

## QUESTIONS CONFRONTING THE NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.

The Reagan Administration's chief envoys to the United Nations, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick and General Vernon Walters, worked diligently to improve the United States' position at that organization. George Bush, himself having represented the U.S. at the U.N. from 1971 to 1973, understands the difficulties of defending U.S. interests at the frequently hostile U.N. He has appointed Thomas Pickering, an experienced career diplomat, to build on the gains made by Kirkpatrick and Walters.

As Pickering heads for his new post in New York, there are several questions he must consider:

**U.N. Reform and P.L. 100-204.** Bowing to considerable U.S. pressure, the U.N. ostensibly has begun reforming itself. Pickering must evaluate whether the U.N. changes go far enough to satisfy the requirements for reform set by Congress in the 1987 legislation known as P.L. 100-204. This law calls for "progress toward a 50 percent limitation" on the number of Soviets on short-term contracts at the Secretariat. Short-term contracts have been used by Moscow to keep Soviet U.N. employees on a short leash. Pickering must determine whether the present situation, where just three of the 184 Soviets working for the U.N. are not on short-term contracts, constitutes "progress." If not, should not the U.S. press U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to reduce the number of short-term Soviet employees by refusing to renew any short-term contracts until the number of those on genuine career status equals at least 50 percent of the total number of employees from that country?

P.L. 100-204 also calls for reduction of the U.N. Secretariat's bloated staff. Reports from the Secretary-General show plans for a 12.8 percent staff reduction in 1990. Pickering will have to determine if these are real post eliminations or just employee attrition with the potential for refilling those posts at a later date. He also will need to decide if the U.S. should continue to contribute 25 percent of the pay for U.N. bureaucrats, who are paid 40 percent to 50 percent more than comparable U.S. civil servants.

Perhaps the most important requirement of P.L. 100-204 involves the U.N. budget, 25 percent of which is funded by the U.S. Congress called for consensus decision-making on the U.N. budget and that the consensus decisions be respected by the U.N. General Assembly. The U.N. has approved a budget outline for calendar years 1990-1991 by consensus, but the actual budget will not be voted on by the General Assembly until the next plenary meeting this September. Pickering must determine what U.S. priorities are for the U.N. budget and be willing to break the consensus to uphold them. He also must determine whether the U.S. will reinstate the policy of withholding a portion of the U.S. contribution to the U.N. if the budget outline is not strictly adhered to by the General Assembly.

**U.S. Goals at the U.N.** Many previous U.S. ambassadors have turned into little more than U.N. cheerleaders, becoming U.N. ambassadors to Washington rather than U.S. ambassadors to the U.N. Pickering must decide which he is to be and how strongly he will push U.S. foreign policy goals at the U.N. He also will have to decide on what the U.S. expects from the U.N.

**U.S. and the General Assembly.** In the most recent General Assembly, overall support for U.S. positions on contentious issues where the U.S. voted yes or no was a mere 16.6 percent. This is the lowest percentage in history. Pickering must decide whether this is alarming, and if so, what can be done about it.

**Withholding Contributions as Leverage.** P.L. 100-204 withheld a portion of the U.S. contribution to the U.N. contingent on progress toward reforms. Pickering will have to decide whether the U.S. use of financial leverage has been the major catalyst for reform efforts at the U.N., and if so, whether this should be used to encourage continuation of reforms.

**Espionage.** Espionage against the U.S. by employees at U.N. headquarters in New York long has been a very serious problem. Pickering will need to assess the situation in the U.N. Secretariat, where Soviet nationals have a lock on many key posts. Pickering must decide whether the U.S. should insist on rotation of key Secretariat posts among nationals of various member nations. He must also determine if the U.S. will press the Secretary-General to fulfill the U.N.'s obligation to prohibit its employees from engaging in espionage.

**Specialized Agencies.** Agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are increasingly politicized and continue to promote schemes that impede economic development in the Third World. Pickering must determine how the efficacy of these organizations should be measured, and in turn, to what extent the U.S. should support and fund them.

Along with the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, the new U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. can either continue the job begun by Reagan envoys Kirkpatrick and Walters and Assistant Secretaries Alan Keyes and Richard Williamson or he can return to the approach of some earlier administrations of not taking the U.N. seriously and hoping that it does not damage U.S. interests. Decisions on these important questions must be based on the fundamental premise that the U.S. participates in the U.N. as part of its overall foreign policy agenda. The U.N. is not an end in itself. It is merely one means by which the U.S. should advance its policy goals.

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For further information:

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Legitimacy and Force: Volume One, Political and Moral Dimensions* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1988).

Mark A. Franz and Robert Winters, "At the U.N., Reform Still Has A Long Way to Go," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 678, October 24, 1988.