in analysing the international groups of the free world, one notices the fact that central to all of them are the U.K. and the U.S.A. Granted the enormous power of the latter, one can perhaps rightly argue that the U.K. is the most central of all the states of the world. London is the centre of a network of financial, technical, educational, diplomatic and ministerial services in and outside of

the Commonwealth which is unrivalled in the world today. A long experience in involvement at all levels in all parts of the globe surely gives Whitehall an edge on American and Russian services newly emerged from relative isolation, and inclined, perhaps, to strike attitudes because of domestic ideologies which they would like to make universal. Even in the post-war years when Britain was struggling to recuperate from a war which had come close to ruining her, General Smuts recognised, in 1948, that because of these factors "A great human mission still lies before her, perhaps greater than any in her glorious past". (*Mansergh, Documents, p. 1135.*) Lord Home, the British Foreign Secretary, in December, last year, himself gave evidence of an appreciation of Britain's central role: "In this century," he said, "we have shed a lot of physical power and we don't want power simply to throw our weight about on the world's stage. But," he added, "I do want to see a home economy which is strong enough to support our role as a leading partner in the Commonwealth, as a reliable ally, and as a champion everywhere of the way of life in which we believe." As a means to this end, he stressed "the strength and cohesion of our alliances". "That," he said, "is why we work, day in day out, to increase our co-operation with the Commonwealth, with Europe, and with the United States. It isn't really a choice between one or the other of these three," he added. "It will take the interdependence of all three to guarantee security." (*Commonwealth Survey, 1960, p. 1198.*)

We come then, to the Commonwealth as an international affair.

As Sir John Maud told us last year, the Commonwealth "embraces . . . about a quarter of the world's population; . . . covers about one-fifth of the world surface; . . . does about one-third of the world's trade . . . is rooted in all five continents, and stretches across all seven seas," so that "as a Commonwealth we are today involved over the whole span of the world's international affairs."

How is the Commonwealth equipped to meet this challenge?

Bearing in mind that the cardinal obligation of Commonwealth membership is that members shall consult one another, one can draw a functional chart of Commonwealth relationships which should shock those who think that the Commonwealth is a flimsy structure reared on passing sentiments and traditions.

Consultation is achieved by what Mackenzie King called a "continuous consultation of Cabinets", punctuated by annual or biennial Prime Ministers' Conferences, and numerous others of foreign and defence ministers, of civil service chiefs, of defence officers and scientists, educationists, statisticians, standardisation

experts and other specialists. There is daily communication between the Commonwealth Relations Office, and the foreign ministries of Commonwealth states. The C.R.O. acts as a clearing-house on the one hand for information from the U.K. ministries and particularly from the Foreign Office, which itself has a special Commonwealth Liaison Office, and on the other for information coming from the Commonwealth. Then there are weekly or bi-weekly consultations between Commonwealth High Commissioners and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs in London. Such meetings are often duplicated in Commonwealth capitals. Similar meetings regularly occur among Commonwealth Ambassadors all over the world, and not least significantly at the U.N. These meetings are informal and friendly; discussions even range over the domestic affairs of members; they are used to arrange for representation of Commonwealth interests through one member on international bodies to which all cannot be elected; and they iron out discordances, so that a more or less common front on important international issues is usual. Here let us remember two things: firstly, as Sir John Maud told us, the British Prime Minister or representative behaves in all the organisations outside the Commonwealth, of which Britain is a member, as the guardian and representative of the Commonwealth; and secondly, let us remember that the British foreign services, being unmatched both in extent and in the number of specialist attachés in the U.K. embassies, generally take the lead in supplying political, economic, and technical information, and thus perform *gratis* a tremendous service to member governments. This is not least true in matters affecting defence planning and equipment, and in finance. The U.K. is directly involved in economic planning and investment all over the globe, bilaterally, and through the regional organisations and the specialised economic agencies of the U.N. Through the conferences of Treasury officials, the Finance Ministers' Conferences and the permanent Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council, the co-ordination of planning and investment of Commonwealth resources is facilitated. This process is helped by the favoured position of Commonwealth members in the London capital market, in the activities of the Commonwealth Development and Finance Corporation, of various U.K. Exchequer funds, and in the distribution of Commonwealth assistance loans, as well as by private investment. In addition, the co-ordination of Commonwealth development programmes enables a more effective approach to be made to the U.N. financial and technical agencies like the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the FAO. In this context it is interesting to notice that Canada, and

Australia, in addition to their commitments under the Colombo Plan and the U.N., are making substantial contributions to Commonwealth development schemes for Africa.

