

William Warren Scranton and the United Nations 1976-1977

By Sean Brennan*

During his year of service as the American ambassador to the United Nations, William Scranton, who had a distinguished career in domestic and foreign service before his appointment to the position in February 1976, faced a number of challenges during this time period. His first task was to improve the standing of the American delegation with other representatives following the tumultuous tenure of his predecessor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, especially when it came to delegates from the Third World. Scranton attempted to find a balance in the Middle Eastern disputes between Israel and much of the Arab world. Following this, Scranton dealt with the end of European imperialism in Africa through welcoming new member-states into the organization. The Cold War, even during the era of détente, was never far from the agenda, and Scranton helped pioneer the efforts to attack on the Soviet record on human rights, a tactic later used by representatives from the Carter and Reagan Administrations.

Introduction

Representative for Pennsylvania's 10th District during the Kennedy Years, widely regarded as one of the Keystone State's most successful 20th century governors from 1963 to 1967, later a special advisor and presidential envoy for Richard Nixon and the leader of Gerald Ford's transition team following the Watergate scandal, William Warren Scranton was one of the best examples of the moderate, internationalist wing of the Republican party during the Cold War era, along with Senators such as Arthur Vandenberg, Warren Austin, and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. Like the later two, Scranton also served as an ambassador to the United Nations, in his case during the Presidency of Gerald Ford, taking over from Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. While his time in this position was brief, lasting from March 1976 to January 1977, it was certainly tumultuous, as Scranton was forced to reorganize the American mission to the UN following the condition it had been left in by Moynihan. Scranton was also dealt with many of the iconic international issues of the decade, from the last remnants of the end of European imperialism, to controversy of America's relations with Israel, the problem of international terrorism, and the emphasis human rights as a weapon to use against the Soviet Union and its allies in the aftermath of the Helsinki Accords at the height of détente.

*Professor, University of Scranton, USA.

Political and Personal Background

Born on July 19, 1917, in Madison, Connecticut, Scranton's parents, Worthington Scranton and Marion Warren, both prominent figures in the Pennsylvania Republican party, soon took him back to the city founded by his ancestors, where he attended elementary school in Scranton, Pennsylvania, before attending the elite Hotchkiss School in Lakeville Connecticut, then attending Yale College, graduating in 1939. He then enrolled in law school at Yale, but, like his law school classmate and lifelong friend Gerald Ford, he took a formal leave of absence to enlist in the armed forces during the Second World War, Scranton served as a pilot for the Air Transport command from 1941 to 1945 and would spend 1946 to 1963 in the Air Force reserve, ultimately retiring with the rank of Colonel. Upon his return to civilian life, Scranton finished law school at Yale, graduating in late 1946. Before his enlistment into military service in 1942, he married Mary Lowe Chamberlain, a Scranton native who was working as an intelligence analyst for the Army Air Force in Washington DC. The marriage would last until Scranton's death in 2013 and produce four children, their oldest son, William Worthington Scranton, would serve as Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor from 1979 to 1987.¹

Despite his reputation in public life, Scranton would spend the next decade and a half in law and business in northeastern Pennsylvania. He joined the law firm of O'Malley, Harris, Warren, and Hill in 1947. In addition to his legal career, Scranton also worked as a salesman for the International Textbook Company, rising to the position of Vice-President until he left in 1952 to become the director of the Scranton-Lackawanna Trust Company the same year. He would rise to the position of President in 1954. By the end of the 1950s, Scranton was also chairman of the Board of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Broadcasting Company and for the Northeastern Bank after the Scranton-Lackawanna Trust Company merged with it in 1956. Ultimately, throughout his life he served on the board of directors of eight local companies in northeastern Pennsylvania and twenty-one in the United States.

