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THE HIDDEN AGENDA FOR THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Once again the United Nations is convening to discuss disarmament. Yet when the delegates from some 80 member nations gather at U.N. headquarters in Manhattan this August 24 to September 11, the U.N. once again will avoid the most serious arms questions. Instead, the U.N. effort will be dominated by a hidden agenda pushed through by the Soviet Union and endorsed by the Third World bloc that dominates the U.N.

Despite the formal U.N. announcements, this year's real agenda almost surely will be an all-out assault on U.S. efforts to develop and deploy a defense against nuclear attack. The undeclared but true aim of the U.N. Conference on Disarmament and Development (UNCDD) will be to discredit Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or, as it popularly is known, Star Wars.

U.S. Warning. Reinforcing this assault will be a distortion of the way the U.N. decided to hold the UNCDD, a decision so dubious that the U.S. warned before it was finally taken that American delegates could not attend a conference falsely linking two separate issues--disarmament and development.¹ This U.S. warning, given as long ago as last year, is now being obscured by the U.N. Undersecretary of Disarmament's office decision to stress "consensus" as the key word behind the UNCDD. The U.N. claims that the decision to hold it was taken

1. The current U.S. position is given in U.S. Department of State, International Organizations Bureau, "I.O. Contingency Press Guidance, U.N. Conference on Disarmament and Development," p. 1. "We are not participating because we believe disarmament and development are not issues which should be considered inter-related."

by "consensus" and that UNCDD will arrive at "consensus" decisions. The U.N., apparently, is willing to redefine "consensus" in a way that pretends that Washington raises no objections to the conference.

The State Department should be forcefully and publicly refuting the U.N.'s anti-U.S. rhetoric and be preparing to deal with attacks on the U.S. at the UNCDD. The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) should be preparing an active diplomatic campaign against these attacks.

Ignoring Third World Arsenals. What is almost certain to happen at this month's U.N. conference is that SDI will be branded as the world's major arms problem and threat to peace. Ignored will be the massive buildup of conventional arms arsenals in Third World countries, the crucial Soviet role in support of regional aggression and the enormous resource drain that this represents. Ignored too will be the fact that every one of the more than 100 wars since the U.N.'s founding in 1945 has been fought with conventional arms. And ignored will be the threat posed by the two-decade buildup of Moscow's nuclear arsenal.

Instead, the UNCDD will accept the longstanding Soviet assertion that there exists a "disarmament dividend" that could fund Third World economic development if only the U.S. and its allies would accept the latest Soviet disarmament proposals. The Soviets first enunciated this line with their 1959 proposal for General and Complete Disarmament. Their 1987 variant will be proposals to halt the U.S. SDI program, a binding U.S. commitment to abide by a "narrow" interpretation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and a ban on U.S. development of Anti-Satellite (ASAT) systems. Similar, but much larger Soviet programs would, of course, be left free to continue their intensive buildup.

Soviet proposals to the U.N. Conference will identify SDI and what Moscow calls the U.S. "militarization of space" as the chief roadblocks to disarmament and hence to Third World development. These Soviet arguments will appeal, as they are designed to do, to three groups: Western leftists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) supporting arms control and disarmament, and Third World governments.

American Counteroffensive. To counter this Soviet propaganda offensive, the Reagan Administration and State Department should develop a counteroffensive built around three main themes:

- 1) **That the main arms buildup draining resources away from Third World development is the Third World's conventional arms buildup and the wars fought with them.** Since 1945, this buildup has cost many hundreds of billions of dollars and these wars have killed some 13.5 million Third World citizens.² These costs in economic resources and human lives have been sharply increased by huge Soviet arms sales and transfers to Third World nations:

2. For casualty estimates, see Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau, *Strategic Atlas: A Comparative Geopolitics of the World's Powers*, second rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 47.

2) That it is Soviet militarism in general, and Soviet militarization in particular, that is the real threat to world peace and to Third World development.

3) That the Soviet propaganda argument about an alleged "disarmament dividend" is not supported by--indeed is refuted by--the analytical evidence. So advocates of this argument are simply scoring cheap political debating points against the U.S. To drive home this point, the U.S. should identify those nongovernmental organizations or NGOs functioning as Soviet front organizations plus other NGOs and individuals with a track record of supporting Soviet disarmament positions.

