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THE U.N. DEPT. OF PUBLIC INFORMATION : A HOUSE OF MIRRORS

INTRODUCTION

At the United Nations, the Secretariat's Department of Public Information has the responsibility "to promote to the greatest possible extent an informal understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world."¹ Its 1946 Mandate from the General Assembly calls on it to undertake "positive informational activities that will supplement the services of the existing agencies of information," and specifically prohibits it from engaging in "propaganda."² Yet, just as almost all other parts of the U.N. have fallen far short of fulfilling the aspirations and meeting the goals of its founders, the Department of Public Information (DPI) has increasingly veered from its original mandate.

Certainly, the United Nations is not the organization it was 38 years ago, and therefore the functions of DPI have evolved over the period since 1946 with the organization itself. But the purposes of the U.N. remain in essence unchanged: to maintain international peace and security, to reaffirm fundamental human rights, and to promote social and economic development. Although the U.N. has a poor record in progress toward these goals, the Department of Public Information portrays the U.N. as moderately successful. Where the U.N. has not been successful, DPI, through an unbalanced and often heavily biased interpretation of events, attempts to blame the failure on the Western industrial democracies.

Such misinterpretation is dangerous in three respects. First, it creates false hopes and expectations among nations and

¹ General Assembly Resolution 13 (I), February 13, 1946.

² Ibid.

their citizens--particularly in developing countries--who look to the U.N. to represent principles of free speech, political and economic self-determination, and human rights but find that the U.N. is neither capable nor willing to fulfill these expectations. Second, by ignoring fundamental flaws and problems at the U.N., DPI prevents the U.N. from addressing and solving these problems. Third, DPI's misrepresentation of reality significantly affects the way in which nations and their citizens view critical global issues. Like the House of Mirrors at an amusement park, DPI distorts reality--exaggerating some things, diminishing others and obscuring most. Unlike a House of Mirrors, however, DPI's distortions form a predictable pattern. This pattern can be seen readily in the following aspects of DPI's activities:

- o The promotion of an anti-Western, anti-free market, and anti-democratic "double standard" through biased reporting and interpretation of events, particularly on the issues of the Middle East and South Africa, through the publication of documents, and the media of television, radio, and cinema.
- o Disregard of the widespread aggression and human rights violations by the Soviet Union and its proxy states, particularly during the past five years in such places as Ethiopia, Angola, Syria, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and the air-space over the Sea of Okhotsk.
- o Promotion of restrictions on free speech, and particularly on freedom of the press, through active advocacy, together with the U.N. Information Committee, of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO).
- o Refusal to acknowledge the successes of free market principles and incentives to economic development, and active support and promotion of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), the U.N.'s concept of a global scheme for redistribution of income, technology and industrial capacity from North to South. This has been most prevalent in DPI's hundreds of radio programs over the past year (171 in the third quarter of 1983 alone), and in the DPI booklet, Towards a World Economy That Works.³
- o Promotion and encouragement of lobbying efforts by non-governmental organizations accredited to DPI in behalf of legislation before the U.S. Congress affecting either the U.N. or U.N. programs. This violates U.S. law and the sense of Congress that prevent recipients of federal funds from lobbying Congress on legislation. One quarter of DPI's budget, of course, is funded by Congress.

³ U.N. Department of Public Information, Towards a World Economy that Works, New York, United Nations, 1980, p. 43.

- o The successful attempt to influence the private media through selective subsidies--at one point amounting to \$432,000 to fifteen foreign newspapers--for supplements promoting DPI's views on aid to the developing nations.⁴
- o The placement, promotion, and encouragement of Soviet and Eastern bloc nationals in positions of effective control or influence within DPI and the U.N. Committee on Information. The Soviets, who maintain among the most severe restrictions on the press and media in their own country, thus can tap the rich resources of the U.N.'s information bureaucracy.

DPI has failed to control its budget. In the past four years alone, this budget has increased at twice the pace of the U.N. budget as a whole: 68.6 percent compared to 35.3 percent.⁵ The U.S. paid \$10.2 million of DPI's 1982-1983 budget of \$40.9 million and \$16.2 million of the entire budget of \$64.6 million for the DPI Headquarters, the Geneva Information Service, and the U.N. Information Centers in that same biennium. While the growth of DPI's budget for the next biennium (1984-1985) appears under control, it is not certain that such moderation will continue.

While many of these problems are endemic to the entire United Nations system, their predominance in the work of DPI may be far more damaging to the interests of the United States and its allies--and in the long run, to the interests of the developing nations of the U.N.--than even the problems of the General Assembly and its various committees. With a staff of approximately 800 operating from U.N. headquarters in New York, an Information Service in Geneva, and from 64 U.N. Information Centers (UNICs) in as many countries--from Papua, New Guinea, and Managua, Nicaragua, to Washington, D.C., and Madrid, Spain--DPI reaches about 150 countries.

