

for the negotiation of peaceful solutions to complex problems.

The actual uses of the United Nations have been ignored, distorted, or suppressed by wishful-thinking idealists, a multitude of scholars and associates of the organization with professional and other vested interests, and the general public, which has had little choice but to accept the images projected by "experts" and publicists. Why do states bring issues into the United Nations? They do so in order to: embarrass and humiliate; legitimize war and preparation for war; promote the juridical status of peoples and governments; and to augment national power or reduce that of enemies. It is in relation to these national strategies that the impact of the U.N. on world politics must be analyzed.

There are no *United Nations* successes or failures. It is pure fiction, for example, to describe the Korean War as an application of the principle of collective security and to refer to United Nations inaction in Hungary in 1956 as an abandonment of that ideal. During the 1950's the U.N. served the interests of American foreign policy. By using the U.N. to *legitimize* America's reaction to North Korean aggression President Truman maximized domestic and foreign support for his decisions. Six years later President Eisenhower decided *not* to risk nuclear war when Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian freedom fighters. To bolster *that* decision the United States opted for the politics of *embarrassment* at the United Nations. *Both* uses of the organization were successful, but they were in the service of different strategies.

For the developing world the politics of status at the United Nations has been a major weapon in the assault on colonialism and racism. In their relentless struggle against Israel the Arabs resort constantly to the United Nations. It should be clear even to apologists for the United Nations that more powerful than the missiles and tanks supplied by the Soviet Union is the availability of Arab-dictated cease-fires. They encourage aggression and adventurism by guaranteeing against defeat on the battlefield, thereby preserving the military, territorial, and psychological bases for the next war. Between wars one-sided resolutions in the United Nations become substitutes for negotiations. Given such U.N. contributions to peace, it is hardly surprising that the meeting of a few fighting men in a desert tent at Kilometer 101 was greeted with deep relief.

Ideals inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations lose their value when they are applied opportunistically by shifting majorities. Israel is solemnly warned that the organization cannot accept the acquirement of territory by force, but the

principle is ignored by those who voted for it. To take only India, which has been perhaps the most consistent non-Arab critic of Israel in the United Nations, application of this rule would require restoration of the independence of Hyderabad, return of Goa to Portugal, and withdrawal from Kashmir. One wonders, too, why the Indians fought the Chinese if not to establish India's version of secure boundaries by use of force. And the rights of blacks in South Africa are not really advanced by an organization which condemns apartheid but remains silent concerning Ibos in Biafra, other blacks in Burundi and Sudan, or Indians in Uganda. Israel is condemned for the nonfatal hijacking of an airplane by the same states which ignored the hanging of Jews in a public square in Iraq and who found that the Israeli Olympians in Munich were guilty of provoking their own murder.

There is more, much more, including the threat to détente among the superpowers posed by small states which provoke the Big Three into assuming conflicting positions in the United Nations, or the destruction of neutral havens by the constant public pressure on states to take sides. The "deal" between black Africans who wanted to silence the South African delegation and the Arabs who wanted to promote the status of the Palestine Liberation Organization illustrates perfectly this last point.

If an analogy is permitted, the United Nations might be compared to a building labeled "Hospital," into which persons with various illnesses enter and from which emerge only corpses and cripples. Because of the name over the entrance and because of the assurance by hospital administrators, doctors, and health experts that the "Hospital" was man's last hope against an all-consuming plague, critics do no more than suggest that the hospital is inefficient and in need of a few reforms. None dare confront the truth. We cannot follow that example. Man's survival in the nuclear age is too tenuous. We must recognize the U.N. for what it is . . . It is a dangerous place.

Abraham Yeselson & Anthony Gaglione
Authors of A Dangerous Place: The United Nations as a Weapon in World Politics (Grossman).

EXCURSUS III

The U.N. as Sandbox

Recent actions by the U.N. General Assembly suggest troubling parallels with certain goings on in U.S. race relations only a few years ago.

