

CHRONICLE

THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

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The year 1995 observed the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> It is time to reconsider whether the balance of power resulting from the Second World War be reconciled with the awareness of the importance of democracy in international relations. Apart from contradicting the U.N. Charter's principle of sovereign equality of states, the privileged position of the five permanent members of the Security Council serves as an obstacle to attempts to democratize international relations. With the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and the resulting of unipolarity, some political and intellectual circles fear that the United Nations is becoming an instrument of the policies of one of the great powers – the United States. There is also the risk that what may be called a hegemony may be eternalized.

There is a growing awareness, on the other hand, of the need to reshape the international system along the lines of equality and power-sharing among all regions. Some states, organizations, scholars and citizens feel that the "New World Order", which the U.S. ex-President George Bush had proclaimed to be one "to protect the weak against the strong"<sup>2</sup>, gives a few privileged nations, foremost the United States among them, the opportunity to dominate and even to terrorize the rest of the world, and moreover, doing that through the United Nations. They uphold that democracy in the new world order is a precondition of world peace. A number of initiatives, pioneered by the World Citizens Assembly, the CAMDUN

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<sup>1</sup>The U.N. Charter was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and entered into force on 24 October 1945.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Government, *Address to the Nation*, 16 January 1991 and *Address to Congress*, 6 March 1991.

group (Conferences for a More Democratic United Nations) and the International Progress Organization (IPO) reflected this growing awareness as well as contributing to it.<sup>3</sup> The Jamahir Society for Culture and Philosophy (Vienna) also joined these efforts. The International Round Table of "The United Nations and International Democracy", held in Geneva on 1-2 July 1994, was planned to be an exchange of opinion among some leading scholars and writers from various countries.<sup>4</sup>

Prof. Dr. Hans Köchler (Austria),<sup>5</sup> who convened the Geneva meeting, as the President of the IPO, and the Vice-Chairman of the Jamahir Society, stressed, in his opening statement, that those who propagate a "New World Order", after the end of the East-West conflict, "do so on the basis of the preservation and even reinforcement of the unipolar power structure in favor of Western countries, in particular of the United States." He added that their insistence on the exclusive control over the Security Council, the global instrument of power, excludes a new order that would be an alternative to the existing one. He noted, however, that there is a new awareness that questions the existing basic dogmata of international relations, a growing awareness that "cannot be stopped."

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<sup>3</sup>The following may be cited among the earliest publications: The Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance, **Common Responsibility in the 1990s**, Stockholm, Office of the Prime Minister of Sweden, 1991; Proceedings of the 1990 International Conference On a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN-1), **Building a More Democratic United Nations**, London, Frank Cass, 1991; CAMDUN-2, **The United Nations and a New World Order for Peace and Justice**, Vienna, 17-19 September 1991; International Progress Organization, **The United Nations and the New World Order**, Vienna, 1993; Harold Stassen, **Draft Charter Suggested for a Better United Nations Organization**, 4th ed., New York, the Glenview Foundation, 1990; Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers, **A World in Need of Leadership: Tomorrow's United Nations**, Uppsala, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1990; John Fried, **The United Nations' Effort to Establish a Right of the Peoples to Peace**, New York, Pace University, School of Law, 1990.

<sup>4</sup>Austria, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Libya, Mexico, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey and the United States.

<sup>5</sup>Prof. Köchler should be acknowledged as an earlier writer on international democracy. His works include: **The Voting Procedure in the United Nations Security Council**, Vienna, IPO, 1991; **Democracy and the New World Order**, Vienna, IPO, 1991; **Foreign Policy and Democracy**, Vienna, IPO, 1988; **Democracy and Human Rights**, Vienna, IPO, 1990; **Die Doktrin der Repräsentation und die Krise der Westlichen Demokratie**, Tripoli, 1983; Also see: **The United Nations and the New World Order**, Vienna, IPO, 1992; **Democracy in International Relations**, Vienna, IPO, 1986.

