

Really What Happened When Arafat Spoke at the U.N.

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In mid-October, 1974, seventy-one United Nations members sponsored a resolution which read:

The General Assembly,
Considering that the Palestinian people is a principal party to the question of Palestine,
Invites the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate in the deliberations of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings.

Since there were seventy-one sponsors, it was inevitable that the resolution would be adopted. But debate on the question was inevitably bitter and spilled over to the substance of the Palestinian issue. For many people the debate—and Arafat's subsequent address to the General Assembly—sharpened questions about the United Nations, its purpose, and its long-term value.

From its birth the United Nations has been an important weapon in the armory of nations in conflict. When one's national ends are advanced, the U.N. is seen as the expression of man's highest ideals. Victims, however, perceive attacks in the world forum as irresponsible distortions of the Charter. From either perspective the United Nations is an arena for combat. To analyze U.N. debates accurately we must, at the very least, be capable of differentiating

the politics of conflict from efforts to maintain peace. The starting point of analysis is the question: Who brings what issues to the United Nations and why?

At first glance it might appear that the issue of the PLO is atypical. Actually, the PLO question does not differ substantially from others which have been brought into the organization. Observers of the United Nations are aware that, during the cold war, the largest number of Soviet vetoes in the Security Council—fifty-one in all—were used to exclude Western-sponsored states from membership. At the same time, the Western majority systematically rejected such applicants as Hungary, Bulgaria, and Mongolia. Given the Western majority and the numerous favorites associated with it, the Soviet Union was constantly forced on the defensive. At a time when every conceivable weapon was deployed against the Soviets, the Security Council was simply another battlefield. The Western use of the United Nations cannot be separated from establishment of NATO, the Marshall Plan, and other cold war maneuvers. It differed only in that it was comparatively inexpensive and effective. Initiatives in the U.N. were intimately related to wars as well as to vast economic and military aid programs, as U.S. actions concerning South Korea and South Vietnam testify.

Developing countries have learned from the West, and now use their parliamentary majorities, effectively to promote anticolonialists. If we recall that at a particularly bitter moment in the cold war Western states voted to hear a private citizen, Ian Papanek, former Czech Ambassador to the United Nations, during the Security Council debate on the

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Communist coup, we will acknowledge that—desirable or otherwise—it was not a startling departure to have Yasir Arafat address the General Assembly. Nevertheless, that address was significant, and we are right to ask what it portends for the U.N. as well as the Middle East.

As chief sponsor of the resolution on the PLO Syria opened the two-day debate on October 14. There were no surprises, but major implications and positions were foreshadowed. Supporters of the PLO ranged from a simple insistence on the principle that all parties to a dispute should be heard, to savage attacks against Israel, its foreign and domestic policy, and even its right to exist. Developing countries tended to define the problem as “a purely colonial situation,” and some insisted that the 1947 partition was the crime which had to be rectified. The Somali delegate observed that “the grave injustice of partition was compounded by recognition of the State of Israel” by the United Nations. Among others accepting this extreme position in the preliminary debate were Dahomey, Tanzania, Cuba, and Kuwait. Many delegates cited the right of self-determination and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as grounds for their approval of the PLO presence.

The Soviet bloc, while agreeing that the PLO should be heard, was careful to acknowledge Israel's right to existence. Yacov Malik, Chief Delegate of the Soviet Union, quoted Leonid Brezhnev: “A just and lasting peace should finally be established in the Middle East. That will benefit the security of all the States in the area, including Israel.” The Geneva conference, he said, should be resumed, with the PLO among the participants. The Albanian delegate, as surrogate for China, talked of “monstrous crimes” against the Arabs, of an American-Zionist effort “to wipe them off the face of the earth.” The Soviet Union was not innocent, he maintained. In fact, the situation was “inseparable from the whole aggressive policy and plans for pillage of the two Super Powers [and] their imperialist designs [to] rob the Arab peoples of their great petroleum resources.” The Egyptian speech was more moderate. Anwar insisted that the Arab states were not making “excessive demands” and that the United Nations must “either accept the people and hear its views or refuse that option and compel it to lose confidence in the United Nations and in all the noble values and principles upon which the Organization is founded.” He hoped that the delegates would avoid “sterile dialectics.”

