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## BY BREAKING THE RULES, MOSCOW KEEPS A TIGHT GRIP ON THE U.N.

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### INTRODUCTION

Moscow's exploitation of the United Nations is, by now, well documented and increasingly widely recognized. Yet one of the least understood means by which the Soviets abuse U.N. rules and the U.N. Charter itself is their skillful use of "secondment."

This word is four-bit bureaucratese for temporary duty assignment or, as it is widely known in the U.S., TDY. In any civil service, it is common practice to assign some staff to special or "temporary" duty, generally for brief (often fixed) terms and to make effective use of a relatively unusual expertise in short supply. Until Richard Nixon virtually abolished the practice in the early 1970s, a good part of the White House staff was "seconded" from other executive departments and agencies. That way, the staff could be expanded while the official Executive Office budget was kept lean and trim.

Within the United Nations Secretariat staff, the Soviets and their East European satellites systematically have turned secondment on its head. For Moscow, however, neither best use of experts nor budgetary flim-flam is the objective. Rather, it is to keep key Secretariat posts solidly in Soviet bloc hands. Secondment, for instance, enforces continuity of Soviet policy control of such major Secretariat components as Political and Security Council Affairs,

public information, translation and documentation, personnel, and conference services.<sup>1</sup>

In effect, secondment is an elaborate game of musical chairs. One Soviet (or Czech or Hungarian or East German) leaves the Secretariat, another takes over, and the game goes on. From 35 to 50 percent of these "international civil servants" are in fact agents of the KGB or GRU (the major Soviet intelligence services) or their Soviet bloc counterparts. Either way, key posts in the U.N. Secretariat are permanently occupied by individuals whose only loyalty is to Soviet or bloc regimes. For good measure, they are kept on the short leash of fixed-term contracts, revocable without notice by Moscow or its allies.

Moscow's use of secondment at the U.N. flagrantly violates the U.N.'s own rules. The U.N. Charter specifically states that all staff-members are "international officials responsible only to the Organization"--that is, to the U.N. itself. The U.S. scrupulously abides by this prime rule. So do the Western and other democracies, and almost all other U.N. members--but not the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Moscow's exploitation of secondment has been made possible by the conscious connivance of U.N. Secretary-Generals--and condoned by a succession of U.S. administrations. Any U.N. "reform," a matter that is becoming an increasingly popular cause, must include measures to ensure that the rules insulating U.N. staff from improper influence by their "home" governments are rigorously enforced. There is no reason why the U.S. should be paying 25 percent (or any share at all) of the salaries of putative U.N. staffers who actually still work for Soviet bloc governments.

#### HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

The U.N. Charter is unambiguous about establishing an international civil service whose members are neutral and are loyal only to the U.N. Article 100 of the U.N. Charter states:

- 1) 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 [U.N.]

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1. See Heritage Foundation Backgrounders No. 307, "Moscow's U.N. Outpost" (November 22, 1983), No. 349, "The Many Ways the U.N. Serves the USSR" (May 3, 1984), No. 487, "The United Nations Library: Putting Soviet Disinformation into Circulation" (February 18, 1986), and No. 518, "Moscow's Bastion in Manhattan: The U.N. Department of Conference Services" (June 20, 1986).

Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization.

2) Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the...staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

By these Charter provisions, the U.N. specifically bans the common Soviet practice of treating Soviet nationals on the U.N. staff as, in effect, Soviet apparatchiks--which of course they are. Article 101, meanwhile, requires that U.N. employees be qualified professionally for their posts. The Article states:

The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff...shall be...securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity....

Article 101 adds that the Secretariat staff is to be recruited "on as wide a geographical basis as possible." By the word "wide," the Article means staff recruitment from all or nearly all U.N. member-states. The Charter was drafted in 1945 when the U.N. consisted of 51 members. By 1980, during the 35th General Assembly, with 159 members, the demand for top positions in the U.N. Secretariat had become much more intense, and much harder to satisfy. The Soviets were able to exploit this new situation by adding a new wrinkle to the game of secondment.

#### The Omnibus Resolution of 1980

In a landmark comprehensive resolution on U.N. personnel practices (35/210, December 17, 1980), the 35th General Assembly "reaffirmed" by consensus that the principle of professionalism cited in Article 101 of the Charter "is compatible with the principle of equitable geographical distribution." In essence, this Resolution transformed "wide" into "equitable." The purpose, ostensibly, was to provide all U.N. members with slots on the U.N. staff, and especially with top professional slots. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to raise the levels of personnel recruited from unrepresented and under-represented countries and countries below the midpoint of their desirable range to the extent possible towards this midpoint."

The underlined words are crucial. The key to the new situation in professional staffing, and to the increased Soviet opportunity to use secondment as a control mechanism, was the introduction of the concepts of "desirable range" and "midpoints" in the Omnibus Resolution.

