

# U.N. WATCH

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## New Session

The thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly opened on September 15, and barring a major world crisis will close before the Christmas holidays. While the Assembly is in recess the fifteen-member Security Council, major organs such as ECOSOC, and the Specialized Agencies will continue to meet and, in theory, to report to the General Assembly. So numerous are the Assembly's opening remarks and so extensive its agenda that meetings are known chiefly for their rhetoric.

This year there is as much activity *around* the Assembly as within it. The U.N. supplied the agreeable circumstance for the first Haig-Gromyko meeting on nuclear disarmament matters. The get-together was easy to arrange. Both men would have good reason to be present at the Assembly and nobody would lose face.

At the Towers entrance of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is a cluster of flags indicating the U.N. delegates in residence. Among the flags are those of nations that attack each other bitterly on the Assembly floor. Perhaps in their contacts away from the East River they can do more for world peace than formal conferences permit.

## SSS on Disarmament

The Preparatory Committee for the Second Special Session on disarmament met in October to plan for the May/June, 1982, conference. The final document of the First Special Session noted "the valuable role" of nongovernmental organizations in the field of disarmament. At the same time, Shridath S. Ramphal, secretary-general of the Commonwealth and a possible choice for the office of U.N. secretary-general, made the following statement in a review of disarmament programs:

...1980, at its beginning, saw the end of the First Disarmament Decade and at its end will see the close of the Second Development Decade, two decades that in the result...wore false labels. Development faltered; disarmament remained a mirage. The facts are ugly and shameful and searing....Does not all this experience tell us that disarmament must become a peoples' movement in East and West, North and South?...We are as near as a finger's width to human extinction....And the tragedy of all this is that a false rationality has overtaken reason. Once possessed of the power to destroy all life at a stroke, what reason can there be to multiply that power so as to be able to kill the human race ten times over?...In the end it will be for the people of the world to assert that they choose to survive....

## Roundup

The U.N. Committee on Decolonization, hard pressed to find a true "colony" these days, has been debating the status of PUERTO RICO. The island, a Commonwealth of the United States, has consistently voted against independence, though of course there are some who are violently in favor of it.

In 1953, the U.N. removed Puerto Rico from its list of non-self-governing territories. A resolution now before the Committee would return it to the list, requiring from the U.S. an annual report on how the island is governed. The sponsors of the resolution are the staunch anticolonial powers Afghanistan, Cuba, Iraq, and Syria.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have an observer problem. The Arab nations have been trying to get observer status for the PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, a status Switzerland, for example, enjoys. The U.S. and several European nations, opposed to the idea, have succeeded in postponing the decision for two years. Because voting by the Joint Board of Governors of the Bank and the IMF is based on the size of national contributions, Saudi Arabia's recent major contributions suggest that the polite, bankerish days of both organizations may be over.

In 1950 the USSR forced POLAND to leave the International Monetary Fund on the grounds that the Fund and the World Bank are capitalist instruments designed to exploit the nations of the Third World. Since then Poland has borrowed heavily from the industrialized nations—with Russian approval—and now owes nearly \$25 billion. Rejoining the Bank would make Poland eligible for more long-term loans. It would also mean reporting on internal economic matters, information the Soviet Union has always withheld. Poland may still get the loan it needs, but Polish officials know the backing of the IMF would make it easier.

Nothing at the U.N. is quite as lunatic as the convolutions over who is to represent CAMBODIA. The Communist government of Pol Pot was overthrown in 1979 by the Vietnamese, who installed their own Communist group headed by Heng Samrin. Accused of killing millions of Cambodians to retain power and now head of a guerrilla army in northwest Cambodia supported by China, Pol Pot is trying to hold on to his U.N. seat. A Soviet resolution to transfer credentials to the new government was vetoed by the General Assembly, with the tacit approval of the U.S.

It was noted in debate that when Pol Pot was in power, the Soviet Union and other Communist nations favored the regime, ignoring the reports of atrocities. The U.S. has said it is supporting Pol Pot now on technical grounds while remaining concerned about those human rights violations.

The Soviet Union seizes upon every opportunity to blast South Africa, but in a strong resolution on NAMIBIA the language was too rough for even the USSR. The phrase "threat to the peace" brought memories of the 1950 Unity for Peace resolution, which put U.N. troops in Korea to stop the invasion from the North. The Soviet Union still claims the action illegal and refuses to pay its share of the cost. The vote on South Africa was postponed to change the language.

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