

Who Rules? The United Nations: Democratic and Representative?

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The United Nations as presently constituted is undemocratic, unrepresentative and under-funded, and reform is urgently needed. All countries, not least the United States which owes half the UN debt, must pay their dues, but other sources of funding such as a levy on currency trading should be explored. Reform of the Security Council, though important, will be difficult to achieve, and the immediate priority must be to tackle the social and economic problems and abuses of human rights that underlie most conflict. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank must be returned to UN control and the influence of transnational corporations curbed. The increasing role of Non-Governmental Organisations is welcome, and a People's Assembly parallel to the General Assembly should be encouraged. The role of the UN in conflict resolution should not be taken over by bodies such as the European Union or NATO; preventive diplomacy under Chapters VI and VIII of the UN Charter should be given priority over peace enforcement under Chapter VII.

Introduction

The name Erskine Childers is a very renowned one in Ireland: we have been blest in this century with not one but three Erskine Childers - father, son, and grandson - who have all distinguished themselves in public service and each, in his own way, died in the pursuit of that service. The first Erskine Childers, a negotiator with Michael Collins of the Treaty with

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Britain but later to be on the Anti-Treaty side in the Civil War, was executed by firing squad by the Irish Free State Government in 1922 - by his former colleagues. But even in the face of death, he preached reconciliation, and in a famous cell scene in Portobello Barracks in Dublin. Childers pleaded with his son to forgive his executioners, the Government ministers who were responsible, and if the son were ever to enter politics, he must never publicly mention the execution. The Childers name, said the father, was to be a 'healing memory'. The son - also Erskine Childers - did enter Irish politics, served with distinction in a number of ministries, and in the 1970s became a very popular and unifying President of Ireland. Unfortunately, the years of service had taken their toll and he died in office, serving little over a year, at the age of 69, from a heart attack while delivering a speech.

This lecture is in memory of the third Erskine Childers, grandson of the executed Childers, son of the President. This Erskine Childers, initially a broadcaster and journalist, served for twenty-two years as a United Nations civil servant and used his remarkable skills to promote the UN. He wrote in 1993: 'I advocate reform of the UN to improve on the already extraordinary; to strengthen a system that has already recorded breathtaking advances on the great canvas of world history'.¹ Erskine Childers was fully aware of the UN's weaknesses. He wrote extensively on how to correct them. Yet he felt the UN was 'extraordinary', and when he died in 1996, aged 68 - at a UNA meeting in Luxembourg (like his father, of a heart attack after delivering a speech) - he was still passionately championing the UN vision. The UN Charter's 'We the Peoples' was a focus for him: the UN must be more democratic and more representative. That is the focus of my talk.

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Is the UN Democratic and Representative?

The short and obvious answer is 'No'. Like the European Union, the UN has a democratic deficit, a deficit institutionalised from the very start in the UN Charter. The Charter, which begins with 'We the Peoples...' and then sets out some of the finest principles and goals for humanity, then proceeds to invest control and veto power in an unrepresentative and undemocratic Security Council. Nor does the General Assembly represent 'We the Peoples': it represents our Governments - which do not always represent us. Not every state in this world is a democracy. Even those that nominally are can have electoral systems that skew electoral results in an unrepresentative fashion (if it were not for Proportional Representation we would not have two Green Party MEPs and two Green Party TDs in Ireland!) and political systems which under-represent half of humanity: women.

The General Assembly system of one-State one vote is a very necessary one in a world assembly but is not in theory representative of the world's 'peoples'. That is why Erskine Childers' idea of a People's Assembly alongside the General Assembly is so important. (Childers pointed out however that the proportion of votes of North and South in the General Assembly almost exactly matches their respective share of the world population.) Aside from the UN's own workings, it is also faced with the reality of economic globalisation, which has wrested democratic power from the nation-states themselves, let alone the UN which represents them. This is a major challenge.

Nevertheless, the UN is clearly the most 'representative' organisation in the world, the greatest world forum we have. This is the UN's great strength and its legitimacy. It is a reason I am so wary of the European Union moving into areas like peacekeeping, crisis management, and even armed intervention which should be done solely under the auspices of the UN – (see below).

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There is a clear need for great reforms at all levels of the UN, as is seen in the large number of studies and proposals coming out from various think tanks, Non-Governmental Organisations, the EU, and from the UN itself. To begin with, the organisation was never intended to cope with 185 independent states (it began with fifty-one and the UN architects were told to plan for seventy at most). There are plans to improve the UN's efficiency. Kofi Annan's proposals for reform will help to eliminate duplication, provide clearer lines of leadership, and shift some resources from administration to development work. But both Erskine Childers and Kofi Annan have cautioned against concentrating too much on housekeeping operations in the UN. Problems here have been exaggerated. Attacks on a bloated bureaucracy (about 50,000 civil servants) forget that nearly 6,000 million people are being served. The McDonalds workforce is nearly five times that just to serve hamburgers!