Like his parents, Scranton was active in local and state Republican politics, which brought him to the attention of President Dwight Eisenhower, who had established a private presidential retreat in Gettysburg where the First Couple frequently visited. In 1959, Eisenhower and the terminally ill John Foster Dulles appointed Scranton to serve as a Special Assistant to newly appointed Secretary of State, former governor of Massachusetts Christian Herter. Scranton's tasks involved doing public relations work for Herter and later worked as the manager

1. George Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman* (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), 31. Much like Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, Scranton was from the unofficial American aristocracy, he could trace some of his ancestors back to the passengers on the *Mayflower*.

of Secretary of State's office. The job raised his profile nationally, and at the end of the Eisenhower Administration, Scranton decided to run for election to the US House of Representatives in November 1960 to represent Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District, which at the time represented the northeastern part of the state, including Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wayne counties. Scranton won an easy victory over the Democratic incumbent Stanley Prokop.²

Despite serving only one term as a Congressmen, Scranton gained a reputation as one of the most visible of the moderate Republicans in the House, vocally supporting several President John Kennedy's policies, including the Peace Corps and Civil Rights legislation, eventually the Washington DC press corps labeled him as a "Kennedy Republican." Although he planned to run for reelection to Congress in 1962, a race opinion polls showed him as a clear favorite to win, Scranton was persuaded by the Pennsylvania GOP to run for governor instead. After having the lost the previous two gubernatorial elections in a favorable political environment in the Eisenhower years and having seen Kennedy win the state by a close margin over Nixon two years before, the Keystone state leaders were convinced a moderate figure like Scranton would stand an excellent chance of winning the state. It turned out to be a wise decision, as Scranton won a resounding victory in November 1962 over the Democratic challenger Richard Dilsworth, the former mayor of Philadelphia.³

During his four years as governor, Scranton continued his moderate policies that had characterized his two years as a congressman. Benefitting from the economic prosperity of the mid to late-1960s and the sharp drop in unemployment, Scranton increased state spending considerably in Harrisburg, partially paid for with an increase in the state income tax. Spending was directed especially towards improving the state's education system, including establishing the Keystone state's community college network. He also spent a considerable amount on promoting industrial development in the state, including obtaining aid from investors abroad, especially in Western Europe. A supporter of the civil rights movement, Scranton also worked to integrate school districts across the state.⁴

Scranton soon became so popular in some GOP circles that he was mentioned in late 1963 as a possible Republican candidate to challenge Democrat President Lyndon Johnson. Whereas the right wing of the GOP in the 1964 primary strongly backed "Mr. Republican", Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, candidates for the moderate Republicans were divided between former Vice-President Richard Nixon, his former running mate and UN ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, New

2. Historical Background Material on William Warren Scranton, January 3 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

3. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 64. At the time, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's constitution allowed for governors to serve for only one term.

4. *Ibid*, 71.

York governor Nelson Rockefeller, Michigan governor George Romney, and William Scranton. For a time, it appeared that Scranton was the most likely rival to Goldwater, although Scranton's mixed messages over whether former president Dwight Eisenhower had endorsed him or not following the California primaries in June of that year helped sink his campaign. Ultimately, Goldwater won the Republican nomination and went on to lose a landslide election to Lyndon Johnson in November.⁵

Term-limited out of the governor's mansion in Harrisburg, Scranton showed little interest in attempting to win the GOP nomination again in 1968. Following Richard Nixon's Presidential victory over Minnesota's Democratic governor Hubert Humphrey, Scranton worked in a variety of functions for the Nixon Administration, concerning both domestic and foreign policy. In between Nixon's election in November 1968 and his inauguration in January 1969, Scranton served as his special envoy to Western Europe and the Middle East, meeting with several leaders to discuss everything from the recent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring to the Sixth-Day war between America's close ally Israel and several of then Arab states. In terms of domestic relations, Scranton chaired Nixon's special commission on campus unrest following the shootings at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and later his Commission on Wage and Price Controls.⁶

The Nixon administration ultimately came to a messy end as President Richard Nixon resigned on August 8, 1974, to avoid certain impeachment due to his involvement in the Watergate scandal. The new President Gerald Ford, who came to power in unprecedented circumstances, as he only became Vice-President due to Spiro Agnew's resignation for a separate scandal from Watergate involving real estate speculation, needed to find a figure with a bipartisan reputation to handle this transition. He turned to his former Yale Law school classmate Scranton, who pulled off the difficult assignment with success. Ford and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had bigger things in mind for Scranton, but he turned down their offers of various diplomatic posts and for the next eighteen months Scranton returned to the business world, although his decision to serve as Chair of the Council of Foreign Relations hinted at a continued interest in diplomatic affairs. In 1975, Scranton acquiesced to serve on Ford's Committee on Arms Control, and in early 1976, Scranton finally accepted a formal position in the Ford Administration, to serve as America's thirteenth ambassador to the United Nations.⁷

5. *Ibid*, 106.

