

U.N. WATCH

The True Believer

The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), a publicly supported nongovernmental organization devoted to the study and support of United Nations activities, is making plans for its national convention in May. It has circulated draft statements on three "substantive issues" and invited comments from participating nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The three issues are (1) U.S. participation in the U.N.; (2) an approach to disarmament and development; and (3) the Law of the Sea Treaty—subjects of extreme importance, not only in Washington and Moscow but in every world capital.

United States relations with the U.N. have always had an on-again/off-again quality. All our presidents have paid lip-service to the world organization, the present incumbent with less diligence than his predecessors. And always, lurking in the wings, is the threat of U.S. withdrawal—if not of membership, then of financial support. Powerful as is the United States in world affairs, its inconsistency in approaching the U.N. has led other member-nations, including our supporters, to question America's judgment and integrity. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick's recent reflection on the problem is quoted in the UNA draft statement: "Through decades, we have not been good at politics at the United Nations."

In the U.N., as elsewhere, the draft statement goes on to say, the "overriding aim of U.S. foreign policy" must be the avoidance of nuclear war. Subordinate goals are the prevention of international conflicts, reduction in the level of international violence, a more stable economic system, the protection of human rights, and concern for the environment.

In assessing the U.S. performance in the U.N., the document cites a lack of professionalism among those who make up American delegations, most of whose members are political appointees with terms averaging a mere eighteen months—scarcely enough time to penetrate the U.N. maze. It also cites the blurred lines of command and consultation between Washington and the U.N. delegation. The UNA recommends that Americans look upon the U.N. as a problem-solving body and bring the office of the secretary-general into mediation efforts, for example, in the Middle East and South America.

The second draft statement, on the arms race and disarmament, notes that an estimated \$500 billion is being spent annually on weapons. Ironically, the greatest growth in arms expenditures is in the Third World, where governments are also clamoring for a "new economic order" to improve the standard of living.

Reviewing the efforts at disarmament, the draft finds the U.N. Special Sessions—including the highly publicized 1982 meeting—ineffective. Hundreds of thousands may have demonstrated at U.N. headquarters, but nowhere in the world was there even a pause in military production or procurement. The nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) has been only partially successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons; countries that have not signed, including Brazil, Pakistan, Argentina, and Israel, are pro-

ceeding with nuclear development. The Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) has been disavowed by the United States. In outer space the USSR has been deploying "killer satellites," while the U.S. has created a Space Command to develop new weapons, including lasers. The draft statement ends on a note of despair and beseeches governments to move back from the brink of insanity.

The third issue addressed by the UNA, the Law of the Sea, appears manageable compared to the first two. Years of discussion resulted in what seemed to be an acceptable program for governing use of the seas and mining of the seabed. In fact, Elliot L. Richardson, now chairman of UNA-USA, was the U.S. negotiator for the treaty for four years. The 1980 Republican party platform contained reservations about the seabed mining provisions, and the Reagan administration has refused to ratify the treaty. (Other countries, including the Soviet bloc, have abstained.) An elaborate procedure has been devised whereby discussions will continue under the auspices of a U.N. preparatory commission, in the hope of enticing additional signatories. The commission meets this month.

The UNA feels the United States should have been more flexible in treaty negotiations, particularly in the sticky area of deep seabed mining. Unilateral or bilateral mining by major industrial powers can only lead to endless legal wrangling. Refusal to sign the treaty places in limbo carefully prepared proposals on navigation rights, coastal agreements, and international law for the high seas.

The draft statements provide a sober and balanced assessment of the U.S. role in the U.N. and of the possibility for placing some pressing issues on America's U.N. agenda. The UNA-USA approaches such matters as a true believer, offering firm support for the United Nations and calling attention to its unused potential. But a pertinent question remains: Who is listening these days? Certainly no one in the White House.

Aux Désarmement, Citoyens

General Assembly resolutions have a way of slipping into obscurity, but A/Res/37/100J, passed by consensus in December, may have an interesting future. The resolution, approved by the U.S. and its supporters as well as by the USSR and its allies, recognizes the right of *all* people to organize for peace and disarmament. In some U.N. member-nations, such activities have led to accusations of subversion, to harassment, and even to imprisonment.

The resolution affirms the right of citizens "to participate in an informed and free discussion" of arms control; governments are "to facilitate the broad flow of accurate information on disarmament matters, both governmental and non-governmental, to and among their citizens"; all governments are to "encourage their citizens freely and publicly to express their own views on disarmament questions and to organize and meet publicly for that purpose."

All 157 member-nations would do well to take note.

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