

Annan's Challenge, Not Bush's Speech, Is the Story at UN

by Muriel Mirak-Wiessbach

As the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) annual session opened on Sept. 23 in New York, it was clear that the issue of the future of Iraq would be brought onto center stage, and it was hoped that steps to be taken to reestablish the country's sovereignty and independence would be outlined. It was expected that President Bush would use his speech to talk up American plans for a new UN Security Council resolution, calling on the "international community" to cough up troops and money. Germany, Russia, France and China were expected to express their criticism, not only of the war, but also of U.S. reluctance to define a clear perspective and timeframe for handing over the Iraq dossier to the United Nations.

All these things happened; and something more important. While the major players' delegations and press seemed focussed on bilateral and multilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference, Secretary General Kofi Annan changed the rules of the game, and forced the real issue onto the agenda—that is, the danger embodied in the United States' decision to adopt and implement a pre-emptive war doctrine and radically challenge the post-World War II order of international relations.

Annan signalled that something unusual was about to occur, when he started his remarks in French. Then, moving to English, he noted that, over the past year, terrorism, violence, and nuclear proliferation have continued to undermine world stability. He gave particular attention to the attacks on the UN itself in Baghdad, last month, and, again, recently, and called for better security for UN staff. Annan noted the conflicting views on the Iraq war, but stressed that "Whatever view each of us may take of the events of recent months, it is vital to all of us that the outcome is a stable and democratic Iraq—at

peace with itself and with its neighbours, and contributing to stability in the region."

Warns U.S. on 'Lawless Use of Force'

He then came to the essential point: "Excellencies," he began, "Three years ago, when you came here for the Millennium Summit, we shared a vision, a vision of global solidarity and collective security, expressed in the Millennium Declaration. But recent events have called that consensus in question."

Listing the "new threats that must be faced," i.e., "new forms of terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," as well as others, the Secretary General emphasized general agreement that such threats are a danger to every nation. "Where we disagree, it seems, is on how to respond to these threats." Annan developed the point through a historical overview, showing that the departure from "collective security" and the embrace of a "pre-emptive war doctrine" by the United States and Britain, represent a dramatic watershed in history. His remarks are important enough to quote at length:

Since this Organization was founded, States have generally sought to deal with threats to the peace through containment and deterrence, by a system based on collective security and the United Nations Charter.

Article 51 of the Charter prescribes that all States, if attacked, retain the inherent right of self-defense. But until now it has been understood that when States go beyond that, and decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, they need the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations.

Now, some say this understanding is no longer tena-

ble, since an 'armed attack' with weapons of mass destruction could be launched at any time, without warning, or by a clandestine group.

Rather than wait for that to happen, they argue, States have the right and obligation to use force preemptively, even on the territory of other States, and even while weapons systems that might be used to attack them are still being developed. According to this argument, States are not obliged to wait until there is agreement in the Security Council. Instead, they reserve the right to act unilaterally, or in ad hoc coalitions.

This logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last 58 years. My concern is that, if it were to be adopted, it could set precedents that resulted in a proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without justification.

But it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action.

UN 'Inspired by Franklin Roosevelt'

Excellencies, we have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. At that time, a group of far-sighted leaders, led and inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, were determined to make the second half of the 20th century different from the first half. They saw that the human race had only one world to live in, and that unless it managed its affairs prudently, all human beings may perish. So they drew up rules to govern international behavior, and founded a network of institutions, with the United Nations at its center, in which the peoples of the world could work together for the common good.

Now we must decide whether it is possible to continue on the basis agreed then, or whether radical changes are needed. And we must not shy away from questions about the adequacy, and effectiveness, of the rules and instruments at our disposal. Among those instruments, none is more important than the Security Council itself. . . .

The Council needs to consider how it will deal with the possibility that individual States may use force 'preemptively' against perceived threats.