Funding

The work of the UN is being seriously undermined by lack of money. The constant wrangles about money owed to the UN go to the very heart of democracy and equity. Programmes for the organisation are being run on a bargain basement basis. The UN's annual budget (for all agencies and funds) is about \$10 billion, less than \$2 for every person in the world. The total cost of all UN peacekeeping activities in 1996 was \$1.4 billion, or less than 0.2 per cent of worldwide military spending. Funds such as UNICEF and the UNDP working for economic and social development, for children, agriculture and food distribution, can only spend something like 80 cents per human being, while in 1994, the world's governments found they were able to spend \$134 per human being for their militaries. Killing machines are worth more than life support systems! Yet the UN is broke.

In 1997, it was owed \$2.3 billion. As is well known, the main culprit in not paying dues is the US government, which owes over half the UN debt: £1.4 billion - the equivalent of one stealth bomber. The payment of UN dues and

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peacekeeping assessments is binding on member-states. (We know this because the US sought an advisory opinion over thirty years ago from the International Court of Justice on this very issue: at that time the baddies were the Russians!) In order to keep afloat, the UN has been 'borrowing' money from its peacekeeping funds – so that it has been unable to reimburse states (including my own) for participating in peacekeeping operations: and early last year, over 70 countries were owed \$800m.

The United States has been using its non-payment as a form of political leverage, to exert pressure on the workings and proposed reforms of the UN system. Erskine Childers was always very strong in arguing, not just against the bully-boy tactics displayed in this case, but against the consequent violation of democracy. The budget of the UN is based on a fundamental tenet of democracy: the ability to pay. Rich and poor are to be equally represented, despite the difference in their financial contribution - the principle upon which 'equality of political voice in governance and policy formation is grounded' (Childers).

In a speech in September 1995 to a 'Colloquium on The UN at Fifty: Whither the next Fifty Years?' at the European Parliament in Brussels, Erskine Childers passionately attacked the so-called 'realists' who continue to argue that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' (or, in this case, 'he who is supposed to pay the piper...'). He said that discussions on reforming and strengthening the UN had been 'grotesquely' distorted by such 'realism':

One of its most insidious influences is the dictum that the governments that 'contribute most' to the UN's budgets should naturally have special influence in its policies and even in the composition of its organs - the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, everywhere throughout the UN system. The capacity to pay is the root principle of democratic revenue-raising and governance in the very countries that demand special influence in the UN on grounds of their contributing the largest money amounts. It is the principle that it is as great a burden for the poorer citizen to find his or her smaller money

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amount of taxes as it is for the richer to find their larger money amount.

Accordingly, since there is equity of burden, no one should have special influence in governance; no rich person and no corporation is entitled to special posts in or influence on the policies - or reforms - of public-service institutions. The citizens of Europe had to struggle for a long time to overcome precisely this undemocratic premise in their own countries; they would abandon democratic national governance to modern plutocrats and corporations if they now accepted it at home.

A way around this stranglehold on UN finances is to explore other means of funding, not as an alternative to dues, which should still be assessed and paid, but as an additional source of income. Not only would this (partly) relieve the UN from 'undue influence', enhance the control of 'We the Peoples' and ensure the UN's continued existence, but it would allow the UN to tackle its enormous global agenda for the fostering of peace and sustainable development. For example, annual currency trading is ten times the global GNP and a tax of just one half of one per cent of trading income would generate over \$1.5 trillion a year - a big boost to the current UN annual budget of \$ 10 billion.

A global carbon tax on the consumption of fossil fuels could raise nearly \$1 trillion a year. Such monies would not only vastly improve the world's environment, foster sustainable development and help to fulfil the global commitments of Rio's Agenda 21, but they could be ploughed back into the 80 per cent of the UN's work that is devoted to helping developing countries, promoting and protecting democracy and human rights, saving children from starvation and disease, providing relief assistance to refugees and disaster victims, countering global crime, drugs and disease, and assisting countries devastated by war. The UN estimates it needs a budget of about \$50 billion to seriously tackle poverty globally.

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The Security Council

But before turning to the one quarter of the human race who are living in 'almost unimaginable suffering and want' (UNICEF), who are supposedly represented in the UN and are to be assisted primarily by the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - the body under the General Assembly established to deal with the economic and social causes of conflict - I consider the Security Council.