This is how the U.N. system works. The top 3,350 Secretariat positions were made "subject to geographical distribution." These positions blanketed the ranks of Under-Secretary-General (the chiefs of the Security Council and General Assembly bureaucracies), Assistant-Secretary-General (the chiefs of such major Secretariat departments as Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development), D-2 and D-1 (the chiefs of divisions within the major departments), and P-5 down to P-1 (office heads within the various divisions).

These are policy making jobs. The personnel in these slots determine what the U.N. Secretariat does, how resources are allocated, and who is responsible for implementing the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. As a group, the Under-Secretary-Generals and Assistant-Secretary-Generals comprise the Secretary-General's cabinet. The "D" and "P" grades are roughly fixed-term contracts of less than one year. Moreover, 240 of the 3,350 positions were set aside in a regional pool, presumably to handle such potential inequities as the total non-representation of a particular country in the professional ranks of the Secretariat. The remaining 3,110 positions were then distributed among the U.N. member-states according to two criteria:

- 1) Every U.N. member-nation was assigned an automatic minimum or "base allocation" of from 2 to 14 positions, with a "desirable" midpoint of 7.75; and
- 2) The balance of 1,872 professional slots was allocated in strict conformity to the scale of assessed contributions. Examples: because the U.S. contributes 25 percent to the assessed U.N. budget, it is entitled to 25 percent of the 1,872 professional slots, or 468, plus the "base allocation," which adds up to a so-called "midpoint" of 477.19. The Soviet assessed contribution of 10.54 percent gives Moscow a 205.66 midpoint, while the U.K. assessment of 4.67 percent gives it a 95.44 midpoint. The desirable range was set at 15 percent plus-or-minus from the midpoint:

#### The Soviet Escape Clause

Resolution 35/210 also affirmed two controlling principles: one has become no more than a pious wish, while the other guarantees the success of the Soviets' misuse of secondment.

In the Resolution, Clause 3 declares "that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State, or group of States," and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that this principle is applied faithfully "in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution." This is undermined, however, by Clause 4 which

Requests the Secretary-General to continue to permit replacement by candidates of the same nationality within a reasonable time-frame in respect of posts held on fixed-term contracts, whenever this is necessary to ensure that the representation of Member States whose nationals serve primarily on fixed-term contracts is not adversely affected.

Ostensibly, this clause was intended to ensure that the representation within the U.N. Secretariat of the smaller member-states was kept at least at midpoint in the desirable range. Losing just one or two key staff slots would virtually wipe them out. Moreover, many of these smaller countries have a limited pool of skilled professionals and are willing to release them to the U.N. only on fixed terms, usually four or five years, rather than for lifetime careers.

In reality, however, the clause was designed to protect the fiefdoms in the U.N. staff established by the Soviet bloc. While some nationals from most countries have fixed-term contracts, 100 percent of Soviet bloc nationals in the professional ranks of the Secretariat are on fixed-term contracts or TDY (as distinct from careerists), except for Bulgaria which has allowed 3 of its 13 Secretariat professionals (as of mid-1985) to achieve career or non-TDY status. In contrast, only 39.7 percent of African state nationals serving in the Secretariat are on fixed-term contracts; 32.5 percent of Asian and Pacific state nationals; 31.1 percent of West European nationals; 33.8 percent of Latin American nationals; and 19.5 percent of U.S. nationals.

Much the same pattern holds for non-professional Secretariat staff. As of September 1985, of 446 Soviet nationals serving throughout the U.N. bureaucracy, 442 (or 96.8 percent) were on fixed-term, non-career contracts; for the entire Soviet bloc, it was 96.3 percent--591 of 614 total staff. For the entire Secretariat, however, the figure was about 30 percent.

#### Staying at the Minimum Desirable

Because the Soviets and their Eastern European satellites keep virtually all of their nationals on the short leash of fixed-term contracts, they can move them in and out of choice U.N. staff positions as their political agendas dictate. And because the controlling General Assembly resolution "ensures" that their "representation...is not adversely affected"--in spite of the exhortation against automatic replacement of one national by another of the same origin--the Soviet bloc carefully keeps its U.N. staff representation well below the "desirable midpoint," usually right around the low end of the "desirable range."

Examples: In June 1985, Soviets held 176 professional positions in the U.N. Secretariat, almost 15 percent below their desirable midpoint of 205.66 and just barely within the desirable range of 175-237. Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Hungary, and Poland were right around their respective midpoints. Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, and the Ukrainian SSR were at or below the low end of their ranges. By contrast, France was exactly at its midpoint with 129 staff positions, the U.K. was a bit above (108 compared with 95.44), and the U.S. was a bit below (472 compared with 477.19).

This fine tuning of the numbers allowed the Soviets and the bloc to claim that they are in imminent danger of "under-representation." This means that they can insist on replacing in a key U.N. staff slot a departing Soviet national with a new Soviet national. This has been their set practice for more than 20 years, and the U.N., with U.S. complicity, lets them get away with it.