THE THIRD WORLD CONVENTIONAL ARMS BUILDUP

The massive buildup and use of conventional arms in the Third World has been largely ignored in the U.N. debates about arms and disarmament. These debates instead have focused almost exclusively on the dangers of the continued buildup of nuclear weapons by the two superpowers. In the debates, the U.S. is always blamed, wrongly, for this buildup. Here, as elsewhere, what former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick called the blame-America approach has served Third World and Soviet interests well. Third World nations do not mention, much less criticize, China's or India's nuclear arsenals, and only rarely are the British or French nuclear arsenals plus the reason for them noted--the need to counter the Soviet threat.

Avoiding Awkward Questions. For Third World governments, focusing U.N. debates on the nuclear arms buildup avoids awkward questions about their conventional arms buildup, their neglect and oppression of their citizenry, and the wars they have fought with these arms. This focus also diverts attention away from the Soviet military buildup, the most massive and sustained in world history. Ignored too are Moscow's arms transfers to the Third World to further Soviet military and political objectives.

This U.N. linkage, making American spending on nuclear weapons responsible for the Third World's poor pace of economic development, is not only false but the reverse of the truth. To the extent that slow Third World development can be blamed on an arms buildup, it can be blamed on the Third World conventional arms spending. This becomes clear by looking at the numbers. Third World arms outlays in 1986 amounted to an estimated \$150 billion.³ By contrast, U.S. spending for nuclear arms in that year was a much smaller \$38 billion.⁴ The fact of the matter is that for all their potential devastating power, nuclear weapons are much cheaper and consume much fewer resources than do conventional arms. If anything, the West's reliance on nuclear arsenals has freed resources for economic development.

3. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

4. The costs of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are difficult to calculate precisely, partly because of the accounting problems posed by dual-capable nuclear and conventional systems. But an average of under 20 percent, or less, of the U.S. defense budget is a reasonable estimate of the costs of the nuclear forces.

More than 100 Wars. The Soviet bloc, moreover, has consumed many more resources for weapons in absolute terms and as a proportion of the economy than have the U.S. and its allies. Pentagon spending for this year, for example, will be about 6.5 percent of U.S. gross national product. In contrast, Soviet defense spending is now estimated, conservatively, by both the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency at 15 to 17 percent of Soviet GNP.⁵ The real burden may be much higher.

Third World countries not only have spent huge sums on massive conventional arms buildups but have suffered the even larger costs, human and economic, of conventional wars. The causes of wars in the Third World are the classic ones: conflicts over economic and territorial assets and over ideological, national, religious, and tribal differences, and they are reinforced by the expansionist impulses of communism and Muslim fundamentalism. A French study concluded that between 1945 and 1983, the Third World fought 100 significant conflicts, including 13 major interstate and 17 secondary conflicts, 16 conflicts over secession, and 37 civil wars to change regimes. Just ten of these wars accounted for over 10 million victims: "...the two Indochina wars (1946-1975), the Indo-Pakistan wars (1947-1949 and 1971 Bangladesh), the Korean War, the Algerian war, the civil war in Sudan, the massacres in Indonesia (1965), and the Biafran war."⁶

The two largest and longest running Third World conflicts currently are the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (since 1979) and the Iran-Iraq war (since 1980). The Soviet-Afghanistan war has killed some 1 million Afghanistans and displaced over 4 million more, while Soviet casualties now exceed 35,000 killed. The Soviets now spend over \$15 million per day on the war.⁷ The Iran-Iraq war has lasted as long as World War I and inflicted proportionately comparable casualties on both societies, including a combined total of 1 million killed.

India's Huge Defense Spending. In such a conflict-ridden environment, it is not surprising that such non-elected and quasi-military Third World governments give priority to spending on defense over spending on economic and social development. The costs of the Third World conventional arms buildup and wars, plus their drain on development, are so large that they can be illustrated only by some representative figures. The Iran-Iraq War has been costing Iraq over half its entire GNP.⁸ India, a leader of the Third World at the U.N. and a vocal critic of U.S. arms expenditures (though nearly silent on Soviet outlays) spends about 20 percent

5. See *Soviet Military Power 1987* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 108, plus the sources cited in *The Military Balance 1986-1987* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986).

6. See "Conflicts in the World Since 1945," Chaliand and Rageau, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-5., quoting p. 47.

