

One could set out specialized agency after specialized agency doing ennobling work. Indeed — dare I say it — including UNESCO. Therefore it is important when summoning the arguments in defence of the United Nations not to forget the specialized agencies.

The place to do it

Nor — number two — is it possible to forget the kind of very special political environment which is created within the United Nations despite all of its difficulties. In the fall of 1984 the world had not been at the negotiating table in Geneva for more than a year; everybody felt we were perched on the precipice looking into some cataclysm of human destruction; and the superpowers were not talking. Lo and behold Andrei Gromyko comes to the General Assembly and makes a speech within which there is a hint that perhaps the bargaining process can be reinstated, and Ronald Reagan comes to the General Assembly — third year in a row, unprecedented in the history of presidential contributions since 1945 — and makes a speech within which there is a kernel of hope about reinstating the negotiations. A few months later those negotiations are consummated again in Geneva. I think it is palpably true that that could not have happened without the existence of an international agency through which ideological opposites can speak to each other, however obliquely. That is one of the great value of the United Nations.

And so to point number three: the question of some of the intransigent issues which seem to be so frustrating when we deal with them. Let me look at the most difficult of all, arms control and disarmament. Let me remind you of the First Committee in the United Nations. Time and again, year after year, in what some would call a suffocating process — I would call it a liberating intelligence — we deal with resolutions on a comprehensive test ban, on the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, on the non-proliferation treaty, on the nuclear freeze, on nuclear winter, on a ban on fissionable materials, on the reduction of conventional arms; all of these resolutions, one after the other, addressed with vigor and passion and fervor by the countries involved. Yet, say the critics: "You never achieve anything. Resolution after resolution is passed and then not embraced by the superpowers." But the fact of the matter is that such a view of the process is both trivial and distorted, because whether it is in the First Committee in the fall, or whether it is in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, or whether it is in the United Nations Disarmament Commission in May here in New York, *we keep the pressure on the superpowers*. They have to vote, they have to take a stand, they have to meet and speak to every single one of those resolutions. It is absolutely inescapable, and in a very important, if unacknowledged, way helps to maintain a glimmer of sanity in an otherwise lunatic environment. One should therefore applaud and recognize the value of those arms forums even though we recognize as well that the ultimate decision will be made in Geneva.