Prof. Köchler underlined that those who benefit from the privileges of the present Charter, especially the United States, seem determined to prevent a change if the latter will abolish those privileges. Their stand has become a major obstacle to any reshaping on the basis of democracy. He stated that "the Security Council has been turned into an international war council of the United States", armed intervention is being "decreed at will" by the same power and the policy of double standards has become "the unofficial credo" of this world organization. He termed the new trend as being "extremely dangerous" since it made the U.N. an instrument of the industrialized world "to control and ultimately subdue the rest of the world". He warned that the U.N. will "turn into a sectarian organization of the community of industrialized nations, led by the United States, to keep the so-called Third World under its tutelage." The U.N. will, thus, become an instrument in the emerging North-South conflict, which he described as "the nucleus of the major conflicts in the next millennium." He suggested that "only a decisive democratic reform of the U.N. Organization" could avert the major confrontation between North and South.

Stating that a decisive democratic reform must also tackle the issue of global nuclear disarmament, he described the democratization of international relations as "utterly meaningless" if one does not address the issue of the majority of the peoples of the world being held hostage by the members of the so-called "nuclear club." Disarmament and international democracy are, indeed, intrinsically linked.

Since any amendment to the Charter necessitates the concurring votes of the five permanent members of the Security Council, their veto rights being operative, more and more people of the world may consider, he reminded, "establishing an alternative international structure, in which peoples and citizens of the world are given the chance to articulate themselves according to the rules generally accepted by each national community."

Ambassador Dr. Arturo Muñoz-Ledo (Mexico), who formerly worked (1968) in the Geneva office of the ILO and served (1973) as the chairman of ECOSOC, and was also his country's chief representative to FAO (Rome) and UNESCO (Paris), categorically rejected the idea of a Security Council. Questioning why that organ ought to decide singlehandedly and in accordance with its own preference on issues anywhere in the world, he maintained that the question is, not only to restructure it, but to consider its total abolition. Reminding that some regions of the world have parliaments, although not all being democratic, he suggested more representative organs to reflect the will of the peoples. Also critical of Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's selective attitudes, he criticized the use of the blue berets only in some instances of conflicts. Questioning the degree of independence of the former

colonies, Ambassador Muñoz-Ledo also asserted that a number of them were subjected to neo-colonialism.

Prof. Dr. William D. Perdue (U.S.A.) concentrated mainly on the working of the Bretton Woods institutions, which find themselves increasingly under fire as promoters of an economic model that has failed to significantly dent the growth of poverty. Indeed, when 700 delegates convened at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods (New Hampshire, U.S.A.) to create a new international order, the American Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau "prophesized" that a dynamic world economy was being established, in which the peoples of every nation would realize their potentialities in peace and enjoy, increasingly, the fruits of material progress on an earth infinitely blessed with natural riches. Fifty years later, that optimism has faded. The Bretton Woods system, exactly half a century old in the year 1994, perpetuated poverty and acted as agent of environmental destruction rather than to combat it.

If the U.N. and related agencies will protect the interests of the world's poor, then, Perdue suggests, new thinking must emerge for a new world order. Today, most of the rich live in the North while the abjectly poor live overwhelmingly in the South. No matter how it is measured, the current disparity between the world's richest and poorest people is extremely large.<sup>6</sup> There are great disparities in income distribution, real consumption levels and access to world markets. Between 1960 and 1989, the share in global GNP of the richest 20 percent of world population increased from 70.2 percent to 82.7 percent, the corresponding figure for the poorest 20 percent having fallen from 12.3 percent to 1.4 percent. Few countries publish information on income distribution. If data were available for all, the global disparity would be even higher. Moreover, being based on comparisons of the average per capita incomes of the rich and the poor countries, even those figures conceal the true scale of injustice. There are wide disparities within each country between the rich and poor people. Even in the United States, a baby is born into poverty every 35 seconds. Every 14 minutes, an infant dies in the first year of life. Every 14 hours, a child younger than five is murdered. The North, with about one-fourth of the world's population, consumes 70 percent of the world's energy, 75 percent of its metals, 85 percent of its wood and 60 percent of its food. In terms of access to world markets, the share of the bottom 20 percent of world population is now only 1 percent. It receives only 0.2 percent of global commercial bank lending. No more than 0.2 percent of transnational investment is directed to the bottom 20 percent of the world's population. While the U.S. holds 17 percent of the voting shares in the World Bank (Japan being the next largest with 7 percent, followed by