6. Historical Background Material on William Warren Scranton, January 3 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Lyndon Johnson having decided not to seek another term for the presidency in early 1968

7. Wolf, 148.

Service at the United Nations

Given the unprecedented circumstances in which he became president, and the limitations placed on his foreign policy by the sweeping Democratic victories in both houses of Congress in the midterm elections of November 1974 in the aftermath of Watergate, Ford was determined not to make waves with the Soviets and to continue Nixon's policies of détente. Broadly defined, détente refers to a period in the Cold War from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 when leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain worked to reduce tension between both sides, at least in Europe, although proxy wars and coups continued in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Although their long-term success continues to be debated by historians and political scientists, during his first two years in office Ford achieved what were viewed at the time as significant diplomatic breakthroughs in the era of détente. The first was his meeting with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at the Far Eastern Soviet city of Vladivostok in November 23-24, 1974, where the two struck up a friendly rapport and signed an agreement where both sides would agree to limit the size of their nuclear arsenals, with limits, to be agreed to later, on both intercontinental and submarine-based ballistic missiles. The second was the summit at the Finnish capital of Helsinki of July and August of the following year, where Ford, accompanied by the various heads of state from the NATO countries, once again met with Brezhnev, as well as the various leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries, and signed what became known as the Helsinki Accords, wherein the NATO countries promised not to alter the post WWII borders of eastern Europe, nor attempt to bring an end to Communism by force. In return, the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc states promised to respect Western definitions of human rights, including freedoms of speech, assemble and religion. As tensions returned on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the late 1970s, the meeting at Helsinki was widely viewed as the highwater mark of détente.⁸

Conflicts remained regarding America's relations with the Third World, especially on the floors of the United Nations. Idi Amin, the brutal dictator of Uganda, gave a speech on the floor of the United Nations denouncing, among other things, Zionism, Western colonialism, attacks on Uganda's human rights policies, and the work of organizations such as Amnesty International in October 1975. UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Harvard-trained sociologist who had served as Nixon's advisor on Urban Affairs and later served two years as ambassador to India, attacked Amin at the annual AFL-CIO dinner as a "racist murderer" and argued many of the postcolonial states which had emerged since the Second World War held next to no respect for individual liberties. Although his remarks were widely praised in the United States, Moynihan was rebuked by

8. Daniel J Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 220.

the Organization for African Unity, and the following month, Uganda, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and several other states in Africa and the Middle East passed a resolution in the UN General Assembly declaring Zionism to be a form of racism. Supported by Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, Moynihan introduced a UN resolution of his own demanding the release of political prisoners held by many of the dictatorial regimes which sponsored the resolution equating Zionism and racism. He was not supported by Kissinger in these efforts, and soon was criticized by some American allies for wielding the issue of human rights like a sledgehammer, such as singling out South Africa for its apartheid policies. There was also the issue that Moynihan had neglected administrative matters regarding the American mission at the UN, leaving many staff members adrift in knowing what their duties and responsibilities were. Eventually the relationship between Kissinger and Moynihan deteriorated so badly that the UN ambassador resigned on February 15, 1976, in his own words to avoid being fired.⁹

On February 25, 1976, Scranton and his wife met with President Ford, Secretary of State Kissinger, outgoing Ambassador Moynihan and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. After Ford expressed the usual pleasantries praising Moynihan for his dedicated service to the United States and the United Nations and discussing Scranton's personal friendship and qualifications for the position as the new American ambassador, he made a statement about his view of the importance of the United Nations. Ford informed Scranton he had a "big job" ahead of him regarding representing the American government at the UN and offered a more positive spin on Moynihan's service than Kissinger would have offered, stating the American mission had done an excellent job in reaching out to underdeveloped countries and protecting it from unfair attacks, efforts he wanted Scranton to continue. Scranton noted it would be a difficult job, especially given the attacks against the United States and its allies, but he was confident of success, admitting it was a tall order to follow Moynihan, of whom Scranton said he was a "big fan." Kissinger concluded the meeting by also expressing his full support for the new ambassador, especially given his previous success in so many other previous endeavors.¹⁰

Ford also ensured a statement was released to the press concerning his views on the UN. The statement said: "America's commitment to the United Nations is firm. The world needs the United Nations for the cause of peace. Because we value that institution, we work to strengthen it. At the same time, we will not hesitate to speak out clearly against actions that threaten its viability. Nor will we hesitate to speak out forcefully in defense of our interests and our principles."