Close cooperation with almost 30 national broadcasting organizations throughout the world and almost all major news organizations allows DPI to convey the distorted image of the world that is portrayed at the United Nations--railing against violations of the human rights of Marxist "liberation" groups while ignoring human rights violations throughout the Soviet empire, and promoting the economic development models of centrally planned economies to the exclusion of other models.

Whether by merely reporting on the U.N. and the work of its various bodies, agencies, committees and conferences to the world

⁴ "U.N. Gave \$432,000 to the Foreign Press to Publish its Views," The New York Times, May 28, 1982.

⁵ Statement by Ambassador Charles Lichenstein, Alternate U.S. Representative to the United Nations, in the Committee on Information, June 22, 1983, USUN 48-(83), p. 5.

public, or by becoming an active catalyst in the interpretation of events and circumstances, DPI furthers the "double standard" of the U.N. and thus betrays the original vision of that organization. By buying influence and support from the private media, and by openly directing and assisting the active lobbying of the U.S. Congress by private non-governmental organizations, DPI is an active player in the shaping of events outside the United Nations in a way designed to legitimize the new "orders" envisioned by the General Assembly, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNCTAD, the Center on Transnational Corporations and others.

DPI: FORM AND FUNCTION

In 1946, the General Assembly called for the establishment of a "Department of Public Information" to "promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world."⁶ To carry this out, the first General Assembly declared that DPI "should primarily assist and rely upon the co-operation of the established governmental and non-governmental agencies of information to provide the public with information about the United Nations."⁷ The General Assembly thus stipulated that the DPI would not undertake the primary role in promoting the "informed understanding" throughout the world. This is confirmed by Yasushi Akashi, an affable former Japanese representative to the U.N., who is now Undersecretary-General for Public Information. He says:

We consider, in brief, our role as supplementary to the efforts of various national and other agencies of information, although, as the same resolution states, we must on our own initiative engage in "positive information activities" to the extent that these national and other efforts are insufficient to realize the purpose which has been stipulated.⁸

More recently, Akashi has taken the "supplementary" role one step further, and maintained that, because of "serious budgetary constraints" on DPI's budget and the increasing amount of new activities that DPI has had to undertake, DPI has played an increasingly "catalytic role" in stimulating outside media organizations and producers to cooperate with the United Nations in "coproducing information programs."⁹ Since the General Assembly also has stipulated that DPI may not engage in propaganda activities, the challenge posed to Akashi and DPI has been to ensure that the "catalytic" role not become a "propaganda" role. DPI's

⁶ General Assembly Resolution 13 (I), op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Statement of Yasushi Akashi, Undersecretary-General for Public Information, to the Committee on Information, June 20, 1983, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

record in meeting this challenge is mixed, for it has engaged in activities which differ little from traditional propaganda.

While many DPI activities understandably are tied to General Assembly resolutions, particularly those on the subjects of South Africa, Namibia, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Jordan River's West Bank, DPI still has considerable latitude, particularly in terms of providing balance and fairness in coverage of a wide range of issues. In the majority of these cases, DPI lacks balance and fairness, most often through omitting facts and events and sometimes by distorting data. For example, the apparent refusal to consider or mention Soviet or Soviet-sponsored aggression anywhere in the world in DPI material; the manipulation of economic data to support generalized statements against transnational corporations; the encouraging of non-governmental organizations to lobby Congress on legislation and decisions affecting the United Nations; and the misuse of statistics on the U.S. voting record at the U.N. in an attempt to show that the U.S. has not been "isolated." These, in effect, constitute some form of propaganda.

DPI Priorities

The funding for DPI programs and activities, as Undersecretary-General Akashi told The Heritage Foundation, follows directly General Assembly priorities. DPI cannot direct attention to issues outside the Assembly's list of priorities. In this way, DPI has become a "catalyst" for promoting the General Assembly's "double standard," for politicizing technical and non-political issues, and for exacerbating tensions among member-states of the U.N. Among the resolutions setting DPI's agenda are those calling for "special attention" to the issues of apartheid, the work of the U.N. Council on Namibia,¹⁰ colonialism,¹¹ the New International Economic Order,¹² the New World Information and Communication Order,¹³ and the World Disarmament Campaign.¹⁴

DPI Activities and Publications

In 1946, the General Assembly divided the functions of the DPI into seven major categories: press, publications, radio, films, graphics and exhibitions, and public liaison and reference.

DPI's Press and Publications Division (PPD) publishes a wide range of materials for various audiences throughout the world. Division personnel, when queried by The Heritage Foundation, only could guess at its output of press releases, briefing notes,

¹⁰ General Assembly Resolution 36/149, December 16, 1981.

¹¹ General Assembly Resolution 34/95, December 13, 1979.

¹² General Assembly Resolution 3535 (xxx), December 17, 1975.

¹³ General Assembly Resolution 34/182, December 18, 1979.