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<sup>6</sup>UNDP, *Human Development Report: 1992*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 34 f.

Germany with 5 percent), the five permanent members have (1991) a virtual monopoly (88.6 percent) on the sale of arms to the Third World, the U.S. leading with 14.2 billion dollars (57.4 percent). Perdue rightly observed that it is "contradictory to ask unrepentant arms merchants to play the role of leaders in disarmament." Debt and interest payments from developing nations totalled 178 billion dollars in 1988, three times the amount of aid received from the industrialized world.<sup>7</sup> The developing world accumulated a debt reaching some 1.3 trillion dollars by 1990. Despite having 80 percent of the world's population, developing countries are responsible for only 4 percent of global research and development expenditure.

The income gap between the rich and poor countries is, not only considerable, but it is also widening. The contrast in some regions is very striking. The share of the least developed countries of global GNP shrank between 1960 and 1989 from a 1 percent to 0.5 percent. The concentration of everything, including knowledge, in the North means that further advances tend also to occur there. The Third World peoples are subsidizing the "breakfasts, lunches, dinners, underwear, shirts, sheets, automobile tires, etc." of the North through their cheap labor.<sup>8</sup> But developing countries must go beyond basic human concerns of human survival and invest heavily in all levels of formation and development.

Noting that "free trade" had never been driven by a desire to change the structural problems of one-sided power relations between North and South, Professor Perdue proposed a new institution, something like a "South Fund for Socio-economic Development" to facilitate growth, urban planning, safe water supplies and investment in education as well as in health care. He introduced the idea that funding could be made possible on the basis of reparations owed to the South whose peoples and resources have historically enriched other lands at the expense of their own development. Towards this end, he suggested that experts from economics, law, sociology, history and anthropology convene to assess the damages suffered by the peoples of the South in their relations with the North and express them in concrete terms such as U.S. dollars.<sup>9</sup>

Describing the Security Council as an organization, not of democratic character, but one formed and used in conjunction with military command, Dr. Alfred Mechtterscheimer (Germany) drew attention to the fact that the

<sup>7</sup>William D. Perdue, ed., *Systemic Crisis: Problems in Society Politics and World Order*, Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace, 1993, p. 421.

<sup>8</sup>Susan George, "How the Other Half Dies," *ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>9</sup>Elsewhere he argued that the doctrine of *raison d'état* must be transcended by a new approach to relations governed by the doctrine of *raison du monde*. William D. Perdue, "Towards a Raison du Monde," Hans Köchler, ed., *The United Nations and the New World Order*, op. cit., pp. 37-47.

U.N. Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace<sup>10</sup> neither proposes, nor even touches the veto power of the permanent members. He stated that as long as the veto privilege of only a few persisted, the United Nations might well be described as "United Nothing". It was more the organization of the permanent powers, especially, the United States. But a readjustment for equality, peace and justice, he pursued, ought to start at home. Reforms ought to be applied first in the nation-states, democracy growing from below and the United Nations standing at the end of the road. But presently, inter-state relations were dominated by the great powers.