'Surprisingly Fortright'

Such a condemnation of the Bush Administration's preemptive war doctrine by the Secretary General, was more



The UN Secretary General's sharp and surprising public criticism of the U.S. war-hawks' pre-emptive war policy, in his address to the General Assembly on Sept. 23, overshadowed the so-far-unsuccessful U.S. push for military help in Iraq. The UN will no longer "serve" the Anglo-American Occupation there; will it get the dominant role?

surprising and more significant than the poor response President Bush's reported got to his demands for troops and financial support. As one of Europe's best informed experts on Iraq told *EIR*, the speech was "surprisingly forthright." Annan, he said, "has been saying these things in private, but not this way, in public. Given the way in which his predecessor, Butros-Ghali, was tossed out by Madelaine Albright," he said, "I am surprised he would be so overt in his criticism."

The decision to break the rules of the game must be seen against the backdrop of the rapid deterioration of the situation inside Iraq, where not only troops of the occupying forces of the United States and Britain, but also the UN itself is being targetted by the resistance forces. As the same Iraq expert noted, "The problem for the UN, is to avoid what happened before their headquarters in Iraq was attacked; namely, to be seen as legitimizing the American occupation."

Annan's speech denotes a far deeper concern, shared by an increasing number of governments and political leaders worldwide, and articulated in recent foreign policy statements by U.S. Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche: If

the current imperial policy direction of the Administration, driven by the neo-conservative "junta" led by Vice President Cheney, is not reversed, it could create conditions for a global, strategic crisis, and lead to "assymmetric" warfare, including the widespread use of nuclear weapons. It is ultimately this level of danger that the UN Secretary General's words point to.

No doubt, those in the U.S. Administration who are capable of thinking through such implications, were stunned by Annan's attack. Country delegations who were in the hall when he spoke, greeted the speech with sustained applause.

As for the American President's speech, it was characteristically low on content and high on rhetoric. While focussing on "terrorism" and the "unfinished war" on terrorism as the determining factors in world politics, Bush exaggerated the alleged success of the war against Iraq. "Iraq is free," he claimed, and prophesied that the transformation to democracy in Iraq will "inspire the Middle East," etc. The only clear indications of intent with regard to Iraq, were Bush's assertion that the goal is self-government, through an "orderly and democratic process," which should be "neither hurried nor delayed by the wishes of other parties." Bush mentioned no timeframe for the transfer of power to an Iraqi government, and simply mentioned that the UN could have a hand eventually in drafting a constitution, as well as preparing elections.

The President received polite, muted applause, including from French President Jacques Chirac. But when the latter rose to address the assembly, Bush, accompanied by Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and U.S. Ambassador to the UN John D. Negroponte, left the hall in a group.

Europe, U.S. Opposed on Israel/Palestine

But Chirac spoke, and to the point. Speaking of the Iraq war, he stated, "The United Nations has just undergone one of the gravest crises in its history," in that respect for the UN Charter was at the heart of the debate. Conducted "without authorization from the Security Council, the war shook the multilateral system." Now that this page has been turned, he said, we must move forward, but insisted that "in an open world, nobody can isolate himself, nor act in the name of all, and nobody can accept the anarchy of a society without rules." Chirac insisted heavily on the need for a "transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis who alone are responsible for their own destiny," a transfer "without which there can be no stability or reconstruction." "It is up to the UN to give legitimacy to that process, (. . .) to accompany the progressive transfer of administrative and economic responsibilities to the Iraqi institutions according to a realistic calendar, and to help in the elaboration of a constitution . . . and the holding of general elections."

Chirac added, "It is also up to the UN to give mandate to an international force, naturally under the command of the main contributor of troops, the United States, whose task is

to ensure security for the Iraqis and for all those who contribute to the reconstruction of the country."

At his press conference, Chirac also addressed the Israeli-Palestinian situation. In direct contradiction to Bush, who had again disregarded Palestinian Authority President Arafat as a failed leader, Chirac stated, "Ultimately, one can think what one wants about Yasser Arafat." But "he is the authority, he is the legitimate and elected representative of the Palestinian Authority. . . . You cannot act as if that didn't exist." "This is the reason why we Europeans . . . are totally hostile to any action tending to neutralize the president of the Palestinian Authority in one way or another." He added that Arafat was "the only one to have today the necessary authority over the Palestinians to lead to an agreement. Therefore we have to be very prudent in this affair."