¹⁴ General Assembly Resolution 37/194, December 10, 1982.

round-ups, backgrounders, publications, and the frequency with which those publications are updated. The estimates are that this Division of DPI sends out approximately 11,000 press releases a year in French and English, and holds around 150 press conferences a year on various topics. Additionally, the Press and Publications Division releases the following periodicals, pamphlets and reference books on a recurring basis:

- o U.N. Chronicle, published monthly (except August). This covers the events and issues at the U.N., and the U.N. system, including the specialized agencies.
- o Objective Justice, a quarterly which discusses human rights topics with heavy emphasis on such issues as Namibia, apartheid, South Africa and Israel. This is published in English only and has a press run of 12,000 copies, the larger portion of which is distributed to the Information Centers and the national delegations to the U.N. There is a small number of subscribers as well.
- o The United Nations Yearbook, published annually in English only, with a press run of 6,000 copies. This volume presents facts and figures on the U.N. and its member states.
- o Everyone's United Nations, published every five years, in English only, with a press run of 2,000 copies. This publication reflects and magnifies the political biases and double standard of the U.N. system. While spending several sections of the volume on alleged human rights violations in Namibia and South Africa, and even giving credibility to African complaints against Israel for its 1976 rescue of hostages held by terrorists at Entebbe Airport in Uganda, the volume makes no mention of Cuban violations of the human rights of Ethiopian citizens, or the thousands of Ugandan citizens who perished during the rule of Idi Amin prior to 1979. The most recent volume, published in December 1979, devotes several pages to U.S. involvement in Vietnam from 1966 to 1975, but makes no mention of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia begun in January 1979.
- o Basic Facts on the United Nations, published every four years, with a press run of 30,000 in English, 15,000 in French and 15,000 in Spanish. This contains basic information on the U.N.
- o The United Nations Charter, published as needed. The last press run was in 1980, with 175,000 copies printed.
- o Image and Reality: Questions and Answers About Management, Finance, and People, published as needed. The most recent issue was published in 1983, with a press run of 100,000 in English. Between 5,000 and 10,000 were pub-

lished in Spanish, French, Russian, German and Japanese. All are distributed to the Information Centers, national delegations, and selected non-governmental organizations. Through a question and answer format, it addresses some of the "oft-repeated criticisms" of the U.N. It is as unbalanced as Everyone's United Nations and other U.N. publications. Example: In answer to the question: "Are the poorer countries in the United Nations out to soak the rich?" DPI answers: "No. What the poorer countries are asking for is a fairer system of international economic relations. In calling for a 'new international economic order' (NIEO) in 1974, the General Assembly was aiming for the common interest of developing and developed countries."¹⁵ Not only does this misstate the major objection to the NIEO--that it emphasizes redistribution of income rather than investment of income, and does not therefore help the developing countries which it purports to serve--but it fails to mention any of the more extreme and punitive economic proposals by the Group of 77 within the U.N. These include a plan to prop up world commodity prices by establishing new international price supports and a major revamping of the world trading system designed to favor developing countries.

DPI's External Relations Division (ERD) maintains relations and communications with schools, governmental and non-governmental organizations, other entities outside the U.N. system, and particularly with the U.N. Information Centers. It sends out some 16,000 information cables each year to the Centers, and is the primary source for the some 120 "briefing notes and round-ups" that go out annually to the non-governmental organizations associated with DPI. This Division's publications include:

- o United Nations Today--Suggestions for Speakers. This is supposed to be published every year, but was not released in 1983, due to controversy over its lack of balance and evenhandedness on a wide range of issues in its 1981 and 1982 editions. At a U.N. daily press briefing in October 1981, a reporter commented that Suggestions for Speakers was "extraordinarily tendentious both in its subject matter and its choice of subjects."¹⁶ The reporter pointed out that Afghanistan was mentioned without any reference to foreign troops in that country, and Kampuchea was discussed in three paragraphs, without any mention of Vietnam, which had invaded the country in 1979. On the other hand, the reporter noted correctly, ten pages were devoted to the Middle East and seventeen to southern Africa.¹⁷ Suggestions saw little improvement in its 1982

¹⁵ U.N. Department of Public Information, Image and Reality, New York, October 1983, p. 18.

¹⁶ U.N. Daily Press Briefing, October 29, 1981, p. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

edition, and, as one U.N. delegate told The Heritage Foundation, the 1983 edition was so "totally unacceptable" in draft form that even DPI did not dare publish it.

- o World Concerns and the United Nations: This comprises model teaching units for primary, secondary and teacher education and is published by the Education Information Programs section of the External Relations Division. Addressing topics from disarmament and peacekeeping to the New International Economic Order and human rights in teaching units for all grade levels, it was prepared in part by a UNESCO project and reflects the bias found in many other U.N. publications.