9. Ibid, 199-200. Moynihan did not have similarly hostile relationship with Ford and would later represent New York in the Senate from 1977 to 2001.

10. Memorandum of the exchange between Ambassador Elect Scranton, President Ford, and Secretary of State Kissinger, February 25 1976 Kendall Files Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Scranton was formally sworn in as the UN Ambassador a few weeks later, a public ceremony in the Oval Office on March 15, 1976.¹¹

Scranton's chief aid during his foreign service career was Admiral John Faigle of the US Coast Guard. In between his meeting with Ford in late February and his swearing-in ceremony in mid-March, Scranton and Faigle spent much of the next few weeks cleaning up the messes that, in his view, had been left for him by Moynihan. He scheduled a series of meeting with the staff members of the American mission at the United Nations, which numbered about 125 in total and with officials in the US State Department who dealt regularly with UN Affairs. He maintained this practice throughout his ten months as the American ambassador, and consequently became very popular with much of the staff, as his cordial manner gained him the nickname, "Mr. Nice Guy." He also contacted many of the delegations to the UN from numerous Third World countries and promised he would be willing to meet with them and discuss any concerns or issues they had. While Scranton made no promises to any of them about an immediate change in American foreign policy, he felt it was necessary to reach out to the emissaries of these governments, following his philosophy in both domestic and foreign arenas that "You can only get what you want by giving others a piece of the action."¹²

These policies continued following the formal beginning of Scranton's term as ambassador. Scranton divided his work time between two locations in New York. The first was at the American mission headquarters across the street from the UN facility in Turtle Bay, the second was the ambassadorial suite on the 42nd floor of the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Manhattan, which during the era of Warren Austin and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr housed the American delegation. Scranton and his wife hosted numerous dinners and parties on regular basis, often accommodating as many as twenty-six diplomats and their spouses at the same time, which gradually helped to improve the atmosphere for the American delegation at the UN. They also hosted occasion social functions in their home in Dalton, Pennsylvania, the highlight of which was a large party in October, attended by representatives of over sixty countries.¹³ Scranton had his first formal meeting at the White House as ambassador on May 18, meeting with the NSA Brent Scowcroft. The main issue of on the agenda, one the was dominant throughout Scranton's time in office, was Israel and its relationship, or lack thereof, to nearly all the Arab world. After emerging victorious in both the Six-Day War in June 1967 over Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and the Yom Kippur War in

11. Memo for meeting with the new UN Ambassador at the Oval Office, February 25 1976. Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives. This statement was certainly true in many senses, Moynihan later said his lowest moment as UN ambassador was ensuring the United Nations did not probe too deeply into the invasion of East Timor by America's ally Indonesia.

12. Interview with Admiral John Faigle, January 21 2021.

13. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 149-150.

October 1973 over the latter two, Israel found now occupied several territories with a significant Arab population, in particular the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula. In addition, there was the intractable problem of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees living in camps in the former war zones. While relations between Israel and Egypt were starting to improve, the other Arab states and many Third World countries regularly denounced Israel on the floors of the United Nations, including advocating the expulsion of the country from the organization.¹⁴