Significantly, in a special session of the UNGA convened on Sept. 19, a resolution was passed almost unanimously, denouncing Israel's stated decision to remove Arafat. The only states voting against the resolution, were the U.S., Micronesia, Israel and the Marshall Islands.

Iraq Governing Council Makes Bizarre Move

The clock is running out in Iraq. It is this fact, and the implications for the region and the world, which is fuelling both Washington's desperate push for a new UN resolution to bring in more troops and funds, and the drive on the part of the anti-war nations to force the United States to hand over responsibility to the UN.

Despite Bush's rhetoric about how much better off Iraq and the Iraqi people are now, than before the war, the opposite is the case. An armed resistance is growing in strength, sophistication, and operational area. After targetting the UN, seen as an institution which has de facto accepted the occupation, the resistance has also targetted members of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), the 25-person group put together by U.S. pro-consul Paul Bremer. Ayatollah Hakim, who was murdered in the bombing of the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf on August 29, was the leader of the SDupreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), one of the organizations represented in the IGC. On Sept. 20, a second member of the IGC, was critically wounded in an assassination attempt by resistance forces.

The worse the economic and security situation becomes in Iraq, the more the IGC will be discredited in the eyes of the population. Thus, leading members of the IGC, especially its purported chairman, banker Ahmad Chalabi, are scrambling to convince the United States to give them some vestige of power, so that they can attempt to present themselves to the nation as something other than a Quisling government. Since the Hakim murder, pressure from the SCIRI, the largest organization of the majority Shi'ite population, has redoubled, demanding the occupying forces relinquish their control and grant sovereignty.

This has led to the bizarre situation, in which Chalabi, the darling of the neo-conservative war party, flew to Washington

on Sept. 22 in hopes of lobbying Congress to give his IGC—and not the Coalition Provisional Authority of American “viceroy” Paul Bremer!—the funds for Iraq’s reconstruction. Chalabi, in public statements, offered Congress the promise that the IGC would reconstruct Iraq for less money. George W. Bush personally reprimanded Chalabi, and stated that no authority could be transferred to the IGC, since it was not an elected body!

The United States moved, on Sept. 21, through the IGC, to announce a vast “reform” of the Iraqi economy. The IGC declared new laws that abolish 30 years of state direction of the Iraqi economy, by opening up most sectors of the economy to foreign investment and up to 100% foreign ownership. Only the oil and natural resources section is exempt from the new rules. (It is known, that the Occupation plans to mortgage oil revenues to pay for Halliburton’s and Bechtel’s reconstruction contracts.)

The new ownership laws—which stand in sharp contrast to those of most of the Arab world—will also allow foreign investors to jump right in without having to be screened by the government, and will allow profits to be fully and immediately withdrawn from Iraq and remitted overseas.

The new rules were announced in Dubai, at the meeting of the IMF and World Bank, by the IGC’s “Finance Minister,” Kamel al-Kailani, who was scheduled to meet with U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow. The Coalition Provisional Authority has also established an independent Central Bank for Iraq. The new laws provide a “fast track” system by which six foreign banks can buy complete control of any Iraqi bank, and allow an unlimited number of foreign banks to purchase 50% control. The London *Independent*’s banner headline on Sept. 22 read, “America puts Iraq up for sale.”

Though one senior U.S. occupation official said of the Dubai announcements, “This is the law. This is done . . . it was all signed yesterday,” it is actually in defiance of that body of international law which Kofi Annan was defending. As *EIR* documented in its Aug. 29 issue, an occupying power has no right to establish any institutions of this type, nor to dispose of the country’s economy or its natural resources. If there is to be any hope for Iraq to recover its sovereignty, this regime of illegality established by the occupying power must be stopped. This requires both a shift to reality-orientation in the Bush Administration, to give an actually predominant role to the UN now, before it becomes too late.

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