But there was no possibility that Israel could acquiesce. Joseph Tekoah denounced the organization for abandoning its principles and procedures. He said that unfortunately votes on the Middle East were not cast “on the basis of what is right and what is wrong. . . . The mechanical majority is always one-

sided and, therefore, the parliamentary outcome of the vote about to be taken is a foregone conclusion.” The PLO, he claimed, represented nothing but “approximately 10,000 murderers trained and paid for the slaughter of innocent human beings.” He recited a long list of PLO atrocities, quoted from the PLO covenant to demonstrate its objective to liquidate Israel, and found similar statements by Arab leaders backing the PLO. After asking rhetorically, “Could there be a disgrace more appalling for the international community?” the Israeli gave his analysis of the effects of the Assembly's contemplated action. These were: (1) to make a mockery of the United Nations and its Charter; (2) to encourage “international terrorism”; (3) to “threaten the diplomatic process toward a solution of the Middle East conflict” by creating “an obstacle on the road to agreement between Israel and the Arab States”; (4) to “raise grave doubts regarding their [the Arab governments'] ultimate intentions towards Israel” which “will not remain unnoticed in Israel”; and (5) to cause Israel to disregard other states which supported the PLO. All these consequences, he observed, were “damaging” to the cause of peace. On the other hand, the General Assembly could not change Israel's attitudes toward these “murderers,” and Israel would “continue to strike at the PLO terrorists and at their bases.” Finally, the Assembly would not “weaken Israel's resolve to pursue agreement and peace with the Arab States.” Tekoah ended his speech by asking the delegates to take warning from the biblical question: “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not burn?”

But neither Tekoah's passionate arguments nor the Holy Book impressed the Assembly. The agenda item was adopted by a vote of 105 to 4 with 20 abstentions. All of Black Africa voted with the Arabs, and the abstainers, except for Burma and Australia, came entirely from Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Only the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and the United States joined Israel against the vast majority. In the most important explanation of the vote, Ambassador Scali of the United States said that his vote “reflects a deep concern that the resolution just adopted could be interpreted by some as prejudging that negotiating process and making a durable settlement more difficult to achieve. In that sense the resolution could have the ultimate effect of working against the interests of a Palestinian settlement.” He was afraid, also, that the precedent of permitting nonstate representatives to participate in plenary sessions “may return to haunt this organization, perhaps cripple its effectiveness.”

Following this victory, the Arab States met in a summit meeting which opened in Rabat on October 26. There the Arab leaders agreed that the PLO would replace Jordan as *sole* spokesman for the Palestinian Arabs. According to published reports, King

Hussein reluctantly accepted the change, but only after he was promised an annual subsidy of \$300 million by his wealthy cousins in Saudi Arabia. With their strategy agreed upon, the Arabs were now prepared to carry the battle back into the United Nations. There, despite demonstrations primarily by American Jewish groups, and protected by rigid security measures, the General Assembly opened debate on the Palestine question on November 13. Preliminary positions had been revealed during the agenda battle, but the full political consequences of the Rabat meeting would develop during the general debate.

The star, of course, was Yasir Arafat, leader of the PLO. He was whisked into the Assembly, given all the ceremonial deference of a Chief of State by the Algerian President there, and, after his speech, departed as suddenly as he had appeared. The PLO chief was articulate. He praised the Assembly, whose enlarged membership of 138 now "more clearly reflects the will of the international community," and could, therefore, implement the principles of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Palestinian issue, he found, was intimately associated with the central concerns of the entire developing world. Together they could build "a world free of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism and racism . . . including Zionism" by destroying the last vestiges of "oppression and violence in Zimbabwe [Rhodesia], Namibia [Southwest Africa], South Africa and Palestine." Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism, and Cecil Rhodes, the British imperialist, were cut from the same cloth. Even after independence, Arafat said, developing countries must struggle against neocolonialism by obtaining "fair prices for raw materials." He carefully supported his patrons in denying any relationship between oil prices and the problems of poor peoples by declaring that it was the duty of the United Nations to fight inflation "now borne most heavily by developing countries, especially oil-producing countries." The United Nations, he went on, "must firmly condemn any threats made against these countries simply because they demand their just rights." He distinguished between the policies of the American government, which "supply our enemy freely . . . with every variety of murderous weapon," and the American people, who were being duped by Zionist propaganda.

