

United Nations

Recap of 30th General Assembly: a demonstration of resilience

By C. V. Svoboda

The work of the thirtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly ended on December 17 with the traditional minute of silence. Many delegates, eager though they were to file wrap-up reports and catch planes for distant capitals, may nevertheless have welcomed, and certainly merited, that moment's respite after having considered a record 126 agenda items (at more than 450 committee meetings and 100 plenary sessions addressed in 11 languages) and adopted some 120 resolutions! The fact that the busy delegates also, according to one estimate, managed to organize over 1,100 social events during the consecutive seventh special and regular thirtieth sessions and still found time to attend 5,200 hours of meetings during 1975 might have been on the minds of many as they stood in reflection.

Figures cannot tell the entire tale, but the thirtieth session was also attended by some 15 heads of state or government and 200 ministers. The level of interest is but one indication of the importance attached to the UN by its members. Aside from the glitter, ceremony and sheer numbers, the substantive and frequently quarrelsome debates continued to attract the world's attention and, perhaps more than in years past, drew reactions from all parts of the globe.

With the admission of Mozambique, Cape Verde, Saõ Tomé and Príncipe, Papua New Guinea, Comoros and Surinam, which brought its membership to 144, the world forum moved closer to its goal of universality. As the process of decolonization nears completion, such perennial questions as the membership of the Vietnams (which the thirtieth session returned to the Security Council with a recommendation overwhelmingly in favour of admission), and the Koreas (where political problems persist) remain as the major hurdles in the organization's approach to universal membership. The

trend towards universality, long supported by Canada, is an achievement no other international organization has matched.

Grounds for hope

The thirtieth session followed immediately upon the seventh special session on international economic co-operation, the success of which gave grounds for hope, but no assurance, that the spirit of moderation and conciliation would continue. From the perspective of those who took issue with the sometimes controversial rulings of his predecessor at the twenty-ninth session, the election of Prime Minister Thorn of Luxembourg as Assembly President seemed to augur well for the new session. Indeed, it was quickly acknowledged by all groups that his leadership, steeped in the Parliamentary tradition, was thoroughly capable, moderate and impartial. Despite some areas in which progress or consensus was impossible, the session showed moderate progress on economic, political (including decolonization), human rights, financial and legal matters. Contrary to the view of those who would deny the organization's ability to produce results in the midst of incessant power struggles, many issues were dealt with by the Assembly quickly and conscientiously.

Thorn's leadership was acknowledged as capable, moderate and impartial

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1975	Imports
66.8	14.3
24.9	56.1
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38.8	181.9
32.1	166.9
77.3	56.3
19.8	1204.7