

## U.N. WATCH

### The Handshake

The highlight of the 39th General Assembly came in the opening week when a smiling President Reagan shook hands with a dour Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. The U.S. had been pressing for a meeting on armaments all year, proclaiming at the same time that the USSR could not be trusted. The reluctant Russians, displaying pique at the installation of Pershing II missiles in Western Europe, were unable to decide whether a meeting would help or hurt Mr. Reagan in his election campaign.

The U.N. is neutral ground. Gromyko was coming to New York to address the General Assembly, and the Reagan invitation could thus be accepted without losing face. In its current phase as a debating club, the General Assembly's most important function may be to provide such opportunities for adversaries to meet. Suspicion, anger, fear, and wild rhetoric on both sides have made it impossible for substantive talks on disarmament to proceed in the near future. Meanwhile, plans for bigger and better offensive and defensive systems are in place. The president's conciliatory speech to the General Assembly, although certain to dismay his right wing supporters, offered nothing new beyond a twenty-year plan to wind down the escalating arms race and was notably lacking in specifics. When Reagan concluded his remarks to mild applause, Gromyko refused even to make the gesture.

The Russian view is clearly stated in the 1984 Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly (Supplement No. 42). The head of the USSR delegation to the commission submitted extracts of a speech by Soviet leader K. U. Chernenko as representing the views of his government:

...the past few years have been marked by a sharp intensification of the policy of the most aggressive forces of United States imperialism, a policy of blatant militarism, claims to world dominance, resistance to progress, and violations of the rights and freedom of the world's peoples. The world has seen quite a few examples of the practical application of this policy. These include the invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of Grenada, the undeclared war against Nicaragua, threats to Syria and, finally, the turning of Western Europe into a launching site for United States nuclear missiles targeted at the USSR and its allies...

The United States Administration has recently begun to make peaceful-sounding statements, urging us to join in a "dialogue."

World-wide attention has been drawn to the fact that these statements are in sharp conflict with everything that the present United States Administration has said, and—what is most important—with everything it has done and continues doing in its relations with the Soviet Union.... Why does the United States, for example, not ratify the treaties with the USSR on the limitation of underground nuclear-weapon tests and nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes, which were signed almost 10 years ago, and why does it not complete the work of drawing up an agreement on the general and complete prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests? Remember that it was the United States

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which broke off the talks on these issues. The United States can also make no small contribution to the strengthening of peace by concluding an agreement to renounce the militarization of outer space. As everyone knows, the USSR has been proposing this for a long time....

In his speech a few days after Reagan's and before his White House meetings, Gromyko repeated the above charges almost verbatim, affirming the USSR's desire for "normal" peaceful relations with the U.S. Again, he asked for deeds, not words.

If disarmament talks are renewed in Geneva, Vienna, or at U.N. headquarters, weeks or months will be spent arguing over the agenda—something at which the Russians are most adept—or haggling over who is Number One—at which both sides are equally skilled. While Gromyko was at the White House, West Germany reported that the Soviet Union had moved SS-20 nuclear missiles, with a range of five hundred miles, into East Germany and Czechoslovakia—a response to the Pershing II and cruise missiles that the U.S. installed in Western Europe in 1983.

### **Business as Usual**

After the Reagan-Gromyko fireworks, the General Assembly settled into its normal routine of scheduled speakers—foreign ministers, prime ministers, secretaries of state—each offering his country's views on the crucial problems of the world. After expressing hope for a U.S.-USSR arms agreement, delegate after delegate took up the economic chaos enveloping most of the world.

Claude Cheysson, the French foreign minister, called the world economy "chaotic and unpredictable." He was referring to the hopeless situation of Third World countries who cannot service their debts and have no prospects for economic growth. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of West Germany put forth specific plans to rescue developing countries by an infusion of capital and technological aid. The president of Argentina called for "North-South" talks to prevent disaster in the underdeveloped countries. Following Gromyko, who said not one word about the desperate conditions of the Third World countries that trail after Moscow, the Indian foreign minister, Ram Niwas Mirdha, told the assemblage that \$100 billion is spent every year on armaments while the international economic situation deteriorates.

In counterpoint to the discussions in New York, delegates at the joint meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington were told by representatives of the Reagan administration that incentives to private enterprise is the only prescription for economic health.

### **Power Plays**

Meeting in Vienna recently, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) held its 28th annual conference, this time faced with confusion about the future of nuclear power. The agency's director, Hans Blix, said only twenty-five new plants went into operation in 1983, making a worldwide total of 313. He said the slowdown was due to decline in electricity demand, political and public restraints, and lack of funds.

The IAEA is again squabbling over South Africa's nuclear potential and Israel's bombing of an Iraqi reactor

three years ago. Israel has agreed not to attack nuclear plants designed for peaceful purposes, but Arab nations are trying to persuade members to expel Israel. The U.S. has threatened to leave the agency if the Jewish state is denied membership rights.

The USSR has agreed to put nonmilitary installations under IAEA safeguards. Argentina is building a plant capable of producing an atomic bomb and is unwilling to allow inspection by the IAEA. The Argentines say Britain may be storing bombs on the Falklands.

### **Delayed Ratification**

The U.N. convention outlawing genocide has been languishing in Congress for thirty-five years while ninety-three countries, including the Soviet Union, have approved the treaty. Just before the coming election and too late for consideration before Congress adjourned, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with presidential support, recommended its approval.

The treaty was a response to the murder of millions of Jews during World War II and was unanimously approved by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948. President Truman signed in 1949. Congressional conservatives have opposed ratification of the treaty on the grounds that it could interfere with domestic matters and give the International Court of Justice too much authority over U.S. policy in racial matters.

### **Roundup**

The recent meeting of the International Labor Organization (ILO) was favorably reviewed by representatives of the AFL/CIO. This is the U.N. agency from which the U.S. withdrew for three years in the late 1970s because of "politicization," meaning it chastised the U.S. while it ignored labor violations in the Communist bloc and Third World countries. The American delegates feel the ILO is now even-handed....The 1984 annual report of the Secretary General is a departure from the upbeat accounts of past years. Instead of recounting the considerable achievements of the Specialized Agencies (World Health, UNICEF, etc.), this document looks with dismay at the failure of the U.N. to prevent hundreds of wars and calls upon the sovereign member nations to come to their senses in the promotion of world peace....The UNESCO fracas heated up as the executive board of the agency met for a three week session in October. A congressional study substantiates the U.S. charges of bad administration, poor financial control, questionable personnel practices, and a total concentration of power in the hands of the director general, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal. Britain, Denmark, West Germany, and the Netherlands are supporting U.S. demands for change and threatening withdrawal. The Soviet Union opposes any changes in UNESCO policies. M'Bow refuses to resign, making U.S. withdrawal almost inevitable....The newest member of the U.N. is Brunei, an oil-rich absolute monarchy in the South China Sea. In his speech to the General Assembly, Brunei's young Sultan commented on international tension in Kampuchea, Israel, Lebanon, and Afghanistan—and he gave a million dollar check to the United Nations Children's Fund.

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