On the main business of the meeting—Palestine—Arafat presented his version of the history of that area. According to him, the Zionist "invasion" of that "verdant land" began in 1881 and was supplemented during World War I by British imperialism in the form of the infamous Balfour Declaration. In 1947 the British and Zionist conspirators "in an atmosphere poisoned with questionable actions and strong

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pressure" persuaded the General Assembly to recommend partition. But, like the natural mother who had refused to allow Solomon to dismember her child, the Palestinians refused to accept the proposal. Although the Zionists, who owned only 6 per cent of the land, had been awarded 54 per cent of the territory, they unleashed "a war of terror against the civilian Arab population." In that war, said the PLO leader, the Zionists occupied 81 per cent of the total, uprooted a million Arabs, and destroyed 385 of 524 Arab villages. The conquerers then built their farms on the graves of their victims. Thus, the Palestinian question was not a conflict between two nations, but was, instead "the cause of a people deprived of its homeland, dispersed and uprooted, and living mostly in exile and in refugee camps."

By defining the problem in this way Mr. Arafat was demanding a solution that required the disappearance of a separate State of Israel. The Assembly was asked to help him "return with my people out of exile, there in Palestine to live within one democratic State where Christians, Jews, and Moslems can live in justice, equality, fraternity, and progress." Those Jews in Palestine "who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination" could profit from this "most generous solution." To achieve this end the "Zionist racists," who had even cynically exploited the German atrocities "while we were vociferously condemning the massacre of Jews under Nazi rule," must abandon their evil ways. Arafat concluded: "Today I come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."

The next day Tekoah replied in kind. Nazism, he said, had been honored in the United Nations, which had hung out a sign reading "Murderers of children are welcome here." Arabs who had collaborated with Adolph Hitler were "in the vanguard of a fanatical assault on the Jewish people, an assault that tramples to dust the ideals of the United Nations." The Israeli noted that the organization had provided more aid for the Arabs than any other people. Kurds, now being annihilated by Iraq, were denied a hearing, and the massacre of a half-million "non-Moslems in South Sudan" was accepted in silence. While the United Nations lav-

ished monies on the Palestinians, Tekoah observed, 500 million people in developing countries faced starvation, and tens of millions of other refugees, including Jewish escapees from Arab lands, had been ignored. There were already twenty Arab states. "Among them is also the Palestinian Arab State of Jordan."

With this statement the Jewish delegate adopted a line as hard and unyielding as that of Arafat. Israel was willing to negotiate with Jordan, which had been included in the original Palestine mandate, concerning remaining problems, including those affecting Arabs living on the West Bank. But, Tekoah said, Israel would not consent to the establishment of a second Arab state in Palestine. And it would certainly not talk to Arafat, "a gangster" who "kills Jewish children and seeks to strangle the Jewish State under the slogan of creating a democratic Palestine." Furthermore, "the PLO will not be forced on the Palestinian Arabs. It will not be tolerated by Israel." No resolution of the General Assembly, Tekoah said, could absolve murderers. In fact, no matter what actions were taken by the Assembly, "the PLO will remain what it is and where it is—outside the law and outside of Palestine." A one-sided resolution would simply "encourage the extremists in the Arab world who reject a peaceful settlement." Israel—the concluding words were a paraphrase of Arafat's own—stood ready for peace, but was prepared for war.

This would be Israel's last speech during the debate. Shortly afterward, the Assembly upheld President Bouteflika's ruling that no state could speak more than once except for the right of reply, which was reserved for the last few minutes of each day. This meant that further defense of Israel was practically nonexistent, although not all delegates accepted the extreme position of denying the Israeli right to exist.

