

issues he dealt with at the Assembly. His views on attitudes expressed by governments at the UN are based on a rather narrow set of preconceptions, those of a doctrinal, conservative American, an individual whose views in an American, let alone a global, context are considered extreme.

Ideologically, he found himself in the company of South Africa and Portugal (the Portugal of 1973) and he saw the bulk of the Third World and some Western countries, not to mention the socialist states, as being hostile to the United States at the UN. In his book Mr. Buckley has drawn up an interesting analysis of a number of selected General Assembly votes. Member states are graded on whether they voted with the U.S.A. or "against" the U.S.A. and are then ranked. (Canada, incidentally, ranks thirteenth on the list of 134 countries, having voted with the United States one more time than it voted "against"). The problem with this analysis is that it assumes some kind of American standard one is either for or against. In fact, what delegates generally must consider is a specific proposal or principle that their government is able to support, that it opposes or that, falling somewhere between those two, causes it to abstain. Voting in favour of a resolution the United States votes against does not necessarily imply voting against the United States.

Mr. Buckley clearly feels very keenly opposition to the United States in an international forum. One must sympathize with his frustration over the assumptions that apply in debate on some questions, however — notably human rights —, a subject for which he was in part responsible. Certain groups of countries seem to be exempt from criticism in UN debate in the human rights field, while a handful tend to bear the burden of such criticism. The main critics are usually from those very countries that, by some strange convention, are seldom attacked for their own internal policies, countries in which human rights seldom figure in decisions by authorities in power.

Mr. Buckley is uncomfortable with the fact that the vote of Burundi is equal to that of the United States in the General Assembly. One must put into perspective what decision-making in the General Assembly constituted in comparison with decision-making in the real world. The decisions that influence international political relations most significantly are clearly those of the great powers. International economic questions are settled largely by countries wielding economic

power, collectively or individually. The General Assembly provides perhaps the only world forum in which the weak and the poor may speak out as sovereign equals on the great political and economic issues of the day. Indeed, one of the UN's major accomplishments has been to make it possible for over 80 states that have acquired independence since 1945 to express this independence. This assertion of sovereignty provides a defence for the weak against political and economic imperialism, and a basis for their claim to a share of the world's wealth. There are few illusions that votes on General Assembly resolutions will have direct and immediate impact on world events. Political will to implement resolutions by those in a position to do so is the necessary requisite for action. Thus, while the votes of countries in the General Assembly are equally distributed, the power to implement the proposals adopted is not.

There is a certain degree of moral pressure brought to bear on a country that is consistently isolated in UN votes, and occasionally such pressure may have a gradual impact on the policies of the government concerned or on the country itself. Portugal is a case in point.

The one-country-one-vote provision of the UN Charter has its most significant impact when decisions are taken that affect the UN itself, notably on questions related to membership and financing of, or participation in, the UN system. The admission to the UN of the People's Republic of China replacing the representatives of Taiwan is one example; the reduction of the United States share of the UN budget to 25 per cent is another. These decisions, which affect the functioning of the organization and which have broader political implications as well, have much more impact on events than the many hortatory resolutions that are adopted each year.

Mr. Buckley was perhaps somewhat mellowed by his experience at the UN. His book is not unfriendly to the institution, and he has subsequently spoken of his experience as a delegate with noticeable pride. He agrees that there are many positive elements of the UN system, the sincere efforts of the Secretariat and the Specialized Agencies, the accomplishments of the organization in the economic sector and the importance of multilateral diplomacy in complementing bilateral efforts in keeping the peace. And yet Mr. Buckley is not corrupted by his experience. His scepticism and incisiveness are applied to the full in this witty and entertaining journal.

*Will to implement  
resolutions  
prerequisite  
for action*

*Buckley mellowed  
by experience  
as UN delegate*