DPI's Division of Economic and Social Information (DESI) serves as a focal point for economic and social issues and agenda within the entire U.N. system, and publishes press releases and documentation on development and economic issues. These include:

- o Background reports on development and Third World economic issues, sent to around 5,000 selected recipients.
- o Development Forum, published monthly. It addresses issues and problems of economic development and allows NGOs to publish their views on development, views which strongly support the wealth redistribution goals of the New International Economic Order. The articles by the NGOs and the DPI staff ignore the economic accomplishments of the free market countries of the developing world, such as Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and the Ivory Coast.
- o Towards a World Economy that Works: Questions and Answers, published in 1980, and distributed to U.N. Information Centers and NGOs throughout the world, and to national delegations at the U.N. This argues that the current world economy is not working but would work under the New International Economic Order.

DPI's Radio and Visual Services Division (RVS) produces television and radio news and information programs on U.N. and world events. This division has produced some 6,200 radio programs in 18 languages over a two-year period, covering the daily range of U.N. activities; a daily quarter-hour program dealing with U.N. efforts against apartheid; the photographic coverage of U.N. meetings; and "in-depth" media information. The Division also produces its own films and has assisted various agencies, committees, and centers within the U.N. to produce and distribute films.

In a letter to The Heritage Foundation, Undersecretary-General Akashi emphasizes the distinction between what the U.N. Secretariat does on its own initiative based on material it prepares, on the one hand, and public information activities which are mandated--sometimes in great detail--by various bodies of the U.N., on the

other. In the latter case, Akashi points out, there is often a consultation clause with the committee concerned, which further restricts freedom of action by the Secretariat.

While there is some truth to this, the fact remains that DPI's material maintains the double standard through obfuscation of basic facts and by avoiding evenhandedness in addressing various issues. The lack of balance is most readily found in DPI's handling of the issue of economic development in Development Forum and Towards a World Economy that Works, and in its treatment of human rights and security issues in such publications as Everyone's United Nations and Suggestion for Speakers. When DPI works from the request or under the guidance of a U.N. Committee or agency, it often becomes an agency that publicizes and promotes the double standard.

DPI Finances

DPI's two-year budget for 1982-1983 was \$65.3 million, of which the United States paid \$16.3 million or 25 percent. This included U.S. contributions to the U.N. Information Services in Geneva (\$883,175), and to the 64 U.N. Information Centers (\$5.4 million).

The U.S. contribution also included \$4.9 million to the DPI's Radio and Visual Services Division which is responsible for, among other items, the production of radio and television news summaries which support the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), the integration of women in the struggle for peace and development, and the promotion of human rights. It has also displayed or sponsored photographic or poster exhibits on "the plight of the Palestinian people," which imply that Israel is solely responsible for the fate of the Palestinians, and thus exacerbate tensions between Israel and other member states of the U.N. The Press and Publications Division of DPI, to which the U.S. contributed \$2.1 million in the 1982-1983 biennium, shares these priorities.

The U.S. Congress should question continued U.S. financial support for the information activities of the U.N. Secretariat. NWICO, for example, encourages nations to impose what would amount to censorship of Western journalistic activities and products. DPI's support of the NWICO and NIEO most harms the countries in greatest need of private direct investment and a free press.

Among the proposed new projects for DPI are a short-wave radio station and a U.N. satellite communications system. The cost of the proposed satellite system is \$145 million, of which the U.S. would be forced to pay \$54 million.

The DPI Staff

The nature of DPI's staff, and particularly the strong influence of its Soviet members, contributes to DPI's lack of

balance. Former U.N. Undersecretary-General Arkady Shevchenko, who defected to the U.S. from the Soviet Union in 1978, has pointed out that DPI plays a crucial role in the Soviet Union's disinformation campaign at the U.N.: "The whole Department is mobilized," he said.¹⁸ The principal Soviet national at DPI is Anatoly Mkrtchyan, head of the External Relations Division. Shevchenko identifies Mkrtchyan as a KGB colonel; in fact, Shevchenko asserts, the post has been held by a KGB officer since 1968. Among the division's main functions is the dissemination of U.N. material to the 64 U.N. Information Centers throughout the world.¹⁹

Other problems with the DPI staff include under-representation of U.S. nationals on the staff.

While the U.S. pays about a quarter of DPI's budget, U.S. citizens in 1982 numbered only 117 of the total 862 personnel (14 percent) at DPI and the U.N. Information Centers. Only three of these 117 were in the highest grade of D-1. While 105 U.S. nationals are posted at DPI Headquarters in New York--on a total staff of 380²⁰--the near absence of Americans in key posts within DPI, combined with the strong presence of Soviet nationals, poses many problems for the U.S. It means, for example, that the U.S. can do little to prevent DPI's anti-U.S. and anti-Western bias. Congress should investigate the degree to which information is thus influenced by staffing policy at DPI.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at DPI

The U.N. Charter recognizes the importance of citizen interests in and support for the United Nations in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