Scranton outlined four pressing issues he had to deal with at Turtle Bay to Scowcroft. The first were negotiations between the American and Egyptian delegations regarding a proposal Cairo wished to make regarding Israel's occupation the various Arab territories in the aftermath of the 1967 and 1973 wars, especially the Sinai Peninsula, as well as more broadly the discussion of the Palestinians within these territories. The second were negotiations with the Syrian delegation concerning Syrian support for the renewal of UNDOF, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, currently about two thousand soldiers strong, and with contingents of men from Iran, Finland, Yugoslavia, Japan, India, and the Philippines. The third was the continued American refusal to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization until it recognized "Israel's right to exist." The fourth and arguably the most important was how the United States should prevent a vote by many of the African and Arab states to expel Israel from the United Nations, or at least suspend its membership, a possibility the delegation of South Africa had recently spoken with Scranton about. The meeting concluded with a discussion of Scranton's upcoming trip throughout Africa, which would conclude with Scranton serving as the official American representative at the independence ceremonies for the Seychelles, an archipelago of islands in the Indian Ocean which had recently been granted its independence by the United Kingdom, part of Scranton's efforts to win over many of the Third World countries to at least neutrality towards the United States.¹⁵ Scranton's African trip, where he visited Sierra Leon, Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Camron, the Central Africa Republic, Gabon, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, and finally the Seychelles, was viewed by many in the Ford Administration as a success, especially given the rough feelings caused by Moynihan's time in office. In addition to attending the Seychelles Independence Day ceremonies, a few months later, on September 21, Scranton announced the United States was formally sponsoring the Seychelles' application for membership in the United

14. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*, 2015, 132-135.

15. Meeting between William Scranton and Brent Scowcroft, May 18, 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives. The Egyptian government, under the leadership of Anwar Al-Sadat, was beginning to move away from being a Soviet ally to an American one. Syria ultimately supported the renewal of the UNDOF in the Golan Heights, and it continues its work up to the present day.

Nations, as: "The dedication of the people of the Seychelles to the goals which we all share of peace and freedom and the welfare of mankind with surely facilitate our join task."¹⁶

The Middle East, or more specifically, Israel, was once again on the agenda of the next meeting between Scranton and Scowcroft. The specific issue was Operation Thunderbolt, the successful effort by the Israeli military on July 4, 1976, to rescue over 100 Israeli passengers and the crew of an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris which had been hijacked on June 27 by Arab and German terrorists and flown to the Entebbe Airport in Uganda, whose dictator, Idi Amin, had supported the hijacking and invited the terrorists refuge in his country. On the early morning hours of July 4, over 100 commandoes from the Israeli army attacked the airport, having received intelligence and assistance from the Kenyan government. Three hostages were killed, another, Dora Bloch, who had been taken to a nearby hospital, was subsequently murdered by Ugandan soldiers on Idi Amin's orders. Israel lost one commando, and they succeeded in killing all the hijackers as well as forty-five Ugandan soldiers. While the United States had not been informed of Operation Thunderbolt until shortly before its commencement, the Ford Administration voiced its support for the operation, which captured the attention of the world. Scranton later shared Ford's sentiments in a July 12 letter to Rabbi Bennett Hermann and Ms. Renee Morgenstern, members of the Cleveland Regional Branch of the Zionist Organization of America. Quoting the President's statement, Scranton wrote: "The American people join me in expressing our great satisfaction that the passengers of the Air France flight seized earlier this week have been saved and a senseless act of terror has been averted."¹⁷

Scranton realized he would have to describe American support for the Israeli raid on Entebbe to less receptive audiences. At this next meeting with Scowcroft on July 8 at the White House, after discussing other possible issues that might come up at the UN including a possible summit between the North and South Korean governments, the status of the Panama Canal zone, and Cuban attempts to raise the issue of Puerto Rican independence, Scranton and Scowcroft moved to the issue of Israeli's Operation Thunderbolt. Both agreed Scranton should promote a resolution at the United Nations condemning all forms of terrorism that targeted air travel as well as all countries which supported these efforts. They also agreed Israel's actions might lead to another attempt to expel it from

16. Statement by William Scranton on membership in the Seychelles in the United Nations, September 21, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

17. William Scranton to Ms. Renee Morgenstern and Rabbi Benett Hermann July 12, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 168, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

the United Nations, or at least a condemnation of its actions in Uganda, and the American delegation should be prepared to thwart those efforts.¹⁸

