

and, finally, balancing the interests of the Group of Five with those of the African members on the Security Council, and their supporters from among other non-aligned states. The latter was a particularly difficult and sensitive task because the non-aligned nations looked upon the Group's mediation activity with considerable suspicion, fearing that it might serve as an effective smokescreen to postpone economic and political sanctions against South Africa. Because Canada was widely trusted by African nations, its presence on the Contact Group did much to establish the latter's credibility.

For a brief instant in the summer of 1978, it seemed as if the protracted negotiations of the Contact Group had finally succeeded; both South Africa and SWAPO\* had accepted the plan for UN-supervised elections in Namibia. Success, however, was ephemeral. The Republic of South Africa defected from the agreement by proceeding with its own internal elections in Namibia, although indicating that the UN plan might yet be implemented at some unspecified future date. Although the Contact Group remained in existence after the collapse of its plan, it did not play a role in the negotiation of the Brazzaville Protocol of December 1988, nor did the Security Council as a whole. The accord was concluded in direct negotiations among Angola, Cuba and South Africa without formal participation by the UN. The Security Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Protocol — first, by setting up a verification commission to monitor the withdrawal of foreign forces from Angola and, second, by arranging for UN supervision of Namibian elections and by providing administrative personnel during the transition to independence.

### PROSPECTS FOR 1989/90

The United Nations can register several recent successes in which it was either directly or indirectly involved, among them the agreement on Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Gulf war ceasefire agreement and the Brazzaville Protocol on Namibian independence. Nothing succeeds like success, and these events have done much to raise confidence in the UN's capacity to serve as an instrument of international peace and security.

A closely related development is the change in Soviet attitudes and policies concerning the security functions of the United Nations. In a series of general foreign policy statements and more specific proposals, Soviet political leaders and officials have called for an expansion of the UN role in peacekeeping, peacemaking, crisis management, and preventive diplomacy. This is in stark contrast with the traditional Soviet practice of restricting the security functions of the United Nations. In a widely noted lead article in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* of 17 September 1987, General Secretary Gorbachev proposed the creation of a UN multilateral war risk reduction centre, having direct communication links between UN headquarters and each

of the capitals of permanent members of the Security Council and the chairman of the non-aligned group. Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has suggested that a multi-lateral verification centre be established under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Such a centre would enable the Secretary-General to dispatch fact-finding missions to areas of international tension and conflict. The information obtained could be used to initiate consultations with the disputing parties and members of the Security Council.

Such a verification centre has been partially realized, with Soviet support, by the establishment of the Office of Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI). Its task is to monitor international developments in countries and regions, thereby to provide the Secretary-General with early warning of serious developments which require his attention and initiatives. Eventually, ORCI may serve as an institutional memory of past UN crisis management and dispute settlement activities.

In another proposal, the Soviet government has called for frequent informal consultations by the Security Council at the level of foreign ministers.<sup>8</sup> In 1977, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Don Jamieson, proposed similar consultative meetings by foreign ministers. Such meetings would help identify potential trouble spots, and provide some guidelines for a possible course of action. The technical details of a solution would then be worked out during regular sessions of the Security Council. At the time, the proposal ran into strong opposition from the Soviet Union and China. Given the apparent change of Soviet attitude, it might be opportune for Canada to revive the proposal during its current term on the Council.

The specific issues which are likely to occupy the attention of the Security Council during the coming term will include many of the perennial problems like the Middle East, South Africa and Namibia. But like a deck of cards, they will be reshuffled and receive different priority and will probably be dealt with by a more effectively functioning Council. In the case of Namibia, the focus will no longer be on the negotiation of a settlement, but on problems relating to the implementation of an existing agreement. Similarly, the UN might become involved in supervising an agreement on the conflict in the Western Sahara, where there has been some movement toward a settlement, and in monitoring the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea.

The possibility of the Security Council becoming involved in a peace plan for Central America is remote given the US reluctance to tolerate UN "interference" in the Western hemisphere, but it cannot be excluded altogether. It would be an extremely delicate matter for Canada to associate itself with those advocating an UN role in terminating the Central American conflict. South Africa will in all probability remain on the active Security Council agenda. The non-aligned members on the Council will press for comprehensive economic and political sanctions, unless

\* South West African People's Organization