More than 425 national, regional and international NGOs are associated with DPI. DPI "encourages and actively assists" these organizations. There is even an NGO section at DPI, headed by Sally Swing Shelley, an American who proudly regards herself as a globalist bureaucrat. Her section assists various NGOs in organizing NGO committees on subjects ranging from human rights to disarmament. Many of these NGOs officially participate in U.N. conferences, such as the U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament (1982), and the Conference on Primary Health Care (1978) in

¹⁸ Quoted in Juliana Geran Pilon, "Moscow's U.N. Outpost," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 307, November 22, 1983, p. 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ U.N. General Assembly, 37th Session, Fifth Committee, Item 111 (a) of the Agenda, Personnel Questions: Composition of the Secretariat, Report of the Secretary-General, A/C.5/37/L.2.30, August 1982. Figures in this study include General Services Staff at DPI. Figures provided by the U.N. Information Center in Washington showed that, in the professional staff alone at DPI, Americans number 47 out of a total of 222 (21 percent).

Alma Ata in the Soviet Union. This provides an important and respectable forum to such anti-West groups as the International Organization of Consumers Unions and the World Peace Council.

One of the most serious deviations by DPI from its mandate has been its encouragement of NGOs to lobby the U.S. government. Not only is this not authorized by the U.N. Charter, it very likely violates U.S. law--since one-quarter of DPI's budget is provided by U.S. taxpayers, federal funds cannot be used to lobby. At a November 1983 DPI/NGO Orientation Course, NGOs were instructed through the use of "skits" and formal presentations to lobby their national legislators, including U.S. Congressmen, on such issues as the U.N. Law of the Sea Treaty.

At a briefing for representatives of NGOs on December 15, 1983, Undersecretary-General Akashi confirmed that, due to budgeting limitations, the General Assembly had recommended that DPI rely "primarily on the assistance of the mass media as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations" in order to make its work "fully understood by the peoples of the world."²¹ Akashi also stressed that DPI, which had always had a very high esteem of NGOs' support, now felt a need for a more active cooperation with NGOs, "particularly as they can influence the decision-making process at the national level."²²

While Akashi himself has been careful not to advise NGOs to lobby the U.S. Congress, members of his staff openly promote and encourage active lobbying.

Extensive Soviet influence within many of DPI's NGOs and the publication and distribution of anti-Western, specifically anti-U.S., anti-Israeli and anti-free enterprise propaganda through these organizations also should be of concern to the U.S. Congress. At present, several Soviet front groups routinely "sponsor" NGO conferences in cooperation with such U.N. units as the Center Against Apartheid. Their proceedings subsequently are adopted by the U.N. and widely distributed by DPI. Because NGOs obtain and redistribute DPI materials, their impact is many times greater than the official publication data may indicate.

The Congress should request an investigation of DPI's activities and relations with its non-governmental organizations. In the near term, the Congress, at a minimum, should request that the State Department review the DPI-NGO relationship within the context of the comprehensive review of U.S. participation in the U.N., called for in the State Department Authorization Act for FY 1984-1985, P.L. 98-164.²³

²¹ U.N. Department of Public Information, Non-Governmental Organizations Section, DPI/NGO/SB/83/33, "The Work of the United Nations: Department of Public Information," January 6, 1984.

²² Ibid.

²³ See: Juliana Geran Pilon, "P.L. 98-164: The U.N. Under Scrutiny," Heritage Foundation Issue Bulletin No. 101, January 17, 1984.

HOW DPI SHAPES AND REPORTS THE NEWS

One of the dangers posed by the United Nations is its role in affecting the way in which nations and their citizens view critical global issues. World reality is distorted by DPI when it gives the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO), and a handful of other favored groups flattering treatment. Equally distorting reality is the silence with which DPI treats human rights violations by socialist and communist nations. Minor or even alleged misdeeds in pro-Western countries warrant unrelenting U.N. attention and denunciation.

If DPI were to perpetuate the double standard only within the United Nations system, the dangerous effects of the Department's media campaign might be relatively minor. But DPI provides news stories, press releases, and taped radio broadcasts to the public media throughout the world. As such, DPI multiplies the impact of the U.N.'s "Hall of Mirrors" distortions.

In offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna, DPI releases scores of press releases and news items each day. During the third quarter of 1983, for example, DPI "coverage activities" at the New York Headquarters consisted of over 3,000 press releases, and 4,223 information cables.²⁴ There were 1,352 information cables issued from the two conferences which took place during this quarter--the Second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the International Conference on the Question of Palestine. While the U.S. paid 25 percent of the costs for DPI coverage of both these conferences, the U.S. did not participate in either conference.

In an interview with The Heritage Foundation, Gilberto Rizzo, Director of DPI's Press and Publications Division, pointed out that while approximately 250 to 300 newspapers are accredited with the United Nations' DPI, the greatest distribution of news and information from the U.N. is made by the major international news agencies--United Press International, the Associated Press, Reuters, Agence-France Presse, TASS, and the News Agency of the People's Republic of China. In addition, all the major television and radio networks, as well America's National Public Radio, have representatives accredited with DPI and who pick up the U.N. daily press briefings for wider dissemination.