Prof. Dr. Themba Sono (South Africa) stated that we had "only one standard imposed by the powerful" and that the standard of right was "determined by that of might." He described the U.N. as "an umbrella organization designed to give cover and legitimacy to the powerful". And in unipolar world, that powerful nation was the United States. Sitting at the top of one of the most impressive hegemonial orders in history, the U.S. uses that international organization as a veneer for supervision of the Third World. In his opinion, "the values and norms of the U.N. Charter are invoked to suit particular goals and desires of the powerful." He said: "U.S. unilateralism is now *ex post facto* U.N. multilateralism." Hence, there is no true multilateralism in the international system. The U.N. Charter, he maintained, might restrain some small nations, but it cannot contain the big powers from getting on the throat of small countries. Prof. Sono cited American bombardment of Libya and Iraq as well as invasion of Panama and Grenada as examples of "only one standard", which coincide with the national interests of the U.S. He reminded that even when the Security Council voted for the Nicaragua-Guyana-Zimbabwe draft resolution, condemning Grenada's invasion, the United States vetoed it, forcing the U.N. to fall in step with the *fait accompli*. He described the present function of the U.N. as a "rubber stamp" of American actions.

Dwelling on questions of war and peace in the U.N. system, Dr. S.S. Mohapatra, the former Secretary-General of the Congress Party (India), accentuated that double standards were inevitable under the present Charter. The latter gave certain powers to five permanent members not conceded to others. It is only natural, he said, that they will use or misuse that international organization primarily to further their own interests. He added that the U.N. was essentially "a spring-board for the U.S". Support of world-wide democracy was, in his words, only "an empty slogan" for that country. Critical of the misuse described above, he urged for changes that would help create a democratic climate in the U.N.

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<sup>10</sup>Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, New York, U.N., 1992.

Criticizing the so-called "New-World Order" as one under the overwhelming weight of a single power, Prof. Dr. Mehdeni al-Saddigh (Libya) described American policy as "an assault on a state which basically pursues a policy in support of the interests of the Third World" and concentrated on the Lockerbie issue as a case of arbitrary judgements and great power arrogance. Referring to Prof. Charvin's *Le Syndrôme Kadhafi*,<sup>11</sup> he accused the United States (and Britain) for politicizing a legal and criminal case. Describing the finger pointed at Libya as a matter of political preference, he said that, legally or otherwise, it was outrageous to pin the Lockerbie crime on that country and its leader. He added that the crime was intermixed with drug traffic, CIA operations, American hostages in Lebanon and a missing suitcase.

Awad al-Karim Mussa A. Latif (Sudan) described the Charter as a product of a world war, and its Security Council as an organ now working as a close group taking military decisions in concert with the will of a single power. Underlining that this privileged position contradicts sovereignty and equality, he stated that global unipolar system did not equate with international democracy, no matter what slogans some world powers employed. He added that neither the will of the member states are fully represented in the Security Council, nor the will of the American people in the U.S. delegation. He supported radical changes in favor of an international organization of the peoples of the world.

Marius Martens, from the Center for Development Analysis (South Africa), spoke of the erosion of national sovereignty in the present international system. He observed that, a few years ago, the international order was one of a superpower bipolarity, and that the international system on both sides of the divide was subjected in totality to this order. In the Cold War period, the national sovereignty of the superpowers was not eroded. The sovereignty of the middle powers was voluntarily eroded in many cases in exchange for the protection by one superpower or the other. The sovereignty of the lesser powers was never relevant and was subject to the whims of the superpowers. Stating that one of the most immediate consequences of the Soviet demise had been America's total capture of the international agencies, he expressed the opinion that the United States, claimed to be a "defender of democracy", was not "even democracy-oriented." On account of the lack of mutual benefits, he described the method of enforcing involuntary subjection of national sovereignty as coercion.