Beginning with the riotous insurrection in Watts and followed by every black community that did not want to be called chicken, America's inner cities discovered the strategic uses of hell-raising. For a time it seemed that nothing worked so well as a riot to attract national attention and, more to the point, federal monies directed to the problems of poverty. It worked because of the black community's long-standing moral claim upon the American conscience and because whites were not entirely confident that the arson could be contained within the neighborhoods of the poor.

After several years of this the nation began to weary of the spectacle of poor people burning down their own homes. It began to be viewed as an oddly self-defeating propensity, confirming racist suspicions about the peculiarities of black people. It was not long before some urban expert types proposed the whole thing should be seen in terms of the sandbox versus the real world. When the children in the inner city sandbox become unruly, the adults toss them some new toys in the form of antipoverty programs. Expensive toys, to be sure, but not nearly so costly as making the adjustments necessary to incorporate the denizens of the sandbox into the real world.

If the toys didn't keep the children happy—or at least prevent their unhappiness from disturbing the rest of us—harsher measures were available. By the end of the 1960's many Americans were prepared to seal off the sandbox with an iron curtain of law-and-order. Fortunately, a new kind of black leadership emerged that was prepared neither to live in the sandbox nor to be treated as children to be placated. The Jim Formans were replaced by the Jesse Jacksons, and the Black Panthers by the Congressional black caucus. The new leadership knows the political limits on the uses of guilt and the threat of terror. It knows that one of the hard facts of powerlessness is the lack of power to sustain an effective intimidation of the powerful. One must have some leverage in the game in order to change the rules of the game. It is not a doctrine designed for romantics but for those who are tired of leading fantasy lives in the sandbox.

The United Nations may not be the world's "last best hope," but it should be a lot more than the international sandbox this General Assembly almost contrived to make it. At least four unprecedented actions should have remained unprecedented: the reception of the Palestine Liberation Organization with honors appropriate to a member state, the virtual silencing of Israel in the debate on Palestine, the exclusion of Israel from UNESCO, and suspension of South Africa.

The reception accorded Arafat and the PLO

was not necessary to assure that their voice would be heard in the debate on Palestine. The General Assembly has traditional and proven means for hearing the views of spokesmen for peoplehood in search of statehood. Setting aside its record of terrorism and acknowledging that the PLO appears moderate in contrast with some Palestinian groups, there is something outrageous about the Assembly's paying high honor to an organization that officially and persistently repudiates everything the U.N. has said about the integrity of the State of Israel.

The refusal to grant Israel the customary right to rebut accusations made against her was an egregious act of unbridled majoritarianism. However much one may deplore Israel's record of intransigence, it can hardly be blamed for shaking the sand from its feet and leaving a party that possesses not even the facade of fairness. As for excluding Israel from the councils of UNESCO, were it not for the politicizing of a frequently worthwhile organization, there would be humor in the attempt to penalize Israel by cutting off its programs, since they constitute but a fraction of what Israel contributes to UNESCO. Of course, for as long as the Arabs have an unlimited checking account they and their African collaborators need not worry about financing whatever diversions they choose to indulge under the auspices of the U.N.

The most serious assault upon the U.N., however, was the successful collaboration to suspend South Africa from the General Assembly. Stipulating that the odious system of apartheid is to be condemned without quarter, and leaving aside the question of whether, as the U.S. argued, South Africa could be more effectively pressured within the Assembly, and even forgetting for the moment the principle of universal representation (a principle which, in connection with the admission of China, was so boldly championed by the nations voting to exclude South Africa), the Assembly's action reeks of hypocrisy. Not so incidentally, the action violates Article Five of the U.N. Constitution, which explicitly states that suspension must be recommended by the Security Council.