Attacks against Israel came from all directions, but primarily from the developing world and Communist states. Asian nations, especially those with Moslem populations, such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, were agreed that the 1947 partition was the "original sin." Although Iran was notably moderate in issuing "an appeal for reason and a spirit of conciliation," the Indian delegate was among the more vehement attackers, even to a finding that Arafat and Mahatma Gandhi represented the same values. Black Africa supported the PLO, and there were constant comparisons between Israeli policies and those of South Africa.

But only some would go so far as to reverse the partition decision. Among the latter were Tanzania, Congo, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Burundi. The Burundian stated the proposition clearly: "We are per-

fectly justified in calling into question Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November, 1947, which was adopted in flagrant contradiction of our Charter. The State of Israel is thus a colonial reality on Palestinian soil." But the most violent statement was made by the Ugandan delegate. "Africa," he said, "has been occupied by an invader and we must defend ourselves." The "tragic anomaly" of partition must be corrected. Israel was responsible for the closing of the Suez Canal, causing all East Africans to suffer and "re-route our goods through the ports of the obnoxious racist South Africa." Furthermore, "Zionist power, the Zionist lobby are not strong in Tel Aviv alone. No: they are everywhere, and particularly right here in the United States of America. . . . It is here that all the money, brains and arms are mobilized to ensure the extinction of the people of Palestine." After referring to threats and intimidation in New York, the Ugandan continued: "That is one of the reasons why my President. His Excellency Al Hajji General Idi Amin Dada, has proposed the removal of the United Nations from America to neutral ground and offered our beautiful city of Kampala for consideration." He ended his speech by quoting President Amin: "There has never been a State of Israel. The Israelis should be accommodated by the United States imperialists. . . ."

Other Africans were more moderate. Nigeria acknowledged Israel's right to exist within agreed boundaries, and Senegal insisted that "any idea of driving Jews into the sea must be rejected." Similarly, the delegate from the Ivory Coast recognized that Israel was an established state. He cited President Houphouet-Boigny: "If men cannot live harmoniously in one hut, then it is better to live harmoniously in two huts." Kenya, too, asserted that all states in the region had the right to exist.

The Soviet bloc maintained the line that the PLO should be represented at the Geneva peace talks, that these talks should be resumed, and that Israel must withdraw immediately behind the pre-1967 boundaries. None in the bloc questioned Israel's legitimacy as a state. Even within this group there were nuances, with the Rumanians decidedly less willing to vilify Israel and make the standard association between Zionism and colonialism. In contrast, the Chinese representatives denounced "the artificially created State of Israel [which had been] planted as a dagger in the heart of the Arab world." After attacking the American role, he shifted to the Soviet Union, which was "actually employing its reactionary dual tactics." The Soviets, he said, used control of arms deliveries in order to betray the Arab cause. In 1973 the Russians had "sabotaged the resistance war of the Arab countries and the Palestinian people." Soviet policy was to supply Israel "with manpower and political soldiers" while the United States gave the weapons. By simultaneously selling

guns to the Arabs, the Soviet Union cooperated with the United States in a policy of "no war, no peace," thereby attempting to achieve hegemony over the area. But, said the Chinese delegate, the Arab people would win out over the superpowers and their puppet, Israel. The October War and use of oil as a weapon were evidence of the Arab awakening.

This speech provoked a Soviet response. Malik described the Chinese attack as "very routine slander," which was "of benefit only to Israel and to its imperialistic, Zionist protectors." Actually, the Chinese, who provided no aid to the Arabs, were "seeking world hegemony." In rebuttal, the Chinese said that Malik "did not have the guts to touch on the series of facts cited." If the Russians were sincere, they would not profiteer on arms sales, but would give the military assistance "free and gratis" to the Arabs. Instead this "merchant of death" supplied Israel with manpower while its partner, the United States, provided the armaments.

