

Urquhart, Brian. *A Life in Peace and War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Brian Urquhart's *A Life in Peace and War* relates the recollections of a former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations. Except for some early chapters on childhood, Oxford and military service, the work is essentially a description of Urquhart's life in the service of the United Nations. As such the work is a chronicle of the trial and error process with which the UN has been involved since its inception following the Second World War. It also details Urquhart's continuing optimism about the organization despite the shedding of many of the naive concepts that he held as a young Secretariat official in 1945.

Urquhart's work is written in a lively and energetic style that often proves elusive in the memoirs of international statesmen. No longer claiming status as an international civil servant, Urquhart feels considerable freedom to criticize a variety of individuals, institutions, countries and processes that he maintains have hurt the UN's chances to play a more significant role in the struggle for world peace. They range from Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to an alcoholic general responsible for UN peacekeeping on the Golan Heights. Urquhart wrote the sections on Waldheim prior to the war crimes allegations currently surrounding the former Secretary-General. He refused to change his text in the aftermath of those allegations and so makes his analysis of Waldheim strictly within the context of the latter's UN service. He also reiterates how deeply some Israelis seem to have disliked Waldheim, also commented upon in Ezer Weizman's 1981 book *The Battle for Peace*. Comparing these two books can make one wonder if the Israelis had their suspicions about Waldheim for a considerable time.

Singled out for particular criticism in his work are the overtly political activities of a variety of nations that are interested in publicizing their own grievances in ways which have nothing to do with the resolution of those grievances but do, nevertheless, appeal to domestic audiences. Indeed many of the activities that are paralyzing the UN are portrayed as this kind of pointless diplomacy. One striking example of this mentioned by Urquhart is the General Assembly's 1975 "Zionism is Racism" resolution which he terms a "mindless and counter-productive provocation." He also feels that some of the posturing by U.S. officials, including Daniel P. Moynihan and Jeane Kirkpatrick, represents a subtle surrender to the same trend.

Apart from Waldheim, those individuals of whom Urquhart is most critical are the various 'hardliners' toward their own particular causes. As an individual concerned with flexibility and negotiations, Urquhart dislikes those he sees as so ideologically committed that they cannot respond to new approaches and will not consider their adversaries in anything more than stereotypes. Two individuals who fare particularly badly in Urquhart's analysis are former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Archbishop Markarios of Cyprus. According to

Urquhart, both men led their respective nations into unnecessary bloodshed and tragedy because of their own closemindedness and inability to grasp historic opportunities. This is especially clear with Markarios who turned down two favorable settlements with the Turks prior to the events leading to a Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Begin's total contempt for the Palestinians is also credited by Urquhart as the cause of many of his mistakes and miscalculations regarding Lebanon.

Urquhart is a passionate advocate of negotiations and has noted several occasions where the UN was close to a breakthrough, which was destroyed at the last minute by the unilateralist impulses of a particular nation. In this context, he has harsh words to say about Argentinian actions during the Falklands War and about the Reagan administration's behavior over the issue of Namibian independence. He further believes that black African states should negotiate with South Africa, that Israel should negotiate with the PLO and that the Arab states should have formal negotiations with Israel.

Overall Urquhart's book is a pleasure to read. In addition to presenting important analysis, it contains many personal anecdotes and experiences that are truly interesting for the reader. Urquhart also treats the UN as an exciting center of politics rather than a sacred or disreputable institution. Both the stupidities and the unsung successes of the UN are brought into focus in this work.

W. Andrew Terrill
Department of Diplomacy and World Affairs
Occidental College