The American ambassador was, as he expected, forced to address these concerns at the UN on July 12. After making his initial remarks of condolences involving the passing of several prominent government officials who had worked at the UN, Scranton noted the Ugandan delegation to the United Nations had accused the Israeli government of violating its territorial integrity through Operation Thunderbolt, which led to the deaths of 45 Uganda soldiers at the Entebbe Airport. The American ambassador admitted this was a violation of Uganda territory and normally "such a breach would be impermissible under the charter of the United Nations." However, given the fact it was a clear and imminent danger to the hostages due to the behavior of the terrorists, and Israel had a right to defend their nationals based on the long-standing international principle of every nation having the right to self-defense. More to this, not only had the Ugandan government not taken any steps to save the hostages, but "there is substantial evidence that the Ugandan government cooperated and aided the terrorists." Thus, the American government saw the charges of the Ugandan government as baseless, and would oppose any resolution condemning Israel for them.¹⁹ Scranton had already, a few months before, on April 28, had a forceful statement on the floor of the United Nations attacking the idea that Zionism was inherently racist, or that it was similar to the white minority rule in Rhodesia and South Africa which has recently been condemned in a recent UN resolution, which the Soviet bloc and Arab states had attempted to link to it. Scranton argued: "Zionism is not racism," and the United States would never accept a linkage between the two. Instead, Zionism was "a justifiable and understandable manifestation of national feeling on the part of a people entitled to a homeland, whose claim to a homeland was recognized by the United Nations almost 30 years ago."²⁰

Scranton did feel, however, the United States should act as an honest broker between Israel and the various Arab states, as there was little chance of a lasting peace between them if the American government only supported one side, a view he regularly expressed to Ford, Kissinger, and Scowcroft, views he had also expressed to President-elect Nixon after his tour of the Middle East in 1968.²¹ The most notable example of Scranton's efforts to appear even-handed were his frequent attacks at the UN on Israel for establishing settlements in a number of

18. Record of a meeting between William Scranton and Brent Scowcroft July 8, 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives.

19. Statement by William Scranton regarding the Israeli Raid at Entebbe Airport, July 12, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 168, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

20. Paul Hoffmann, "U.S. Warns at UN about Zionism Issue," *The New York Times* April 29, 1976.

21. Interview with Admiral John Faigle, January 21, 2021.

the territories in had occupied since 1967, especially the West Bank. While he accepted Israel's occupation of this territory as a temporary measure until a peace settlement could be worked out between it and its Arab neighbors, none of whom had yet granted diplomatic recognition to Israel, the settlements were a strong barrier to resolving the standoff: "The thought we could get a peace and military and economic security for Israel by making enemies of everybody on the Arab side was an absurdity." Scranton also attempted to involve the Palestinian Liberation Organization in discussions at the UN, as he did not take many of its leader Yasir Arafat's public statements of "destroying Israel," very seriously. Both actions earned him as much animosity from some elements of the Jewish population in America as his actions regarding the definition of Zionism or defending Israel's actions at Entebbe earned him support.²²

Regarding the racial debate over two American allies, Rhodesia and South Africa, Scranton addressed racial discrimination practiced by both, and what the American delegation's response at the UN should be. Regarding Rhodesia, the former British colony, named after an icon of the British Empire, Sir Cecil Rhodes, succeeded from the British Empire in 1965 following a disagreement between the white minority provisional government in the capital of Salisbury and London over voting rights for the African minority. Under the rule of Prime Minister Ian Smith, a former fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force, the government was not recognized by many countries outside of Portugal and South Africa. Smith's government, presenting itself as a bulwark against Communism in Africa, fought a guerrilla war known as the Rhodesian Bush War, against two groups, the Zimbabwe African People's Union, and the Zimbabwe African National Union, while negotiating with Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a more moderate face of the African majority, for a power-sharing arrangement between the white minority and the black majority. As part of a shift in American foreign policy, Ford and Kissinger came out in early 1976 against white-minority rule in former European colonies, if only, in Kissinger's view, to prevent the Soviets from being viewed as the only supporter of African nationalism. South Africa, under Apartheid rule since 1948, considerably larger with more resources than Rhodesia, continued to use its military might to fight against communist insurgents in Africa, and against African countries supporting the ANC against its white-minority government.²³

On April 6, very early into his tenure as ambassador, Scranton announced the American government would not only continue the use of sanctions on the Rhodesian government but to strengthen them as well. He then went on to say: "This offers an opportunity to affirm our strong opposition to the illegal Smith regime in Rhodesia and express the Security Council's full support for the urgent transfer of power in Rhodesia to the majority of Rhodesia's citizens." Eventually Smith's government worked out a power-sharing agreement with Muzorewa in

22. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 155-159.

23. *Ibid*, 225.