DPI is curiously selective in its coverage of U.N. activities. Example: in a 1983 debate in the Outer Space Committee, Canadian nuclear physicist Roger Eaton maintained that a Soviet nuclear

²⁴ "Monitoring System for DPI Programme Implementation," United Nations Department of Public Information Memorandum from F. Lwanyantika Masha, Chief, Planning Programming and Evaluation Unit, to Yasushi Akashi, Chart I.

powered communication satellite had fallen from its orbit onto Canadian territory, and had not, as the Soviets were insisting, burned up over the ocean. At a time when journalists throughout the world were covering this issue, DPI ignored the debate and did not release a statement by the Canadian scientist. When queried by the reporter concerning the omission, Undersecretary-General Akashi maintained that the issue "would not warrant wide enough interest."

DPI reaches millions throughout the world in other ways. In the third quarter of 1983, for example, U.N. Information Centers distributed and screened 3,351 films to a total audience of 72,651,974 in developing and developed countries.²⁵ In the same quarter, the Centers distributed and showed 705 films on the subject of disarmament to a total audience of 12,388,983; 200 films on the subject of apartheid to a total audience of 11,543,433; 123 films on Namibia to a total audience of 10,878,537; and 395 films, highlighting the importance of the New International Economic Order in Development, to a total audience of 14,449,058.²⁶

Some of these films treat their subjects in a balanced and relatively unbiased manner and deal with subjects worthy of attention. Most of the films, documents, video and radio tapes that are distributed and most of the briefings that are given, however, obscure or ignore significant issues and problems facing developing countries. Material on economic development, for example, does not address the real challenges to creating wealth and prosperity in the developing world and ignores the economically most successful of the developing countries; material on disarmament ignores Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and the enormous threat that conventional armaments pose to regional peace.

Two years ago, DPI attempted to promote news coverage of the U.N., and in particular to promote the theory of global redistribution economics in the guise of the New International Economic Order. Subsidies of at least \$432,000 were given to 15 foreign newspapers for supplements on the NIEO and the U.N.'s view on development. Such activity appears to have been halted under Akashi.

DPI has also begun to target the U.S. Congress "to influence the decision-making process at the national level." In addition to encouraging lobbying, DPI has communicated with Congress directly on a wide range of subjects. Example: A recent letter from the U.N. Washington Information Center to key members of Congress contradicted, by using irrelevant data, the claims of key U.S. officials that the U.S. regularly is outvoted at the U.N.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Monitoring System," op. cit., Chart VI.

²⁷ Ibid.

Though DPI's priorities and public information activities to a large extent are mandated by the General Assembly and its committees, this does not explain DPI's double standard or its continued assault on the free enterprise system and multinational corporations. The General Assembly has not, for example, passed a resolution barring DPI from discussing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in its publications or media broadcasts, but DPI operates as though there were such a resolution. Effective control by the Soviet Union of the various media within DPI, and, as one former Secretariat official described it, effective Soviet intimidation of key staff positions within the Department precludes the need for such a resolution.

DPI's distortions appear throughout its documents, pamphlets and radio broadcasts. Examples:

Colonialism and South Africa

In a 1983 radio broadcast on "Cooperation Between the United Nations and the OAU (Organization of African Unity)," the DPI narrator presented the taped view of a Soviet spokesman:

We fully support the complete elimination of the remnants of colonialism and racism. The Soviet Union is profoundly opposed to Africa's becoming an arena of political confrontation. We support the desire of the African people that their continent be spared the presence of foreign military bases and be turned into a nuclear-weapons-free zone.²⁸

While saying nothing of the Soviet, Cuban and East German military bases in sub-Saharan Africa, the narrator followed the Soviet's remarks with a comment on the U.S. relationship with the OAU:

Although the United States still opposes U.N. assistance to liberation movements recognized by the OAU, it feels...that cooperation between the two international organizations is necessary.²⁹

By this commentary, the listener is told that because the U.S. neither recognizes nor negotiates with the Southwest Africa Peoples' Organization (SWAPO), a major terrorist group, the U.S. does not support the "complete elimination of the remnants of colonialism and racism" in southern Africa. Of course, for many years, the United States has voiced its opposition to colonialism and racism, including Soviet and Soviet backed neo-colonialism in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia. But DPI, in radio broadcasts and documents, continues to depict the U.S. as one of the main stumbling blocks to the end of colonialism.

²⁸ United Nations Radio Service, PERSPECTIVE EIGHTY-THREE, No. 21, May 25, 1982.

²⁹ Ibid.