Mr. Scali defended American policy in the area. He recalled Secretary Kissinger's role in obtaining the disengagement agreements. "The consequences of a possible breakdown in this negotiating process cannot be overestimated," he said. The Geneva talks were endangered by injection of the PLO in this manner, because the conference had to agree on "the role of other participants." And he went on: "If any of the parties reject that governing principle or question the right to exist of any parties to the negotiation, our best hopes for negotiation and for peace are lost." The interests of the Palestinians would not be ignored, Scali said, but only if the General Assembly allowed the negotiation to go forward. America's major allies tended to follow this lead, although most were more solicitous of Arab feelings. Japan, as a typical example, stressed the right of Palestinians to choose between returning to their homes and being compensated.

Among the Arab states even the "moderates" heaped scorn on Tekoah and denounced Israel as a racist, colonial state. Thus, Tunisia found that the Palestinians were in a worse situation than blacks in South Africa because "Zionist colonialism had and still has as its only objective to seize all of Palestine." Jordan said very little except to deride the idea that it was part of Palestine and to express its complete confidence in and support for the PLO. The Arab states more remote from the battlefield were unwilling to accept the 1947 partition. These included Bahrein, Algeria, Qatar, Libya, Sudan, Oman, Morocco, and Democratic Yemen. The last sounded a theme repeated by others: "Predicated on concepts of racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy, the Zionist ideology is a new facet of Nazism." As usual in debates on the Middle East, Barood of Saudi Arabia was a colorful and eloquent spokesman. He attributed misunderstanding of the

issue in the United States to the influence of Zionists over the mass media. "Is there any doubt," he asked as had the Ugandan, "that we are in the wrong place, here in New York?" His quarrel was with the Zionists, not with the Jewish people. Indeed, he said, "some of my best comrades at school were Jews." In a happy mood he expressed complete confidence in the ultimate Arab victory over Israel because the Arabs were so numerous and they possessed "God's blessing, the oil."

The most significant Arab statements were those of Syria and Egypt, the two states with the largest stake in peace or war with Israel. Syria's statement was harsh and militant. Kelani described the Balfour Declaration as "an alliance between Zionism and imperialism," and said that the partition vote in 1947 was part of the same conspiracy. "Part of the Palestinian people," he said, "are subject to occupation, whereas the rest of the Palestinians are refugees." Following these statements, which indicated that Syria could not accept the existence of Israel, Kelani asserted that the Palestinians were free to use all means, including force, "to defend their national rights." These rights included "the right to return to one's home" and "the right to sovereignty over the Palestinian homeland."

In contrast to the Syrian statement, the Egyptian delegate, Anwar, was considerably more circumspect. Although he supported the PLO, he did so without directly attacking Israel's right to exist. He affirmed that the Palestinians had the right to "self-determination, freedom, and independence," but he did *not* specify that these rights obtained throughout pre-partition Palestine. In fact, significantly, Anwar did not refer to the partition plan, although he made general references to "a conspiracy unprecedented in history." The Egyptian tied the "restoration of Palestinian rights" to the achievement of peace in the Middle East. In a decidedly moderate vein, he said:

The aim of the international community, as defined by the United Nations, is to establish a just and durable peace in the Middle East. This policy finds clear expression in the principles of the Charter and in the resolutions of the United Nations which have condemned the acquisition of territory by force. This entails respect for the integrity of territories and the political independence of *all States* (italics added).

Finally, toward the end of the debate, the Assembly was treated to a remarkably different speech. It was made by Waldron-Ramsey representing Barbados. Although it was unlikely that many listened, or that any were influenced, his statement stood out for its disinterested sanity in the malevolent atmosphere of the Assembly hall. He warned against the accumulation of "paper victories" which were not acceptable to all parties to the dispute.

In the considered view of the delegation of Barbados, the General Assembly is certainly not the place for the settlement of the Palestinian question.

It is not a forum suitable for the settlement of disputes. For one thing, it is too big, too open, too parliamentary and perhaps too pregnant with the combative views of contending parties, each seeking to excel the other in verbosity and the winning of debating points.