1978 under pressure from UN sanctions, before giving way entirely by 1980 to the radical Robert Mugabe. Renaming the country Zimbabwe and its capital Harare, Mugabe's brutal 37-year rule victimized the country's black and white citizens alike.²⁴ Regarding South Africa, Scranton also made a strong statement which again marked a shift in policy by Ford and Kissinger, specifically regarding the territorial incursions of the South African military into its neighbors of Namibia and Zambia on July 30: "Let me say first and foremost that my government forcefully condemns this incursion into Zambian territory. We oppose unequivocally the violation of Zambia's territorial sovereignty and integrity. We deeply deplore this loss of life and destruction of property." Regarding Namibia, Scranton said that South African military's presence was an "illegal occupation" and demanded they withdraw immediately.²⁵

Regarding the Soviet Union and its satellites, Scranton did take steps to reduce tensions with America's chief adversary when he could. One of the main examples during his tenure was Scranton's statement following a shooting at the Soviet UN mission headquarters in Riverdale, NY. The incident occurred on February 27, wherein a black car drove up to the building and a male individual stepped out and fired a number of shots with a pistol at some members of the delegation as they stepped out of the building. No one was hurt, and only a window in the lobby was shattered, but the incident was the third shooting which had occurred at the Soviet missions since 1971, and the Soviet government angrily accused by the American government and the New York Police Department of failing to do anything to find and arrest the guilty parties.²⁶ On April 2 1976 had a personal meeting with Mikhail Averkiyevich Kharlamov, the Deputy Soviet ambassador to the United Nations to inform him that the American ambassador viewed the shooting incident as an "absolute outrage" and to express his condolences. He also promised Kharlamov the US federal government would make all possible efforts to identify the shooters and bring them to justice. He would describe the incident on the floor of the United Nations as "the latest in a series of uncivilized acts carried out by extremist groups acting in a spirit totally contrary to the American tradition. The people of this nation are repelled by terrorism and demand that it end."²⁷ At the same time, Scranton also forcibly

24. Statement by William Scranton on the expansion of Rhodesian sanctions April 6, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Scranton received several angry letters from American citizens for the support of this policy.

25. William Scranton statement on Zambia's complaint regarding South Africa July 30, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. South Africa's military incursions continued into the late 1970s and 1980s.

26. "Soviet Diplomats as Targets" *The New York Times* March 7, 1976.

27. Press Release by William Scranton regarding the shooting at the Soviet Mission April 7, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Scranton also had to deal with many angry letters from émigré groups from the

attacked the Soviet government at the Appeals to Conscience Dinner in late October for the beating of Jewish demonstrators in Moscow by plainclothes policemen for demanding the right to immigrate to Israel. He also, under pressure from Ford and Kissinger, spoke out against Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam's entry into the United Nations following the conquest of South Vietnam by the communists in late 1975, and used America's Security Council veto to deny its entry. It was a controversial decision and one criticized by many political commentators on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁸

Easily the most memorable speech Scranton during his brief tenure as American ambassador to the UN was to its General Assembly on November 24, 1976, entitled "Human Rights: Let's Mean What We Say," where in Scranton laid a new method of incorporating the promotion of human rights as a vital component of American Foreign Policy. Following Ford's defeat by Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter in the American presidential election earlier in the month, Scranton desired to go out on memorable note, and the speech served as excellent summation of his foreign policy views. Scranton had already raised the issue of human rights before, on memorable example, in response to a letter from a Ms. Shirley Pierson on March 24, regarding the status of Pastor Georgi Vins, a Baptist preacher and Soviet citizen of both American and Russian lineage who had been imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia for attempting to establish a number of Baptist churches without permission of the Soviet government. Scranton promised Pierson the Ford Administration was working to secure a release for Vins and other Soviet dissidents, and he promised to bring the issue to the attention of the UN Human Rights Commission as soon as possible.²⁹

Scranton began his speech by stating: "Human rights is as vital and generic of an interest of the United Nations as peacekeeping itself." Going to say the record of the United Nations on both had been mixed at best: "The rhetoric on human rights has been superb. The record of accomplishment has been sadly deficient." Discussions about human rights remained mired in political contexts, and the United Nations had been "long on declarations and short on implementation." Nor did the United States' government believed human rights were only for certain people at certain times, but were the rights for every person, across the world. Scranton also rejected the argument popular among many Third World leaders that economic development was more important than human

Soviet bloc and from the USSR itself regarding what, in their view, was his refusal to press the Soviet government more strongly on its failure to honor the promises it made in Helsinki the year before. A group known as the Jewish Armed Resistance claimed responsibility for the shootings

28. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 155-157.

