

THE SECRETARIAT OF THE UNITED NATIONS. By Sydney D. Bailey.  
[London: Stevens. 1962. 113 pp. 25s.]

According to the Charter of the United Nations the Secretariat constitutes one of the principal organs of the Organization, although the nature of its work makes it, at first sight at least, somewhat different from the other organs. From the earliest days of the League of Nations, however, it became clear that the true nature of the Secretariat and the significance it could assume would depend largely on the personality of its senior officer. In the case of the United Nations this possibility is made more real by virtue of the power of initiative given to the Secretary-General by the Charter itself.

So far, the United Nations, despite the criticisms of certain of its members, particularly those in the Soviet bloc, has been well served by the three persons who have filled its supreme administrative office. Although U Thant may be more self-effacing than his predecessors, he still seems to accept the view of his function as defined by Hammarskjöld: "... The discretion and impartiality imposed on the Secretary-General by the character of his immediate task must not degenerate into a policy of expediency. ... I believe it to be the duty of the Secretary-General to use his office and, indeed, the machinery of the Organization to its utmost capacity and to the full extent permitted at each stage by practical circumstances. ... It is in keeping with the philosophy of the Charter that the Secretary-General also should be expected to act without any guidance from the Assembly or the Security Council should this appear to him necessary towards helping to fill any vacuum that may appear in the systems which the Charter and traditional diplomacy provide for the safeguarding of peace and security. ... I am sure I will be acting in accordance with the wishes of the members of the [Security] Council if I, therefore, use all opportunities, offered to the Secretary-General, within the limits set by the Charter and towards developing the United Nations effort, so as to help to prevent a further deterioration of the situation. . . ."

The Soviet Union has not approved of the attempts by the Secretary-General to, in its view, 'usurp' the functions of the Security Council, and has suggested a 'troika' arrangement to clip his wings. But its discontent has spread to the entire Secretariat and it has suggested a change in balance in its membership in order to

reflect the three trends [West, East, and uncommitted] in the United Nations. This view has, to some extent, received support from the new members, for they have joined an Organisation which, of historical necessity, is staffed primarily by nationals of States who were leading members in 1945—in this connection it is perhaps as well to remember, as Mr. Bailey points out, that the countries of the Soviet bloc have not been excessively co-operative in finding Secretariat personnel when required to do so. Again, one should bear in mind the comment of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in 1961: too often, “the choice is between accepting unsatisfactory standards or leaving posts unfilled.” In any case, there is no special magic in quotas or in geographical representation. All the Charter requires of its civil service is efficiency and integrity. Given this, and with a strong United Nations man at the head, there should be no reason for any member to fear that it is ‘being done down’ in any way because it has a lower percentage of nationals in the Secretariat than has another member (Mr. Bailey’s tables are most enlightening).

For those who want to examine the organisation of the Secretariat, and to see the way in which the Secretary-General has altered the arrangements so as to satisfy the views of both East and West without in any way giving up his sole discretion in the selection of staff, *The Secretariat of the United Nations* will prove invaluable. If Mr. Bailey produces a second edition, it would be helpful if he would identify delegates by name or nationality, rather than saying “one delegate”. He might also consider whether he really wishes to preserve the appearance of being the only up-to-date work on the Secretariat which ignores the advisory opinion of the World Court and the activities of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal.