

# Disparate Views Of The United Nations

**The Play Within the Play** by Hernane Tavares de Sá. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.95.

**HammarSKjöld** by Emery Kelen. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$5.95.

by John R. Inman

We are offered, in two books that have recently been published, strongly contrasting views of the United Nations. *The Play Within the Play*, by Tavares de Sá, who served as Under-Secretary for the Office of Public Information at the United Nations for five years, may well be the best anti-U.N. ammunition that anti-U.N.ers can acquire, for there are enough half-truths to lend credence to the whole text. For the uninitiated it might seem to be not only a spicy but an accurate exposé. Such is far from the truth. Secretariat people with whom I have talked say that this bitter Brazilian not only failed in his professional duties but managed to do it with great pomposity. The opening quotation in the introduction of the volume is from *Markings*:

"Courage? On the level where the only thing that counts is a man's loyalty to himself, the word has no meaning. Was he brave? — 'No, just logical'."

I doubt if many of the U.N. bureaucracy would think this the most appropriate quote to describe Señor Tavares de Sá or his book.

A very different view of the U.N. emerges from the volume entitled simply, *HammarSKjöld*. Emery Kelen, who was formerly in charge of U.N. Television and now teaches at Columbia, has produced a sensitive study of a sensitive man. It is not in a real sense a biography, but an attempt to understand and explain the complexity of a strange

man. He contemplates the loneliness of Hammarskjöld and notices the paradoxes of his personal relations in the U.N.: he was warm and humble with security guards and elevator girls, cold and aloof with the second-level secretariat, and he inspired devotion in his top aides. Kelen discusses Hammarskjöld's aestheticism and his mysticism, so rare in a person of high political office. I do wish that the Conor Cruise O'Brien controversy, with all its implications about the authority and structure of the U.N., had been explored in depth. However there are few books that delve more deeply into the constitutional dilemma of the U.N. than this one. And it is all done through the fascinating study of the *unusual man*.

A good deal of space is spent on the mysterious death of the Secretary General. News of Hammarskjöld's death reached the U.N. September 18, 1961. There were not many dry eyes at the U.N. headquarters, although he had made enemies in the position he assumed in 1953 and ugly rumors were circulated about his personal life. But nearly all of the Secretariat had come to recognize his dedication and integrity. The Security Council, in an informal meeting that afternoon, praised the former Secretary General for his leadership in the quest for international peace and his "extraordinary diplomatic skill."

Only Valerian A. Zorin, head of the USSR delegation, refused to associate himself with the eulogy. For the USSR had not recognized the existence of Hammarskjöld for some time — a tactic they had used successfully to get rid of Trygve Lie. Zorin did, though, send a personal message of condolence to the family.

No one thought in the spring of 1953 that they were getting not only a capable Secretary General but a tough and courageous one.

Tavares de Sá quotes from 'the famous reply of Hammarskjöld to Khrushchev's request in the General Assembly that he resign:

"It is very easy to resign; it is not so easy to stay on. It is very easy to bow to the wish of a great power. It is another matter to resist. As is well known to all the members of the Assembly I have done so before and in many directions. If it is the wish of those nations who see in this Organization their best protection in the present world I shall do so again."

No one who was there that day shall ever forget the impact of his stand expressed in typical Hammarskjöld style.

Tavares de Sá has some kind words (he doesn't use many) about the former Secretary General in his chapter "Hammarskjöld and Thant: A Study in Contrast." He finds it difficult to see much in Thant, under whom he served as Under-Secretary for Public Information about four years. For Thant, he says, ". . . pride and vanity, as we Westerners understand them, are integrated into face-saving, that pervading trait of Asians . . . Thant tended to be helpless and ineffective in an emergency. He was vague and preachy . . ." While admitting that Hammarskjöld might have moved too fast and landed the U.N. in real trouble politically, constitutionally and financially, the ex-Brazilian journalist claims that Thant doesn't move at all. I believe that this judgment is decidedly unfair. The U.N., after Hammarskjöld, needed to slow down. It needed a Thant to calm the waters. A more objective evaluation of the present Secretary General should have been made in the context of the U.N. situation.

Tavares de Sá is far from objective in *The Play Within the Play*. Indeed, he strikes this reader as arrogant and contemptuous. Speaking of "tame Africans" he says "they have an indefinable

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family air about them. Well-dressed, urbane, articulate and lazy, having a family connection with the prime minister or the president of their country, they are usually the African version of a Western playboy." Again speaking of the members of the Afro-Asian group at the General Assembly he mentions "cynical, pommaded third secretaries." He cannot resist repeating the charge of a New York paper that "ladies of easy virtue frequent the Delegates Lounge and are brought into the Lounge under impeccable auspices, usually a status-seeking African delegate for whom any blonde is a blonde."

His prejudiced approach is also extended to the Asians, particularly the Indians. He says of a central figure in the group who surround the Secretary General — no doubt the Chef de Cabinet — that he is a "former provincial government employee from the south of India with boundless ambition...." Burmese U Thant is referred to as a former "headmaster of a high school up country from Rangoon."

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Over the years the many voluntary organizations have built up an acceptance of the U.N. among the U. S. public. U. S. non-governmental organizations (N.G.O.s) can be accredited to the U.N. Office of Public Information. N.G.O.s, through frequent briefings by members of the Secretariat, through access to U.N. documentation and through personal contact with the U.N. staff and delegations are able, if they are diligent and tactful, to gain an insight into the inner U.N. There is a hard core of N.G.O.s who do an exceedingly good job of informing their organizations about U.N. affairs. There are, as Tavares de Sá says, "ladies equipped with flowering hats and a grim determination to love the United Nations and to be internationally minded." But this is not the whole story.

The real story is the dedicated and successful efforts of many to

educate their national organizational headquarters. If the N.G.O.s had only ineffectives (and the author doesn't note that there are any other kind) Tavares de Sá should have taken their accreditation away. They were, after all, accredited to his shop. However, he places greater blame for shaping a "ladylike if not saintly" image of the U.N. on liberal university intellectuals and "progressives" in government bureaus. That is a sweeping charge. One wonders if Tavares de Sá ever read Lincoln Bloomfield, Sidney D. Bailey, Inis L. Claude, Jr., Thomas Hovet, Stanley Hoffman, and Richard Gardner, for example. These are not sentimentalists but serious students of international organization.

Kelen has the discerning insight of the political cartoonist as shown in his drawings for the *New York Times*, *Fortune* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. He also has the good T.V. director's ability to see beyond the obvious and to disclose the personality. Hammarskjold loved the challenge of climbing mountains. Kelen's conclusions about a mountaineer rather accurately fit the former Secretary General: (1) That a mountaineer is prudent and thinks twice before putting his foot anywhere. (2) That even so he must accept the challenge of the peak, advance and never retreat. (3) That he has a taste for solitude and the courage to risk his neck.

What caused the crash of the D.C. 6 carrying its human cargo of sixteen? Kelen looks at the numerous explanations carefully. Why did the plane take a circuitous route to Ndola at night? Was it sabotaged? Why was Hammarskjold's body the only one totally without burns? Was there a plane in the air near the D.C. 6, and who's was it? Did it fire on the D.C. 6? Did the tower and field lights go off as the U.N. plane approached? Did Hammarskjold commit suicide, taking the other fifteen (including his close friend Heinrich Wieschoff) with him to their deaths? Significantly on his

last journey he carried with him a Swedish translation of a part of *I and Thou*, written by a friend, Martin Buber.

This strange man had so many sides to him that one cannot make any simple analysis of his character. For example, as Kelen notes, he made a point of shaking the hands of all 4,000 who worked in the "House." Yet, as I witnessed during one of his tours of the headquarters, the handshaking was accomplished wordlessly, and this despite the sentence or two of greeting from me on behalf of the others in the N.G.O. Lounge that day. Occasionally too he would stand in line in the cafeteria, waiting his turn, doubtless wanting to see how the other half was being fed.

It was Hammarskjold who introduced the custom of United Nations Day concerts by distinguished symphony orchestras and artists, and later in celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights. During the Christmas season the U.N. Singers in their native dress can be heard in the public lobby of the General Assembly Building. All this is a touch of Dag.

Kelen also notes a little-known aspect of Hammarskjold's interests: the Meditation Room, for which no plans had been made when the Headquarters were constructed, and in the details of which Hammarskjold himself took a hand. (Tavares de Sá should note that the cost involved was raised by the N.G.O.s.) Kelen quotes the former Secretary General as saying, "This house must have one room, one place which is dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense." The room is a fitting memorial.

Mr. Kelen is a sensitive man too. No other could have written this book, *Hammarskjold*, full of fact, insight and admiration. If he over-stresses his ability to judge personality by physical dimensions, let us excuse him, remembering his background as a cartoonist — which so often serves him well.

**The Alliance of Necessity**

Lionel Gelber. Stein and Day. 192 pp. \$5.95.

The author, a Canadian who served as an advisor to Prime Minister Diefenbaker, dissents from the widely-held view that Britain would benefit from entry into the Common Market. "For an improvement in Britain's prospects," Mr. Gelber writes, "two things are needed: internal reforms and recognition by the United States that, if she is to rely on Britain as a close ally, she must help the British find an alternative to Europeanization."

**The New Left Church**

Terence Eagleton, Helicon. 180 pp. \$1.45 (paper)

Mr. Eagleton, an editor of the British "Catholic Left" magazine *Saint*, notes that "all the essays in this book are concerned with the church, literature and politics"; indeed, "no one strand of the web which links these three concerns can be touched without affecting the others." His aim in the discussion is "to persuade Christians that being in the church involves commitment to imaginative culture and the political left."

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**Voluntary Organizations**

Edited by D. B. Robertson. John Knox. 448 pp. \$9.75

This volume, "A Study of Groups in Free Societies," is a *Festschrift* by friends and former students of James Luther Adams, professor of Christian ethics at Harvard Divinity School, for whom the subject represents a long-time concern. There are papers on the theory and practice of associations in history, on the voluntary church and other associations today (including an examination of SANE as a voluntary organization), and there is both a biographical sketch of Adams and a bibliography of his writings.

**Handbook on South and Southeast Asia**

Foreign Policy Association. 72 pp. \$1.00

The January-February issue of *Intercom*, bi-monthly world affairs journal of the Foreign Policy Association, provides basic information about South and Southeast Asia and the individual countries in it, new cooperative developments and the activities of U.N. and U. S. agencies. A special feature is the 13-page section, "Vietnam Viewpoints: A Resource Guide."

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