29. William Scranton to Shirley Pierson March 24, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 169, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Vins eventually was along with a few other dissidents released in a deal made between Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in 1979 in exchange for two Soviet spies captured by the FBI.

rights: “promoting and cherishing freedom is both a moral necessity and a precondition to better living.” The Communist states, in particularly the Soviet Union had, since the founding of the United Nations, cynically used language concerning human rights they had no interest in following, as the Marxist dogma these states were founded on remained diametrically opposed to political and economic freedom. One solution Scranton proposed was to end the secrecy surrounding the discussions of the UN Human Rights Committee, and to ensure it conducted its work openly during every session at the United Nations. At the conclusion of his speech, Scranton recommended a UN Court of Human Rights, as well as the creation of regional human rights organizations that could then report on a regular basis to the UN. Ultimately: “The conscience of mankind can ignore injustice in the dark. When the lights are on, few men of conscience can be quiet. This body must choose between darkness and decency, between protecting the violators of human dignity and protecting human dignity itself with the light of world opinion, the clear light of truth.”³⁰

Two months later, Scranton formally stepped down as ambassador to the United Nations with the beginning of the Carter Administration, to be replaced by Andrew Young, a former pastor, civil rights activist and a Democrat congressman from Georgia, who was the first African American ambassador to the UN, and who occupied the post until August 1979. It was Scranton’s last diplomatic position in the American government, although he was not done with the United Nations yet, taking the position as President of the United Nations Association, a civic organization designed to promote American support for the UN, in early 1977. Its outgoing President, James Leonard, praised his replacement for his skillful work during the 31st General Assembly, especially compared to its chaotic environment of the previous few years. Leonard specifically praised Scranton for his role promoting détente, ably addressing the controversies over the Panama Canal and Vietnamese entry into the UN, and for his promotion of human rights.³¹

Conclusion

Scranton’s period as UN ambassador, although brief, was a successful one. He had promoted a new approach for the American government regarding

30. William Scranton, “Human Rights: Let’s Mean What We Say” November 24, 1976, in *The Department of State Bulletin*, Volume 75 (Washington DC: US Department of State Press, 1977), 746-748

31. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 163. The American and Panamanian governments were in the process of contentious negotiations securing the transfer of control over the canal from Washington to Panama City, Scranton worked with the Panamanian delegation to keep the issue from spilling over into angry debates at the UN. The treaty was eventually completed in early 1977 during the Carter Administration.

human rights, one continued by the Carter Administration. Despite some domestic criticism, he had ably followed a balanced approach regarding controversies in the Middle East, America's allies in Africa, and regarding relations with the USSR. He had improved the working environment for the American delegation at the UN and had helped to ease the tensions between the United States and many of the countries of the third world. It was a course that predecessors such as Warren Austin, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, and Adlai Stevenson would have approved.

Acknowledgments

I had the fortune of using material from the William Scranton papers, located in the Special Collections Library of the Pennsylvania State University. This contained all of Scranton's correspondence during his period as American ambassador to the United Nations. I also had the opportunity to view materials from the Ford Administration, especially President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, from the Gerald Ford Presidential Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I also utilized several the volumes of the US State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, specifically concerning the Ford Administration's relations to the United Nations. Finally, I interviewed Scranton's former chief aid during his time at the UN, US Coast Guard Admiral John Faigle, on January 21, 2021.

Bibliography

- Hoffmann, Paul. "U.S. Warns at UN about Zionism Issue." *The New York Times* April 29, 1976.
- Sargent, Daniel. *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Scranton, William. "Human Rights: Let's Mean What We Say." November 24, 1976. In *The Department of State Bulletin*, Volume 75. Washington DC: US Department of State Press, 1977.
- "Soviet Diplomats as Targets." *The New York Times* March 7, 1976.
- Wolf, George. *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*. State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981.