7. See Chaliand and Rageau, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137; *Strategic Survey 1986-87* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1987), p. 134.

8. Table 4, "Comparisons of Defense Expenditure and Military Manpower 1981-86," *The Military Balance 1986-87*, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

of its government's budget on defense forces, which include the third largest army in the world.⁹ Economically anemic Vietnam fields the world's fourth largest army. Cuban forces, meanwhile, have been dispatched far from home, to distant Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia in a modern version of the Afrika Korps. It is near certain that the U.N. Conference on Disarmament will be silent about these Third World arms costs.

The Soviet contribution to the Third World conventional arms buildup is so huge that estimates of its total value are nearly impossible. Harvard Professor of Political Science Samuel P. Huntington calculates that "...Soviet arms deliveries to non-communist developing countries amounted to...over \$8 billion" by 1979.¹⁰ It is Moscow's more than \$5 billion per annum aid to Havana, moreover, that allows Fidel Castro to keep his troops in Africa. Soviet subsidies of \$4 billion per annum also have enabled Nicaragua to create Central America's largest armed force. Other Soviet subsidies have included \$5 billion to Angola (1975-1987), \$1 billion to Mozambique (1975-1983), and \$3.5 billion to Ethiopia (1975-1986).¹¹

Another Moscow Forum. In a familiar phrase used in U.N. debates, if only a small fraction of the resources spent by the Third World and the Soviets on conventional arms and on conventional wars were devoted to economic development, the world would be much better off. Why, then, does the U.N. choose to ignore the link between this conventional Third World arms buildup and development? The answer is that the true agenda of these U.N. conferences is not to probe the relationship between economic development and global arms spending. The true agenda is to create yet one more forum at which Moscow, its allies, and willing Third World nations can attack the U.S.

UNCDD: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE SOVIET LINE

In 1959, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev addressed the U.N. and unveiled his plan for "General and Complete Disarmament." In this, he implicitly recognized the new propaganda possibilities at the U.N. opened up by the emerging Third World, composed of newly independent countries. Because most were former Western colonies, their governments often were inherently anti-Western. They were interested primarily in securing as much development aid as possible from their former colonial masters and from the U.S.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

10. Samuel P. Huntington, "Patterns of Intervention: America and the Soviets in the Third World," *The National Interest*, No. 7 (1987), p. 43.

11. See *Soviet Military Power 1987*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 141-142 and Table, "Major Soviet Equipment Delivered to the Third World 1981-86," p. 134. Soviet economic aid to Cuba has recently averaged \$4 billion per annum plus \$1 billion per annum for military aid; Soviet aid to Nicaragua includes economic and military aid. See Timothy Ashby, *The Bear in the Back Yard: Moscow's Caribbean Strategy* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1987); additional information provided by the author. For Soviet aid to Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, see U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1986*, pp. 106, 116, 128, 143-146.

To appeal to the Third World's anti-Western, pro-aid biases, the Soviets introduced the idea of the disarmament dividend: huge sums available for economic development in the Third World if only the West would accept the sweeping Soviet proposals for "General and Complete Disarmament." The propaganda success of this first Soviet use of the disarmament dividend led them to refine the concept and lobby for its acceptance as valid by the U.N. bureaucracy.

Controlling the Bureaucracy. This was easy because the Soviets then and now control much of the U.N. bureaucracy. In addition, through inducements or coercion, Moscow has the support of many Third World nationals working for the U.N.¹² A number of West European nationals, moreover, were sympathetic to the disarmament dividend concept. Thus in 1978, at the First U.N. Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD I), the concept was accepted. Said Alfonso Garcia Robles, Mexico's Permanent Representative to the U.N. Committee on Disarmament: "the U.N. philosophy on disarmament [asserted]

that there is a close relationship between disarmament and development and that any resources that may be released as a result of the implementation of disarmament measures must urgently be used to reduce the economic imbalance between developed and developing countries....¹³

UNSSOD I accomplished nothing and, of course, avoided any scrutiny of Third World and Soviet arms outlays. At the Special Session, predictably, the U.S. was denounced repeatedly. UNSSOD I was followed, in 1982, by UNSSOD II, which even Ambassador Robles described as a hopeless failure. At this Special Session, however, the Reagan Administration was much more forceful than the Carter Administration in defending legitimate U.S. interests and identifying Soviet and Third World propaganda arguments for what they really were.