Leaving these things aside one must notice the continuous services and benefits offered by what I call the Commonwealth specialised agencies, such as the Shipping Committee, the Air Transport Council, the Telecommunications Board, the Scientific Offices, the Joint Research services, the numerous Agricultural Bureaux, the Press Union, and the Parliamentary Association. In this context one should not forget the great services performed by the U.K. Central Office of Information, which links the British Ministeries with the High Commissioners' Offices in Britain and abroad.

In the case of the technical agencies, the knowledge and experience of individual members of the Commonwealth is, of course, made available to all members; but these agencies fulfil an even wider purpose: they pool knowledge from corresponding organs in the regional organisations and the U.N.; and in addition they directly serve Commonwealth interests, and indeed world-wide interests, in assisting the universal specialised agencies such as the International Transport and Communications Commission, the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the FAO, and other U.N. bodies; for from smaller patterns of established rules and co-ordinated activities, larger ones can more readily be established, indeed, without the smaller ones the larger could scarcely be established.

South African scientists, I am told, lost a good deal by our withdrawal from UNESCO. May we not stand appalled by what they may lose by being excluded from Commonwealth technical agencies? If India, a great Commonwealth state, has lagged behind in defence equipment and know-how simply because she will not participate in either regional defensive organisations like SEATO, or in Commonwealth defence talks, what will South Africa lose by exclusion?

Preparedness, I feel, is important when one is under any form of attack: how effective can we be when the broad political consultation which has been available to us is denied us, and when we are lacking even in information?

Some people have been at pains to argue that the Commonwealth is dying, or becoming like the United Nations Assembly, and to forget that membership, in a former New Zealand Prime Minister's phrase, "is independence with something added". Intra-Commonwealth disputes there naturally are. But even India

and Pakistan are currently engaged in a great co-operative project with regard to waterways and resettlement, greatly helped by the Commonwealth and the U.N., and latterly Ayub Khan has even been urging Nehru to agree to military consultation and joint planning for northern defence, where their common interest is self-evident. The division between the so-called "committed" and "uncommitted" groups hardly amounts to a dispute. India, in particular, has served the Commonwealth and the world well, as Nehru, in offering his reasons for staying in the Commonwealth in 1949, said it would. Indian diplomacy in China and Russia probably saved the world from far worse consequences to the Korean and Indo-Chinese wars; and generally, in interpreting Asian affairs to the Western and Communist blocs, republican India has proved an invaluable partner in the Commonwealth. African divisiveness, again might appear to be serious. But it would be foolish to dismiss Anglo-West African co-operation, or to decry the example and the progress towards inter-state co-operation of the French-speaking African states. The Africa Charter issued recently at Casablanca by the assembled heads of state, should perhaps be taken seriously. Certainly one should not scoff at the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Council, and Julius Nyerere's Pan-African freedom movement for East and Central Africa. What Prof. Carrington* wrote of the Commonwealth might well prove true of the African groups: "while India, Pakistan and South Africa," he wrote, "in the world of diplomacy are on very poor terms, in all the other far more serviceable functions of social life they co-operate freely through Commonwealth channels . . ." The African states cannot avoid interdependency and seem to seek combination; here and there machinery exists to make it effective; and there seems no reason why it should not mature under the umbrella perhaps of the French Community and Commonwealth organisations, or Communist organisation, and be broadly facilitated by the United Nations co-operative agencies.

The voluntary and dynamic association of interdependent free states in multi-purpose organisations, none of them themselves self-sufficient, is the new formula which the free nations of the world have adopted since 1945. In these associations, even when they have supranational powers, the nation states find their national interests best served.

South Africa, in this context, seems an extreme example of a state which has not moved out of the 1920's and 1930's. General Smuts, of course, warned us in 1948 that "Organisation of the West

*Maitland, p. 111

becomes the one paramount issue, for us of the Commonwealth also" (*Mansergh, Documents, 1135*) and he visualised South Africa playing its full part in the regional security and development of Africa. Even Dr. Malan, who in that same year was determined to "rescue South Africa from foreign complexes", was by 1949 thinking of associating South Africa with NATO. He had decided by then that the Commonwealth was a powerful influence in the world, strong because of its "ability to adapt itself to changing conditions in a changing world" (*ibid. 863, 871*), and a boon to South Africa since it made her more secure on the international plain, and would enable her to become united within. He went further. After the Commonwealth Defence Ministers' Conference of 1951, he recognised and accepted South Africa's responsibilities in the defence of the Middle East. Before that he had sent South African servicemen so far afield as Korea as part of the Commonwealth contribution. Even Mr. Erasmus, during Mr. Strijdom's administration, advocated the creation of a Southern African Defence Organisation related to NATO, or, alternatively, an organisation of Eurafrikan states for the defence of the mainland. (*P. Maitland, p. 191*). In 1955 the Union Government formally agreed that "The defence of Southern Africa against external aggression lies not only in Africa, but also in the Middle East . . ." as well as in the southern sea routes. (*Tunstall, 48.*) But the International Defence Conference in Nairobi in 1955 failed to establish an African Command Organisation because the Union would not agree to non-whites serving in it. The NATO Powers who participated in that conference were disappointed in their hopes. Yet African security to bolster CENTO and SEATO is important, and the Union is essential to the proper organisation of African security. This has become rather more than less true since the World War. After Nairobi, a United Kingdom-South African agreement to plan communications, supply and repair bases, was accordingly made. But how far we can continue even this tepid arrangement now is a moot point. We have in fact only the Simonstown Agreement and a vast dependence upon the Western Powers and, ironically, the African states, to preserve our continental as well as our seawards security. Our own desires, that is to say, our desires as white South Africans, and our political and economic needs, even for defence, cannot now receive the kind of consideration they formerly did, unless it be in Lisbon. An African and an Indian Ocean people, ought we not to have heeded Mr. Macmillan's warning, which he called one of his "main points", in Cape Town last year? "The fact is", he said, "that in the modern world no country, not even the greatest, can live for itself alone."