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

What is involved here is an interlocking pattern of Charter abuse, rule bending, and special pleading, with the objective of locking Soviets and other Soviet bloc nationals into key U.N. professional staff positions. This pattern has evolved during the last two decades and was confirmed, in effect, by the General Assembly in its key 1980 resolution--even though the official U.N. "line" is "no exclusive preserves" for any nation or group of nations. In practice, the Soviet bloc totally controls all of its nationals on the U.N. professional staff: the secondment game simply reinforces the control.

#### Examples of this pattern of control:

- o Almost without break during the 40 years of the U.N.'s history, the Soviet Union has held the major slot of Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs who runs the bureaucracy of the U.N.'s principal unit, charged with meeting "threats to international peace and security" and with peacekeeping. These are the two preeminent purposes of the entire U.N. system.

- o In contrast, a U.S. national has generally held the lesser slot of Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs. Whereas the Security Council is the "action" unit atop the U.N. system, the General Assembly specializes in "talk." Moreover, there is absolutely no evidence that the U.S. government ever has "controlled" or even attempted to control the incumbent of this slot--which is in line with the practice of virtually all of the Western and democratic U.N. member-states.

o The Soviet bloc has held on to the key slot of Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services almost without a break for three decades. The incumbent is a Pole. His Director of Interpretation and Meetings is a Soviet. So is the Director of Publications and the Director of the Library. All Russian language interpretations and translation is handled by Soviet nationals, the only U.N. language division monopolized by one country. This huge department, the biggest in the U.N. Secretariat, runs all conferences and backup services for meetings--and conferences and meetings are the principal business of the U.N.

o For more than ten years, the Director of External Relations in the U.N. Department of Public Information (whose last two chiefs have been Japanese) has been a Soviet national. This division controls the dissemination of publications to all U.N. Information Centers throughout the world.

Several measures could reduce substantially Soviet exploitation of the U.N. by the secondment game.

First, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., with the explicit backing of the Secretary of State and coordinated support from U.S. diplomats in all foreign capitals, should demand immediate compliance with Clause 3 of General Assembly Resolution 35/210--that no U.N. staff positions become the "exclusive preserve" of any state or group of states. The Secretary-General should be directed to limit any member-state or other state in the same regional bloc (as these blocs are defined by the U.N.) from occupying posts in the top four professional categories for more than five consecutive years. This rule would apply to all Under- and Assistant-Secretary-Generals and to all department and division heads (D-2 and D-1 slots). Some exceptions might be permitted in the five lesser professional categories (P-5 down to P-1), but only if the Secretary-General were to certify that no other qualified candidates were available to fill a particular slot.

This would break the Soviet bloc lock on key U.N. power centers. It would end the perpetuation of Soviet bloc cadres within the Secretariat, thus making it more difficult for espionage networks to dig in. Such a proposal should be attractive to just about all U.N. members because it would spread the top jobs more equitably among the member states, especially the smaller ones. Put to a vote in the General Assembly, this proposal could command a healthy majority--if the U.S. made it clear it meant business.

Second, the U.S. should demand an end to the systematic Soviet practice of secondment on fixed-term contracts. A rule should be adopted setting a 50 percent limit on the nationals of any country seconded to the U.N. professional staff. The smaller member-states, those with minimum staff representation in the 2 to 14 range, should

be exempt from the rule. Such countries have a limited pool of professionals to draw on and, understandably, often are able to post a few of them to the U.N. staff for limited terms only.

This rule can and should be enforced by a reduction in the U.S. assessed contribution of the exact amount of the U.S. share of the salaries of U.N. professional staff seconded in violation of the 50 percent limit.

#### CONCLUSION

Moscow exploits the U.N. and flagrantly violates the U.N. Charter by its systematic abuse of the practice of secondment: it moves U.N. professionals around at will, grabs key slots as monopoly preserves, and maintains total control over its nationals, who presumably are international civil servants responsible only to the U.N. itself.

The U.S. must take the lead in forcing Moscow to play by the rules that apply to everyone else: top professional slots in the U.N. Secretariat must be rotated among all U.N. members on a regular basis, and a ceiling should be imposed on the nationals of all countries (except those with minimum staff representation) seconded to the U.N. on fixed-term contracts--enforced by a reduction in the U.S. assessed contribution for noncompliance.

As with all of the U.N. reforms under consideration, the real beneficiary of these proposals would be the U.N. itself. The U.N. has an adequate, workable Charter. It ought to be observed and its rules ought to be enforced. Putting an end to the secondment game and to the Soviets' contemptuous abuse of the principle of an impartial, professional international civil service can only strengthen the U.N. system. If the U.N. hopes to regain some of the respect and credibility it has lost, it must be serious about reforming itself.