

Even in the 70's and the early 80's when the dominance of the non-aligned but Moscow-friendly nations reached its crest, and the reputation of the United Nations in western capitals was at a low ebb, Canada's support for the Organisation never wavered. Canada continued to recognize the value of a vital multilateral system and the need for a constructive relationship between all member states.

The next major review of Canada's international relations coincided with another important anniversary for the United Nations. In 1985, the year of the fortieth birthday of the UN, the newly elected Conservative government published *Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations* as a "green paper" to stimulate discussion.

The green paper offered a revealing glimpse of the goals and priorities of the new government. Remarks about the UN were less negative than they had been 15 years earlier. However, doubts persisted about the effectiveness of the UN and lingering questions remained concerning the "politicisation" of its economic and social institutions. "Renewal and reform," the paper commented, "are very much required if the UN is to make the contribution to international security that its membership needs." That sentence has a familiar ring!

Later that year, in his address to the General Assembly, Prime Minister Mulroney remarked, so very appropriately, that "where the United Nations is weak it is almost always due to a failure of political will" on the part of its members. A veteran Canadian UN participant and observer, John Holmes, returned from that 1985 session of the General Assembly with what he admitted was an "upbeat assessment" of the UN. Holmes wrote that "the dark side of the UN is what we hear of most often [but] the UN is a long, continuing experiment in international self-discipline. We need to heed the lessons of failure, but it is more important to seek out what works and build on it."

Three years later, I was offered a privileged opportunity to test the validity of that judgement rendered by one of Canada's wisest and foremost diplomats and scholars.

In August 1988, I was practising law in Montreal, not too far from here, in that happy state best described as comfortable and industrious obscurity. Although my law practice had included international mandates including representation of Canada in 1984 before the International Court of Justice in The Gulf of Maine case, I possessed only a rudimentary knowledge of the UN, and an image of it not so very different from that of most Canadians at the time. From my perspective, it was a "talk shop" inimical to Western interests and dominated by dictators and petty tyrants from the Third World.

It was at that time, and in that state that I received a telephone call from my friend and former law partner, Brian Mulroney. Within six weeks, I was in New York as Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the