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Race, Conflict and the International Order

From Empire to United Nations

Hugh Tinker

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For
my grandson

Joshua

May he find
the twenty-first century more kind

Preface

The factor of race enters increasingly into our lives at every level. It has been approached in the past on a personal, social level ('Would you like your daughter to marry a black man?') but in the 1970s it has attained the importance of a world phenomenon. This book was first planned in December 1974, and writing was begun in December 1975. Even during the brief intervening period, the importance of race in world affairs has dramatically increased. Probably, before this book is published a further escalation will have occurred. Yet, thus far, few writers have attempted to explore the international dimensions of race. Ronald Segal's *The Race War* seemed sensational when it appeared in 1966; it suffered from the author's tendency to introduce events and trends which were outside the orbit of race and thereby it had the effect of seeming to strain too hard to make a case.

Several shorter studies have examined the subject. Perhaps the most incisive and articulated is by A. R. Preiswerk, 'Race and Colour in International Relations' in *The Year Book of World Affairs, 1970* (London, 1970). More free-ranging but also stimulating is Harold R. Isaacs's 'Color in World Affairs', *Foreign Affairs* (New York, January 1969), while a more basic approach is taken by Robert K. A. Gardiner, 'Race and Color in International Relations,' in *Color and Race*, edited by John Hope Franklin (Boston, 1968). The present study has drawn upon these articles, especially that of A. R. Preiswerk, but is based more upon the author's own observations and experiences. (A valuable stimulus was given by an unpublished paper of J. D. B. Miller, 'Racial Equality', delivered at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, in October 1956, at a time when most of us had no idea that race would become a prime factor in international relations.)

The work was supported by a Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation in the programme on conflict in international relations.

At the outset, we need to find some answer to that elusive question: What is Race? In the United States, a person with a skin of a light colour with even one remote black ancestor is black; whereas in Brazil a person

with a skin of a dark colour with even one remote white ancestor is not black. Race lies in the eye of the beholder. We shall not now try to provide a comprehensive definition of race which can withstand all biological, cultural, religious and political criteria. The reader is asked to accept the following working definitions. We have a *racial* factor when one group of people, united by their own perception of inherited and distinctive qualities, are set apart from another group with (supposedly) separate inherited and distinctive qualities. We have a *racist* factor when one group claims a dominant position, justified by the supposed inferiority of the other group. This superiority will be claimed on the basis of physical characteristics, but is reinforced by a claim to spiritual and mental superiority, or what Arnold Toynbee calls 'psychic qualities'. It may be hoped that before the reader has finished with this book he or she will have formulated a more satisfactory definition.

November 1976

HUGH TINKER