

## United Nations by McFadden

### Good news and bad news

*Two issues dominated the U.N.'s birthday: strategic defense and debt—one was joined and the other, disastrously sidestepped.*

President Reagan's speech at the United Nations 40th-anniversary sessions had a twofold impact on the delegations: His eloquent appeal for a world made safe from thermonuclear ballistic missiles was warmly received by the usually less than enthusiastic delegates. But unfortunately, the President's moral vision did not inform his proposals on foreign policy. Latin American and African delegates were stunned at his concept of super-power mediation of several of the world's hotspots, effectively ruling out groupings such as the Contadora group, the Organization for African Unity, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Reagan seized the high ground in his speech, declaring: "If we are destined by history to compete, militarily, to keep the peace, then let us compete in systems that defend our societies rather in weapons which can destroy us both, and much of God's creation along with us."

While it is certain that no Third World delegation will reverse its opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) on the basis of the speech, Reagan's moral vision of the SDI and his commitment to the concept of the defense of life prompted a sustained ovation from the General Assembly—longer than that given to any other speaker. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar and General Assembly President Jaime de Pinies halted the General Assembly proceedings to personally escort President Reagan to his car—a courtesy offered to no other

head of state.

Reagan's organizing for the SDI was evident in, at least, one other forum. Italian Premier-designate Bettino Craxi, whose government was toppled by the Mossad-influenced U.S. handling of the *Achille Lauro* affair, nonetheless reaffirmed strong support for the concept of strategic defense. In a press conference given several hours after the President's speech, Craxi said, "President Reagan has talked about a scenario of the future which I think is very interesting. . . . The SDI, as it has been described to me, will mean the whole world completely defended with space shields. And therefore nuclear war would be eliminated. This is a fascinating and convincing picture."

Reagan avoided entirely the international debt crisis which, under Peruvian President Alan García's leadership, has dominated so much of this year's General Assembly. Indeed, in his proposals for dealing with regional hotspots, the President called for "welcoming each [crisis-torn] country back into the world economy so its citizens can share in the dynamic growth that other developing countries enjoy." Such a statement would be laughable were it not so ignorant.

Several political blows against the international banking fraternity that uses supranational institutions as the U.N. to aid in enforcing debt collection were struck during the commemorative week. A behind-the-scenes battle was waged to include Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi among

the speakers for Oct. 24, the actual anniversary day. Originally, only the permanent and original members of the U.N. Security Council—the United States, U.K., Soviet Union, China, and

That Gandhi, as head of the Non-Aligned Movement, was able to join the "Big Five" was an important, symbolic victory. In his address, Gandhi pointed to the economic holocaust caused by the debt crisis, and warned, "The consensus on development which was painstakingly built in the decades after the Second World War has broken down today. It is fitting that we use this session to make a start at repairing the damage. The consensus must be built."

In an unmistakable reference to the International Monetary Fund, Gandhi charged, "While experts painfully hammer out agreements, in many parts of the world hunger stalks hundreds of thousands. We must unite to save them."

Gandhi's sentiments were echoed by Abdou Diouf, President of Senegal and current president of the Organization of African Unity. Speaking in both capacities at an Oct. 22 press conference, Diouf attacked "palliatives" to the international debt crisis, such as proposals for short-term debt stretch-out. He said that Africa needs stretch-outs of up to 30 years, with a 5- to 10-year grace period and very low interest rates. This is necessary, he argued, so that "we can invest more in production and productive projects," and can then eventually meet debt obligations. Diouf is calling for a special General Assembly session on the African crisis and for an Africa-wide conference on the debt. Observers have warned, however, that the United States, in its role as IMF-enforcer, may back such an Africa-only special session in an attempt to fragment the international debt fight.