

THE U.N. MAKES A DEAL WITH THE SOVIETS

Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead recently has confirmed reports that United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar intends to waive the U.N.'s April 1986 freeze on recruitment of personnel in the U.N. Secretariat. This is curious since the U.N. is still by its own account suffering from a "financial crisis." The freeze, along with normal attrition, has reduced the U.N.'s bloated bureaucracy by only 9 percent so far--far short of the 15 percent called for by last year's "Group of 18" Experts' Committee Report on U.N. management and budget reform.

Even more curious and alarming is the fact that the Secretary-General apparently has promised the Soviet Union that it will be allowed to rotate some 104 new Soviet nationals into the Secretariat over the next 18 months, ostensibly to replace Soviets whose U.N. contracts have expired. Such rotation may already have begun. There are two serious problems with this:

1) It clearly violates the letter and spirit of Article 100 of the U.N. Charter, which states that:

in the performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization.

2) Many of these new Soviets are expected by Reagan Administration officials to be line officers of the KGB and GRU, the principal Soviet intelligence agencies. The Kremlin long has used U.N. headquarters in New York City as a base for espionage operations and continually has placed professional intelligence officers in the U.N. Secretariat. In fact, since 1947, some 66 Soviets have been expelled publicly from the Soviet Mission to the U.N. and the U.N. Secretariat for engaging in espionage.

A number of recent actions by Congress and the Reagan Administration have complicated U.S.-based Soviet intelligence operations. Foremost among these was Ronald Reagan's order expelling 25 officials attached to the Soviet Mission to the U.N. in late 1986. This effectively decapitated the KGB and GRU leadership cadre in New York.

Similarly, congressionally mandated travel controls and restrictions on the number of Soviet and Soviet-bloc officials allowed in the U.S. also have hindered Moscow's spying.

Endorsing Moscow's Game. The employment of new Soviets by the Secretariat, however, would give the USSR the opportunity to rebuild its intelligence capabilities. Senator Robert Kasten, the Wisconsin Republican, last week warned his Senate colleagues that the admission of new Soviets "...would mean that the Soviet Union would be allowed to obviate measures which our country rightly has taken to reduce the threat of hostile intelligence activities on American soil by moving new intelligence officers into New York through the back door of the U.N. Secretariat—an effort supported, moreover, through American taxpayer dollars."

The rotation of new Soviets into so-called Soviet jobs in the Secretariat, moreover, would represent a virtual endorsement of the bureaucratic game by which the Soviets maintain control over entire chunks of the U.N. bureaucracy. Nearly every one of the 265 Soviet nationals in the U.N. Secretariat in New York are "seconded" to the U.N.; that is, they are assigned to the U.N. on temporary, fixed-term contracts, and are thus effectively still under the control of the USSR—not the U.N. This prevents Soviet nationals from ever actually serving as international civil servants, in contrast to how Americans, French, German, and nationals from most other major countries serve. This practice of "secondment" also allows Moscow to "own" key jobs in numerous U.N. functional departments. Although this has been criticized severely by a wide variety of governments, officials, and U.N. observers and does violate the U.N. Charter, the Secretary-General now seems to be condoning it.

Continue the Hiring Freeze. To protect American security from Soviet espionage and to keep the U.N. on a path toward genuine reform, the Reagan Administration should continue to protest vigorously the actions of U.N. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar. Though Secretary of State George Shultz already has spoken to Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary has yet to receive a satisfactory response. At the very least, the U.S. must insist on the continuation of the U.N. hiring freeze and must make clear that U.S. entry visas for known or suspected Soviet intelligence officers simply will be denied.

The U.S. Congress should consider passing a sense of the Congress resolution criticizing the Secretary-General's actions. Congress also should strongly consider further withholding of U.S. funding for the U.N., since experience has shown that the U.N. responds best to financial pressure. It is only through such strong and decisive action that the U.S. can keep the U.N. reform movement—as half-hearted as it is—on track.

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For further information:

Charles M. Lichenstein, "By Breaking the Rules, Moscow Keeps a Tight Grip on the U.N.," Heritage Foundation Background No. 526, July 23, 1986.

"Soviet Presence in the Secretariat," Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, S. Print 99-522, U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1985.