Waldron-Ramsey went on to observe that "never was a peace treaty elaborated and signed as a result of a vote taken by the parties involved and their allies." In his view the task of the Assembly was to "create an atmosphere" which would facilitate discussions by the parties directly involved. Mr. Waldron-Ramsey had voted to hear the PLO because he had grown tired of listening to their "self-appointed surrogates and proxies." He criticized the Arab "brothers" of the Palestinians who had "forced them into losing wars" and then abandoned them to "live pitiless lives in refugee camps." He observed, too, that Palestinian refugees were second-class citizens in many Arab countries, as well as in Israel. The truth was that the Israelis and Palestinian Arabs must each have their own state, but justice for one could not mean injustice for the other. He went on to lecture those who had distorted history, and cited the Bible to demonstrate that there had indeed been a four-thousand-year Jewish identification with Palestine. His compassion for the Palestinians was evident, too. He said of that "most human" problem:

This General Assembly cannot create lives or destroy lives by writing a resolution. That is why we need to be very careful in the type of resolution we draft at the end of this debate. It would be cruel, it seems to me, to raise false hopes or to abandon a chance to be helpful and constructive in an effort to restore some measure of justice to this human tragedy.

He concluded his speech by urging the Assembly not to engage in "idle futility" by trying to settle the problem with votes. "The Israelis and the Palestinians have got to find a solution for themselves."

Inevitably, Waldron-Ramsey's advice was ignored. On November 25, 1974, the Assembly adopted two resolutions by overwhelming majorities. One, by a vote of 95 to 17 with 19 abstentions, assured the PLO the permanent right to participate at all United Nations meetings and conferences, thereby guaranteeing similar confrontations into the indefinite future. The other went to the substantive question. It "reaffirmed" the Palestinian rights to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty. Palestinians had the "in-

alienable right . . . to return to their homes and property without any external interference." It said further that "the Palestinian people is a principal party in the establishment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East," and, finally, recognized their right to utilize "all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations," to carry out the intent of the resolution. The crucial omission, of course, was any mention of Israel or of its rights in Palestine.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 89 to 8 with 37 abstentions, with only Norway and Iceland joining a few Latin American supporters of the United States and Israel against the tide. In explanation of the vote, Tekoah spoke again. He denounced this "surrender and humiliation" as a capitulation to "murderers" by the organization. "Israel," he said, "has no intention of being replaced by the Nazis of the Middle East." The "usual mechanical majority" had adopted resolutions which were "products of iniquity and decadence," and Israel would treat them accordingly. In the last speech on the issue Arafat's deputy thanked the Assembly in behalf of the PLO. "The isolation of Israel inside this hall is but a reflection of its historical international isolation," he said. The resolutions represented a "triumph of justice," and he promised that the PLO would wield either the gun or the olive branch to achieve full implementation of the resolutions.

We begin by asking "Who brought the PLO to the United Nations?" because it is essential in clarifying the "why." The real problem is to identify those Arab states which had the greatest influence at Rabat, where the strategy to be followed in the general debate was formulated. Jordan's consent was reluctant. Libya, Algeria, and Iraq were among the more militant PLO supporters, but the crucial actors appear to have been Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Raising an issue in the United Nations is always a calculated act, with the initiators estimating that certain gains will flow from this step. With the negotiating process in being on two levels—the Geneva conference and Henry Kissinger's mediation—a major objective was to impose new conditions for any further talks. Negotiations require delicate *prior* consultations concerning the identity and status of negotiators, the site, procedures, and the scope of the bargaining.

At one stroke the painstaking moves in this direction since the Yom Kippur War were nullified. If the sides had been inching toward a definition of what was negotiable, that progress was brutally reversed. The resolution committed the United Nations to the fulfillment of Arab rights throughout Palestine without regard to the existence or needs of Israel, and the Jews responded in the debate by barring the estab-

lishment of a second Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan.

This result was anticipated by the Arab side, and they preferred it to a continuation of existing negotiations. The hard Arab line reflected the encouraging early victories in the October War, the increasing isolation of Israel, the responses of the Western states to the oil blockade, and practically unlimited wealth with which to purchase arms. Not only were the Russians frustrated in respect to their role in Geneva, but U.S. mediation efforts were also set back.