And yet, what a very great chance we have missed—and I am not referring to post-war emigration from Europe either. That we could have benefited from too; but in co-operation with, and with the aid of the great international organisations of the free world, and not least of the Commonwealth, with all its special goodwill for the country of Jan Christian Smuts, could we not have helped to realise the Eurafrican idea, and have really got on with the development of our native territories?

Is not our neighbour, the patriotic President Tsiranana, wiser than we are?

“ Any man’s death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls
It tolls for thee.”

It was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom who quoted these words to us: but whom, or what, is the most diminished by our leaving the Commonwealth? The Commonwealth probably goes forward strengthened in its resolve and in its effectiveness to prevent the headlong clash of oppugnant ideologies. It does therefore seem to be what General Smuts hoped it would be, a vital third force, helping to articulate Eastern and Western blocs and the interests of peoples of all colours and creeds. *Long may it continue so.*

Questions

Of the several questions put to the speaker, there were three, perhaps, which registered the interest of the audience more than the others.

1. Are there any regional organisations of which South Africa is a member?

The Union is a member of the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA), and of the two bodies which are closely related to it—the Scientific Council for Africa (CSA), and the Foundation for Mutual Assistance in Africa South of the Sahara (FAMA). These bodies are able to draw upon the assistance, or at least to co-operate with, such U.N. organs as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organisation, and not least, the Economic Commission for Africa. It might be noted

here that the Union has withdrawn from UNESCO, but that at this level at any rate, might gain some indirect benefit from the existence of this body.

2 Does the position of Eire with regard to Britain offer a precedent which South Africa might follow?

Not really. Ireland's geographical position, the very close interdependency of the Irish and British economies, the fact that there are more Irish nationals than there are nationals of all the other Commonwealth States put together in Britain, points to a very different relationship. But the difference is greater than one depending upon mere geographical proximity, demographic facts and economic interests—Ireland left the Commonwealth in order to become a republic. In doing so, she was exposing herself to nothing more than loss of one kind of status, and to certain useful facilities and in any case, since 1939, if not since 1937, she had been not much more than a nominal member. But the Union left the Commonwealth, not in order to become a republic, or because her people wanted to, but because the policies of her Government made her a danger to Commonwealth stability, and put the Commonwealth in a weaker position than need be in the rivalry between the Soviet bloc and the Western bloc. South Africa's apparent insincerity with regard to the preamble of the U.N. Charter is as bad as the Russian—with this difference, that the Soviets can use the egalitarianism of the Soviet constitution and of Communist theory, with regard especially to race and colour, to considerable effect in international relations. "Apartheid", or "Separate Development", is seen as a poor alternative to this challenge. South Africa is an "outcast": Eire is not. Eire's re-entry into the Commonwealth would probably please everybody and be undramatic whether in domestic politics or in international politics, though, no doubt, NATO would be the better for it: but South Africa's re-entry is fraught with difficulty, at both domestic and international levels. More than that: it is embarrassing to any Government to show themselves too friendly towards her. She cannot expect to be treated like Eire.

3. Why did Burma leave the Commonwealth?

There is a long history of Burmese irritation with British Colonial policy, not least with that aspect of it which made Burma subordinate to the Government of India until 1937, and at the same time treated it as less worthy of constitutional advance than India. In consequence, Burmese nationalism made rapid strides between 1920 and 1939. But, more important perhaps, the Burmese knew that the Indian Congress was pledged to make India a republic, and did not believe (who did?) that that could be reconciled with Commonwealth membership. The Burmese leaders believed that it would

be foolish politically to be out of step with India in such an important matter, both for domestic reasons and because independent India's likely preponderance in all South Asian affairs was expected, and respected. No one could foresee in 1947 that Pandit Nehru would achieve the seemingly impossible.

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