There were so many complaints about imbalance in the DPI's United Nations Today-1982. (Suggestions for Speakers) that a U.N. Secretariat spokesman indicated that Undersecretary-General Akashi had "conveyed his dissatisfaction at the lack of balance in some of the contents" and had ordered it to be rewritten. Yet it was not revised and some 60,000 copies in English, plus those in French and Spanish were distributed by the United Nations' 64 Information Centers. Several diplomats at the U.N. have suggested that Soviet control of the DPI's External Relations Division had ensured publication despite Akashi's objections.

Criticism of the apartheid policies in South Africa and of the continued problems of achieving Namibia's independence are fully justified, and the U.S. Mission to the U.N. works extensively with U.N. organs to bring Namibia independence and to end racial discrimination in South Africa. But there would be no way of knowing this from DPI's products. Through its unbalanced approach, DPI has not helped the efforts of the United States and other countries at the U.N. to resolve these issues.

The Middle East

Nothing characterizes DPI's coverage of the Middle East issue so much as its campaign against Israel. The October 1982 issue of U.N. Chronicle, an official DPI publication, for example, reported on Israel's operation in Lebanon. The Israeli forces are depicted in shrill pejorative terms, whereas action by the Palestine Liberation Organization was reported in studiously neutral terms. Examples: in covering the U.N. debate on the Israeli operation, DPI states: "A number of speakers compared Israeli actions in Lebanon--where it was accused of carrying out a 'genocide' of Palestinian and Lebanese people--with the crimes of Nazi Germany."³⁰ A picture of Damur, Lebanon, is captioned: "The town had 16,000 people in early June. A month later only ten people remained in its ruins." The truth was that the town had been destroyed in 1976, when the PLO killed hundreds of its Christian inhabitants.³¹ This "error," which was never corrected, was distributed worldwide in an official DPI publication.

DPI has prepared or displayed poster and photographic exhibitions which have implied strongly that Israel alone has been responsible for the plight of the Palestinian people. One 1983 exhibit, shown at the U.N. in New York, was so starkly anti-Israeli that it was removed by the Secretariat within hours of its installation at the request of Israeli Ambassador Yehuda Blum. Yet an official of the DPI admits that this and other exhibits continue to be distributed to U.N. Information Centers around the world.

³⁰ United Nations Chronicle, October 1982, p. 18.

³¹ See Juliana Geran Pilon, "The United Nations' Campaign Against Israel," Heritage Foundation Background No. 271, June 16, 1983, p. 9.

In his interviews with The Heritage Foundation, Akashi declined to comment whether the U.N. treats Israel unfairly. He did, however, admit that he sometimes has sleepless nights over the exhibits presented by the U.N. in celebration of Palestinian Solidarity Day. Asked what he would do differently, Akashi replied: "You'll be very surprised how little power I have." This is also the impression of some diplomats who have indicated that Akashi may be manipulated by members of his staff sympathetic to the PLO against Israel.

Problems of Economic Development

In dealing with the world economy, DPI has a strong bias against free market solutions and in favor of the model offered by the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This is demonstrated in DPI's enthusiastic support and promotion of the U.N.'s New International Economic Order (NIEO).

DPI also endorses the U.N. argument that the problems of the world economy have been exacerbated by multinational corporations. In a 1982 issue of the DPI/U.N. University publication, Development Forum, the Department printed an article which maintained, among other claims, that "the unprecedented TNC (transnational corporation) penetration of the world economy has become a leading catalyst in the global crisis of mounting unemployment, inflation and stagnation."³² DPI ignores the overwhelming evidence that the private sector, particularly the multinational corporations, has provided developing countries greater access to world markets, and developed new job opportunities in the countries where they invested.³³

Other arguments are presented in favor of the NIEO, and against the free enterprise system and the multinationals in a recently published DPI document, World Concerns and the United Nations. This document is to provide teaching units for primary and secondary schools and for teacher education. It presents a heavily biased teaching unit for Grades 10-12 (ages 15-18) on "Developing the World We Want: A Model U.N. Meeting on the New International Economic Order (NIEO)," which calls for an end to the "vicious cycle" of staggering price increases and dropping output in the developing world, and the implementation of "additional financial flows" and "an entirely new range of international economic ground rules."³⁴ This document's pro-NIEO rationale

³² "The Ever-Grasping Drive," Development Forum, November 1982, p. 3.

³³ Address by Paul Belford, Director, International Issues Analysis, International Division, Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, to a Workshop on "Third World Development, U.N. Economic Agencies and U.S. Business," International Chamber of Commerce.

³⁴ U.N. Department of Public Information, World Concerns and the United Nations (Model Teaching Units for Primary, Secondary and Teacher Education), New York, 1983, p. 146. This document is based on the work of participants in the U.N. Fellowship Program for Educators (1975-1981) and the UNESCO Associated Schools Project.

ignores the development successes achieved by such countries as Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and the Ivory Coast which have avoided adopting the disastrous economic policies of the centrally planned economies of the Soviet Union and other states within the Communist bloc.