Dwelling on South Africa as an example, Martens argued that President Mandela was "coerced into a specific and pre-determined direction." Those government functions, which traditionally deal with the outside world, were "allocated with special care." He made the point that it was the

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<sup>11</sup>Robert Charvin, *Le Syndrôme Kadhafi*, Paris, Ed. Albatros, 1992.

prevailing "element of prescription" that mattered, and each instance of prescription ate "into the fabric of national sovereignty, ultimately a country's independence of thought and action." He was of the opinion that the national sovereignty of the new South Africa was "impaired from the day it emerged in its present democratic form." He said that 70 percent of the loudly proclaimed American promise of 2.9 billion dollars will never leave the United States, destined to be spent in the so-called "administrative costs." With *apartheid* gone, South Africa now qualifies for the funding of IMF and the World Bank, where the U.S. enjoys the greatest degree of control. He reminded that they lend money on the basis of pre-approved projects. They dispense the money in phases, and it cannot be allocated for more pressing needs. It may be cut off at any time. Africa, too, will get money, "according to someone else's priorities." The man in the street cannot benefit from an economy he does not participate in, and the government cannot benefit from an economy it does not manage. He asked: "Who ultimately tries to control the economy, and what happens to national sovereignty in the process?" If the economies of countries in the periphery of the global mainstream are to be controlled from distant metropolises, Martens says that national sovereignty is the most immediate and significant casualty.

Almost all of the recommendations made by Erskine Childers, former top U.N. administrator (Ireland), may be implemented without amending either the Charter or the constitutions of the Specialized Agencies. A few, a U.N. Parliamentary Assembly, for instance, would require a Charter amendment.<sup>12</sup> Most of Childers' suggestions streamline existing machinery and make it more efficient. He suggests decentralization where it is needed. Childers believes that the "system can be greatly improved, without difficulty." He maintains that it will not help to restructure where the need can be well met by wise managerial improvements, and equally to avoid restructuring by palliative reforms which will not solve weaknesses that simply are structural.

Childers recorded that the concept of several locations as U.N. headquarters are less and less desirable. He suggested a single common seat. As a new piece of machinery, he proposed a "U.N. System of Consultative Board" to monitor the coherence and efficacy of the system. He added that the General Assembly should establish its own standing capacity to evaluate its discharge of U.N. responsibilities. He suggested that the Secretary-General should carry out an in-depth study of the performance of all U.N. Agency agreements on reciprocal representation. He proposed the new "Consultative Board" also to oversee the development of the consolidated budget as one of its priority functions, and stated that the "Administrative Committee on

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<sup>12</sup>Erskine Childers with Brian Urquhart, *Renewing the United Nations System*, Uppsala, Sweden, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1994.



Coordination" should be more responsive and responsible to the General Assembly.

Childers saw an expert paper, analyzing the present deterioration of world economy, urgently needed to avert a North-South crisis as one of the Secretary-General's highest priorities. He considered such a paper as the basis for convening a high-level United Nations Monetary, Financial and Trade Conference as an early sequel to the 50th Anniversary. Arguing that governments have tried to improve the functioning of a disconnected set of voluntary funds and agency activities, supposed to assist developing countries, he suggested reforms at country, regional and global levels. There should be one U.N. System Office in any developing country, each headed by a U.N. Coordinator and assisted by a resident professional team whose precise composition should be designed without any preconceived model, but against each country's forward needs. He urged the ECOSOC to plan and adopt a total reorganization of the Regional Commissions, each answering the particular needs of its region and not duplicating the research of other entities. At the global level, the Secretary-General should bring all U.N. funds under the working responsibility of the Deputy Secretary-General for International Economic Cooperation and Sustainable Development.

To meet the aspirations and problems of cultural and ethnic groups, Childers suggested the establishment of a U.N. Council on Diversity, Representation and Governance, composed of experts dealing with learned papers and dialogue, and also acting as a forum of resort and petition. For a wider support-base, Childers recommended a U.N. Parliamentary Assembly, formed by universal adult franchise. He also suggested a U.N. and NGO emergency personnel, consisting of volunteering national police.