But it is the hypocrisy that so undercuts the moral authority that is the chief, and always tenuous, claim of the United Nations to be taken seriously. Not in South Africa but in Uganda a mad tyrant executes tens of thousands, frequently feeding their chopped up bodies to the crocodiles. Not in South Africa but in the Central African Republic the President has himself been photographed clubbing helpless prisoners to death. Not in South Africa but in Chad Christians are buried alive in anthills. The moral outrage of

Africans might be more credible if it included even a trace of candor about their own countries, many of which are police states in systematic violation of the human rights their delegates so fervently revere upon arrival in New York.

In addition to the African instances cited, Russia, China, Indonesia, Haiti, the U.S. in Vietnam, and a dozen others are all guilty of atrocities far greater than anything imputed to South Africa. Yet they, together with Uganda and Chad, sit in the Assembly seats of the respectable and, over cocktails in the delegates lounge, deplore the iniquities of those they have cast out. The hypocrisy of South Africa's judges does not make apartheid look any better. It deserves to be condemned even by murderers. But murderers should exercise more caution, not to mention modesty, in drawing up criteria for exclusion from the club.

Unlike the black sandbox of yesteryear, the General Assembly poses not even the semblance of a threat to American power and policy. We have in the past criticized Henry Kissinger and the current Administration for their patent indifference to Third World countries in general and the United Nations in particular. Mr. Kissinger's approach seems to be that the little kids should not be permitted to interfere with the big boys' games. This assembly witnessed the little kids trying to get back at one big boy in particular. That he was promptly abandoned by his usual teammates says something, although nothing very new, about the place of principle in international life. More ominous is the prospect that the U.S. will feel confirmed in its suspicion that the presence of the U.N. is a burden to be borne with patience and a modicum of humor but not to be confused with the real business of nations.

Lamentable as all this is, it need not be irreversible. The United Nations continues to be important for sundry international projects, for occasional peacekeeping missions, for a uniquely global dialogue among nations and leaders, and for symbolizing the hope of a more just and secure world order. The crucial component in all these tasks is moral credibility; it is as elusive and fragile as it is crucial. On that score the General Assembly can continue to discredit the U.N. as it has in recent months. No doubt the Arabs can fund the frolics for the foreseeable future. One hopes, however, for the emergence of a leadership that sees the General Assembly as something more than a noisy sandbox of limited nuisance value in support of a highly selective morality. A world parliament it may never be, but a reasonably fair and representative forum should not be out of the question.

RJN

EXCURSUS IV

Amnesty International

Luncheon at the Harvard Club. The host is Amnesty International and the principal speaker is Hortencia Bussi de Allende, widow of the late President of Chile. The principal topic is death, imprisonment, and torture.

Many of the charges Mrs. Allende brought against the United States are now depressingly familiar to most people, and U.S. complicity in the overthrow of Allende is officially acknowledged—whatever disputes continue about the extent of U.S. influence. Less familiar is the charge she brought against the present Chilean regime of imprisonment with torture. Of the many instances of which she could speak with knowledge Mrs. Allende chose someone close to her own heart.

"To the long list of assassinations, including José Toha, General Bachelet, General Prats, and thousands of Chileans we must now add the arrest of my sister-in-law Laura Allende Gossens, youngest sister of President Allende, who is suffering from an advanced case of cancer. She has been Deputy for the Socialist Party for four terms, and member of the Central Committee. She is accused of having close links with the MIR and of being a terrorist. She is a political woman who enjoys great popularity in Chile due to her commitment to the people, not only because she is the sister of the assassinated President, but because today she is a symbol of the resistance in Chile. We ask for her immediate release, we appeal to the efficient efforts of Amnesty International so that she will not be tortured and her life will be saved."

Laura Allende is, of course, a special case, bearing as she does a politically resonant name. And there are a number of special cases around the world—special because the people are well known, not because they always receive special treatment. They frequently receive the same punishment, including torture, as the much larger group for whose welfare Amnesty International is specifically concerned. For the special cases are the visible tip of a large iceberg that grows in size. Sean McBride, Chairman of the International Executive Committee of the organization, touched on some of the more grisly aspects of his work when he addressed a conference on torture about one year ago:

There is no doubt that the practice of torture has been on the increase in recent years.