Peacekeeping

In the document Images and Reality, the DPI poses questions and attempts to provide answers on the "management, finance and people" of the U.N. system. In answer to the question: "What are Peacekeeping operations and how effective have they been?" DPI provides the reply:

The peace-keeping activities of the United Nations have certainly been effective in preventing the renewal of hostilities and in containing conflict situations in a number of sensitive areas of the world.³⁵

DPI fails to explain, however, how it measures U.N. effectiveness, for the U.N. has not been able to effectively keep the peace in a world which has seen 140 conflicts since 1945 in which approximately 10 million people have died. No mention is made, moreover, of the lack of discipline and effectiveness in many national contingents of U.N. peacekeeping operations where U.N. troops were found to have assisted various terrorist elements, particularly the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon and the Golan Heights.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Public Information has become more than just an agency promoting "an informal understanding of the work and purposes of the U.N. among the peoples of the world." It has become a source of propaganda to further the U.N.'s anti-Western and anti-free enterprise ideology.

The DPI also has become a powerful articulator of the U.N.'s double standard which gives favored treatment to the PLO, SWAPO and a handful of other groups, while overlooking outrages committed by socialist and communist nations. Not only does this waste DPI resources and undermine the credibility of the United Nations, but also seems to provide a U.N. sanction, by its silence, for some of the world's worst contemporary violations of political and human rights.

DPI further has borne the double standard and spread its biases beyond the walls of the Secretariat building by openly

³⁵ U.N. Department of Public Information, Image and Reality, New York, October 1983.

buying influence and publicity in the world media, by carrying out an advocacy campaign for the U.N. through the 64 U.N. Information Centers, and by directing non-governmental organizations associated with the Department to lobby before the U.S. Congress.

Last, the DPI has assumed a role as "defender of the faith," while striving to protect the U.N. from all criticism, castigating those who would criticize the U.N. organization for whatever reason, and defending the U.S. role in that organization by presenting inaccurate and misleading data on the U.S. voting record at the U.N.

While the DPI's activities are circumscribed by the priorities of the General Assembly, the DPI, and particularly Undersecretary-General Akashi still can recommend some programs and advise strongly against others. He may inform the General Assembly that some programs cannot be carried out because of budgetary constraints, or because they are unbalanced and unfair, or because they will alienate those who are asked to pay for them. Some U.N. diplomats maintain in private that Akashi has tried to do this in consultation with the Assembly and its various committees, for example, the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. They regard Akashi as a man of high integrity who personally must be very displeased by much of what DPI does. Yet he ultimately must bear responsibility for DPI's record.

If Akashi is intent on making the Department of Public Information an agency which does not merely publicize and promote the U.N.'s double standard, he must stand up to those who use his organization for such promotion and for the furthering of anti-Western ideas and values.

The U.S. already has begun a fundamental reappraisal of its role within the U.N. and the review has had results. President Ronald Reagan, for example, has notified UNESCO that the U.S. intends to withdraw from participation in that body on December 31, 1984. The U.S. also is reconsidering its participation in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), an agency based in Rome that fails to meet its goal of assisting small farmers in the poorest countries. Beyond this, however, Washington must review U.S. support for the informational activities of the U.N. Secretariat, and particularly for the DPI.

In the State Department Authorization Act for FY 1984-1985, P.L. 98-164, Congress has asked the Executive Branch to conduct an immediate review of U.S. participation in the U.N., and to make recommendations based on the review. The report, which is due to Congress by June 30, 1984, should evaluate the role of DPI in the U.N., and how that role affects the "importance of the U.N. in fulfilling the policies and objectives of the United States."³⁶

³⁶ U.S. Congress, State Department Authorization Act for FY 1984-1985, P.L. 98-164.

Before this report is completed, the Congress should demand that the U.N. cease all promotion of lobbying activities before Congress, and all support for non-governmental organizations which participate in such activities. Congress should stop all U.S. funding of DPI activities that promote the interests of the Palestine Liberation Organization, SWAPO and other terrorist groups.

The U.S. should also seek the support of other states within the U.N. to change the rules by which the DPI distributes its publications and press releases, particularly to the U.N. Information Centers and the non-governmental organizations. The U.S. should seek to ensure that, if DPI distributes material based on a General Assembly resolution requesting that information on a particular topic be "made available," it does so only for those resolutions that are either adopted without a vote or on the basis of consensus--that is, resolutions that reflect the views of all member states of the U.N. Since around one-third of all General Assembly resolutions are adopted without a vote, this would give DPI the opportunity to distribute information that truly reflects the views of all member states of the U.N. and to avoid publicizing information on issues that were voted on by the General Assembly only after heated debate, and not approved by all member states.

If the DPI is not willing to end these activities; to offer a more balanced and unbiased interpretation of policies and events; and to demonstrate an ability to order priorities and accurately measure program effectiveness, the U.S. Congress should vote to withhold a portion of its annual contribution to the U.N. Secretariat in an amount commensurate with the U.S. portion of the DPI annual budget.

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