Mikis Peristerakis, representing the Independent Peace Movement (Greece), urged for a new democratic world order in which "effective mechanisms for the prevention and solution of conflicts through negotiation must be included." He stressed the need for a new international legal framework, under U.N. auspices, treating the strong and the weak equally and assuring compliance by them all. He asked for far-reaching democratic reforms, such as the elimination of the veto, a greater balance between the permanent members on the basis of regular representation, a restructuring of the Security Council to reflect the U.N. more realistically and the right of all to appeal to the International Court of Justice against the decisions that contravene the U.N. Charter.

Stating that international law may be an important aspect of interstate relations legitimizing the actions of states, Prof. Dr. Robert Charvin (France) upheld that it was the interpretation attached to it that often violated the Charter. If the U.N. really adhered to majority rule, there might even be no need for the revision of the Charter. Majority rule not being the case in

reality, it was up to the majority, in this instance, the Non-aligned countries, to show the will and choose the means to modify the international order, including the judicial one. He added that it would be dangerous to combat the U.N.O., and not the great powers. Directing the struggle, "for the United Nations, and against the great powers", he urged for an "Assembly of Peoples."

I (Turkey) also spoke at the Geneva meeting on the need for structural changes related to international democracy. Following a summary reminder of U.N.'s achievements, I emphasized the inevitability of changes and the need to further restructure various organs especially the Security Council, to make it more representative of the world community and more responsive to international will. Since the question of structure is, not only a matter of managerial technicality, but also integrally tied to substance, in which politics, that is, local, regional and international activities of various players weigh heavily, I devoted time and space to a number of recent cases of crises, connected with Iraq, Libya, Cuba and Bosnia. Not only the same exclusive custodians of the veto power are entrusted with the control of military force, but also some parts of the globe are categorically excluded from the map of the Security Council interests. I underlined that neither the U.N. Charter is compatible with the universal norms of democracy, nor the workings of some organs of that organization reflect the features of today's international community. In the assessment of Henry Kissinger, the United States has the "intention to build a new world order by applying its domestic values to the world at large".<sup>13</sup> It is trying to "recast the international environment in its own image and in accordance with its own interests. Many states and quarters now fear a *pax Americana*, this time a U.N.-centered one and without a counterweight.

I also suggested the creation of at least four Deputy Secretaries-General, each responsible for a particular functional area,<sup>14</sup> reminded that the Court has been under-utilized, drew attention to the need to restructure ECOSOC and the Trusteeship Council, and asserted that the IMF and the World Bank could not respond to the authentic needs of developing nations.

In summary, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of that organization, there was a new spirit in some quarters to help construct an international democracy. The U.N. is facing a crisis of reform, the roots being political as well as bureaucratic. The issues range from screening the

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<sup>13</sup>Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 805.

<sup>14</sup>Gareth Evans, *Cooperation for Peace: the Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond*, St. Leonards, Australia, Allen and Unwin, 1993, pp. 107f.

staff to radical structural changes with political tones. The expansion of the United Nations, on account of decolonization, did not bring democratization. In fact, the impoverishment of the South increased since decolonization. The huge continent of Africa, for instance, received mostly advice. If Germany paid reparations to Israel, the Western colonizers of Africa should at least pay for slave trade. Under the present circumstances, the "real U.N." consists of the Security Council (where the permanent powers have a veto right) and the Bretton Woods institutions (where the powerful industrial countries enjoy a weighted voting advantage).

A number of states, organizations and individuals want to change that system. They are critical of those governments and circles which frequently refer to a new order while preserving the old order in respect to their privileges. They note that those who try to dominate world public opinion use the terminology of democracy, human rights, partnership for peace and the like. What is yet absent is the political will to act, what are needed are new priorities, what must be done are new social institutions with a new face, what must be forged are new values, and what must be rejected is the deception, nurtured by the United States and its accomplices, that causes many to believe that inequality, injustice and misery are natural states.