When the United Nations is perceived as an arena for conflict, it serves as a barometer of hostility. Close reading of Egyptian speeches showed that Egypt was attempting to retain some flexibility. The most important evidence of this was the Egyptian delegate's failure to question the 1947 partition and his reference to "the political independence of all States." These clues proved out in the period following the debate as talks continued through Secretary Kissinger on a possible Israeli withdrawal in Sinai. Here existed ingredients of a successful negotiation.

The effect of the PLO debate was to make it more difficult for Egypt to conduct bilateral negotiations with Israel in the face of accusations that it was abandoning a U.N. decision in favor of the PLO. There is little doubt, therefore, that *Egypt* was a major target in the world body of the hard-liners in the Arab world, who believed it was unnecessary to make any concessions to Israel. The leaders in this complex maneuver were Saudi Arabia, a traditional competitor with Egypt for Arab leadership and immensely strengthened by the dramatic increase in oil prices, and Syria, which had only marginal chances of negotiating a total Israeli withdrawal from Golan and wanted to insure Egyptian participation in the next military round against Israel. The stakes are high. From an Arab point of view, successful neutralization of Sinai would significantly reduce possibilities of imposing their solution on Israel elsewhere. The PLO debate was, in large part, designed to prevent this occurrence.

In addition to these direct attacks on a negotiated solution of the problems of the Middle East other negative effects of the United Nations debate are also apparent. To adopt a resolution satisfactory to only one side in a conflict situation leaves no working room for compromise. If talk, rather than war, will be the instrument for settlement, it will be necessary for the parties to overcome the pro-PLO resolution, which has received the blessing of the world organization. A secondary effect of the use of voting in the U.N. is that it results in various trade-offs. States with minimum substantive involvement in a particular issue will contribute to the creation of the appearance of consensus in anticipation of rewards on issues of more concern to them. Furthermore, when states with considerable influence are

determined to amass an overwhelming majority, it is prudent to vote right and to make the appropriate speeches. Thus, the "opinion of mankind" is recorded in favor of one position or another. In the present instance both factors were operating, which explains the huge majorities and the remarkable acquiescence to some rather spectacular interpretations of history. In the conflict atmosphere of the United Nations a speech such as that by the delegate from Barbados is not the norm. It is the rare, courageous, and unappreciated exception.

Obviously, the quality of debate cannot be ignored. Seldom in the history of the organization has there been a more acrimonious discussion. Even if, by some unknown chance, the PLO and the Israelis eventually reach the point of talking to one another, the suspicions and hatreds engendered by the vicious insults will be difficult to overcome. Will the PLO be capable of forgiving those who described them as cowardly murderers of children, and will the descendants of Hitler's victims be able to talk peace with those who described them as Nazis? Such debates, differing only in degree, are part of the conflict diplomacy at the United Nations. They are not substitutes for the use of other weapons. In truth, they help convince both sides that there is no alternative except to fight with every means available.

We have discussed how the promotion of the PLO contributed to the erection of obstacles to a negotiated settlement with Israel. But the recognition of Arafat's status by the General Assembly also helped him to assert leadership over the contending Palestinian groups and to elevate his standing among Arabs in Israel and occupied areas. Even while the debate was going on there were numerous pro-Arafat demonstrations in those places which forced the Israelis to use police against school children. Whatever hope the Israelis may have had that they could contribute through tolerance, limited autonomy, and improved living conditions to an indigenous leadership that would agree on mutually acceptable terms was badly damaged at the United Nations.

Further, and finally, the entire debate placed a strain on Soviet-American relations. The USSR had not initiated the PLO issue. This was done by Arab states and by the PLO, who felt that détente threatened their interests. An outstanding danger for those opposing negotiation is that the Russians and Americans will agree sufficiently to apply combined pressure in favor of an agreement. By raising the PLO issue in the United Nations they succeeded in forcing the two states to take opposing positions and, by that measure, added another impediment for those seeking to overcome the deep distrust which has existed between the superpowers.