Stacked Against the U.S. This more forceful U.S. approach to disarmament diplomacy served to blunt the impact of the Soviet and Third World propaganda in American public opinion. So the Soviets and the Third World sought an alternative U.N. forum for advancing the disarmament dividend idea. They devised an International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development (shortened to UNCDD). It was authorized by the U.N. General Assembly in 1984 and originally scheduled for 1986. It was then delayed for one year. Named Secretary-General of the UNCDD, was Undersecretary-General for Disarmament, Jan Martenson of Sweden, a longtime critic of the U.S. and of the Reagan Administration. He has since been replaced as Under-Secretary and Secretary-General of the UNCDD by Yasushi Akashi of Japan.

12. This Soviet penetration of the U.N. has been extensively analyzed and documented in The Heritage Foundation's United Nations Assessment Project studies and by the former Soviet U.N. Under-Secretary General who defected to the U.S., Arkady Shevchenko. See *Breaking with Moscow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1985), especially p. 225. As former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick recently noted "...Soviet bloc nationals working in the U.N. Secretariat remain employees of their own government." "Will the U.N. Knuckle Under Again?" *The Washington Post*, June 1, 1987, p. A11.

13. Alfonso Garcia Robles, Introduction to Homer A. Jack, *Disarm—or Die: The Second U.N. Special Session on Disarmament* (New York: World Conference on Religion and Peace, 1983), p. 11. Dr. Jack is Secretary-General of the WCRP and head of the New York-based NGO Committee on Disarmament.

Preparatory work for the UNCDD reveals that the conference will be stacked against the U.S. Example: the impressively entitled glossy pamphlet *Disarmament and Development: Declaration by the Panel of Eminent Personalities* contains not one "eminent personality" from the U.S. Its theme is the alleged interrelationship between the Triad of Peace: Disarmament, Development, and Security.¹⁴

"Not Borne Out by the Facts." An earlier U.N. report is entitled *The Relationship between Disarmament and Development*. This study was conducted under the chairmanship of one of the "eminent personalities," Sweden's longtime Ambassador to the U.N. Committee on Disarmament, Inga Thorsson, with the assistance of Undersecretary-General Martenson. The report, endorsing the Soviet theme that Third World development depends on disarmament, has been widely circulated through the U.N.'s global information network. Ignored have been the many protests that the report is seriously flawed and biased. The Western experts participating in the study, for instance, attached numerous reservations, noting repeatedly that "Statements are made which do not appear to be borne out by the facts...."¹⁵ The U.S. expert, Daniel Gallik, added that many important findings were "...adopted under the majority rule procedure...adopted after the growing number of reservations by experts...."¹⁶ Soviet bloc and Third World countries ignored facts that conflicted with the disarmament dividend idea and then used their voting majority to make this U.N. report endorse the idea.

NGOs: DISTINGUISHING SOVIET FRONTS FROM INDEPENDENT GROUPS

Many nongovernmental organizations, widely known as NGOs, long have been involved with arms control and disarmament issues. These NGOs fall into three distinct, although overlapping, categories:

1) **Soviet front NGOs** which clearly can be documented as such. The most transparent of these is the World Peace Council (WPC). Others include the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and the Christian Peace Conference (CPC), which is associated with the U.N. Department of Public Information. In addition, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) although not a direct Soviet front organization, collaborates actively with the WPC.¹⁷

14. *Disarmament and Development: Declaration by the Panel of Eminent Personalities* (New York: United Nations, 1986), pp. 1-2. Not surprisingly, one of the personalities was Ambassador Robles.

15. *The Relationship between Disarmament and Development*, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, U.N. Center for Disarmament, Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, 1982), Appendix III *Reservations...*, pp. 181-189.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

17. Juliana Geran Pilon, "At the U.N., Soviet Fronts Pose as Nongovernmental Organizations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 549, December 1, 1986, pp. 15-17.

2) **Genuine groups of non-experts led by leftists.** One of the most prominent of these groups is Homer Jack's World Conference on Religion and Peace.¹⁸ Others include the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the U.K. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

3) **Groups of experts that draw upon qualified analysts' aid to make serious arguments.** The most influential NGO in this category is the Washington-based Arms Control Association. Others include the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Pugwash Conference on Science and International Affairs, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

In dealing with these NGOs at such U.N. conferences as the UNCDD, the U.S. faces a series of problems. If U.S. delegates identify Soviet front organizations for what they are, these delegates are accused of McCarthyism. The second group of NGOs, by and large, is immune to rational arguments and ignores data that undermine its preconceptions. These are emotionally committed advocates of disarmament who will embrace nearly any movement or proposal that invokes the correct buzzwords. In dealing with NGOs in the third category, the U.S. is dealing with groups that at least listen to facts and understand how difficult, perhaps impossible, general and complete disarmament is. But this third group is very reluctant to break ranks with the groups the other two categories.

A U.S. STRATEGY FOR UNCDD

At other United Nations conferences and gatherings, the Reagan Administration has pursued an effective strategy: explain the real problems of international peace and security clearly and refute Soviet propaganda claims very forcibly.

Stress Real Problems

At the UNCDD this approach will require the U.S. to stress that the real arms impediments to economic and social development result from the Third World conventional arms buildup and the wars which Third World countries have been fighting. The U.S. must stress repeatedly that Third World development problems are increased by Soviet arms transfers to the Third World and Soviet interventions, including those via surrogates, in Third World conflicts. Similarly, the U.S. forcefully must refute Soviet, Third World, and NGO attacks on the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative. No logical or plausible link can be made between U.S. spending on SDI and Third World economic problems. The U.S. should warn that it is inappropriate for SDI to be discussed at UNCDD.

18. There is, it should be added, nothing amateurish about these non-expert NGOs' ability to conduct effective public relations. Homer Jack's position is typical of the genuine idealists in these NGOs, blaming the U.S. for escalating the arms race and willing to work with NGOs supporting Soviet positions, yet prepared to recognize the WPC as a Soviet front. See John Buckman, "The U.N. and Disarmament: The Second Special Session," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 186, May 26, 1982, pp. 9-10.

Remember Real Audience

The U.S. must remember the real audience to which its arguments are to be addressed. It is not the Soviet government, nor Third World governments, nor those NGOs committed to the disarmament dividend-for-development idea. They are not going to change their minds because of rational U.S. arguments.

The real audience for U.S. arguments are those few Third World governments seriously interested in development and the citizens of the U.S. and its democratic allies. The citizens of industrial democracies are decent and well-meaning and want to assist Third World development in affordable, effective ways; they will want to be reassured that the U.S. is not blocking development by its refusal to accept Soviet and Third World disarmament proposals. For this audience, the reasons why the U.S. rejects the Soviet-inspired disarmament dividend will have to be spelled out, yet again. Similarly, this democratic audience will want to be reassured that the U.S. SDI program is not blocking Third World development, is not militarizing space, and will create a more stable balance of deterrence.

CONCLUSION

Even though the U.S. quite rightly has declined to participate in so futile a discussion as the UNCDD, it will be important for the U.S. to refute the Soviet and Third World propaganda arguments that will be made at the conference. In particular, the U.S. will have to refute the false, but superficially appealing, idea that there is a disarmament dividend that is available from general and complete disarmament for use for Third World development.

The U.S. further should stress that Third World governments are poorly serving their populations and themselves by blaming their lack of development on a false problem instead of facing the real problems, particularly the Third World conventional arms buildup.

The basic U.S. means of dealing with the anti-U.S. propaganda offensive to be conducted at the UNCDD thus should be a public diplomacy campaign stressing seven themes:

- 1) **The UNCDD is going to unfold according to a hidden Soviet agenda.**
- 2) **This agenda aims to blame the West, and mainly the U.S., for the economic problems of the Third World.**
- 3) **The key culprit will be identified by the Soviets as U.S. spending on nuclear arms and U.S. plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative.**
- 4) **Ignored will be massive Soviet military spending and even more massive Third World conventional arms outlays.**
- 5) **The U.S. is not prepared to accommodate what is certain to be the strong anti-U.S. mood at UNCDD.**

6) If the conference really is concerned about disarmament, then it will look at how to reduce Third World and Soviet arsenals.

7) And if UNCDD is really concerned about economic and social development, then it will look hard at and repudiate those policies pursued by Third World nations which have impeded growth for a quarter century:-----

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