Much attention has been focussed on reforming the totally undemocratic Security Council. Despite all the proposals - increasing overall numbers, increasing the number of permanent members, with or without vetoes and the like - there seems little hope of change here. Childers himself referred to the Security Council as having 'fascist flaws', thrust 'into the otherwise noble, principled architecture of the UN Charter':

Had not the powers in 1945 just led a world war against systems of governance in which a minority faction would:

- Create permanent, unelected seats for itself.
- Arrogate to itself the power to block admissions of others to the institution of governance.
- Wield the police power in the community.
- Hold the power to block nominations to the chief public-service post.
- Have the power to block any amendments to the constitution giving themselves these special privileges?

'When I was doing my studies, this was indeed called fascism'. (Colloquium on 'The UN at Fifty,' European Parliament, 8 Sept 1995).

I see no sense in extending this undemocratic veto to even more states and would also be totally opposed to the often-floated idea of creating an EU

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seat - permanent or otherwise - on the Security Council. It would solidify the dominion of the North over the South even more forcefully and I do not want Ireland represented by a block EU vote. Over the past decade, the Green Party in Ireland has campaigned strenuously against the evolving EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, appealing for a 'no' vote in referenda on the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, and last May, on the Amsterdam Treaty. The Greens are opposing not only what we see as a movement towards an EU nuclear military bloc, but we are also concerned that Ireland's independent voice and contribution to international affairs, particularly its disarmament and peacekeeping work at the United Nations, would be severely compromised and silenced under some sort of EU mantle.

Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Andrews, has recently spearheaded a major disarmament initiative, joined by Sweden, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and South Africa, (the New Agenda Coalition).² This initiative attacks the nuclear 'logic' now maintaining vast nuclear arsenals, a 'logic' which has inspired India and Pakistan to get 'logical' as well. At the launch of this initiative, Mr Andrews attacked the 'complacency' of the nuclear weapons states, highlighted the case at the International Court of Justice on the illegality of nuclear weapons, and pointed out that Ireland was the only EU state to actively support that case. Forty years ago, in 1958, the then Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank Aiken, first proposed the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the UN. The point here is that it is widely acknowledged that Mr Andrews did not initiate his disarmament proposals in the EU because he knew they would not be supported there. That is why I do not want the EU representing me - or Ireland - on issues of war and peace at the Security Council.

However, an EU seat is probably not a serious runner at the moment. I cannot imagine Britain or France accepting it. There is no sense 'reforming' the Security Council until the reforms can be meaningful. Childers envisaged a chamber of 23 or 24 states '...entirely elected on the basis of regional representation and rotation, in which most of the big

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countries will always have seats. There must be no vetoes, but graduated majority voting according to the type and gravity of the decision to be taken'. (European Parliament speech).

This is a goal, but meanwhile, perhaps the best policy is to concentrate on the other institutions of the UN, to ensure that the root causes of conflict - social and economic problems and violations of human rights - are being seriously tackled. The Security Council is only supposed to be called in when things go wrong. We must ensure that more things go right in the first instance.

Globalisation and Human Rights

This is the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reaffirmed the stirring declarations of the UN Charter itself, of 'promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'. It has taken many years to translate some of these rights into legally binding state obligations. We in Ireland are of course very proud of the appointment of our former President, Mary Robinson, to the post of High Commissioner on Human Rights, and are hoping that human rights will be given a higher profile and priority in the workings of the UN. She appears to have embraced the broader human rights agenda of economic and social rights alongside civil and political ones. I am however personally concerned - as are others (notably the *Irish Times*) - that Mrs. Robinson's human rights efforts can be a little selective. Developing countries are concerned that she is more likely to home in on their violations than on abuses in the West. The bombings of Afghanistan and Sudan received no comment from Mrs. Robinson, nor has the US blockade of food and medicines to Cuba, a silence which has earned Mrs. Robinson condemnation from the former UN Assistant Secretary-General, Peter Bourne.

If the UN is to be genuinely democratic and representative, it must do its

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best to use its institutions to promote democracy in the international community, and that democracy must entail the achievement those basic human rights aspired to in the Charter and the 1948 Declaration. The UN actively promotes democracy and has successfully, monitored elections in Mozambique, Cambodia, South Africa, the former Yugoslavia and El Salvador. It has an enormous (though inadequately funded) humanitarian and development programme, and there have been successes. UNDP figures show that life expectancy in the developing world has increased by one-third in the last thirty years, infant mortality has halved, more diseases have been eradicated and primary education and children's nutrition have improved.

However, the gap between the richest and poorest has doubled, and the top 20 per cent are now sixty times better off than the poorest 20 per cent. 13,000 children a day still die of preventable diseases, and yet the West has diminished its aid to the developing countries for the fifth year in succession. Dag Hammarskjöld used to say that the UN had never meant to take humanity to heaven but to save it from hell. But saving it from hell is not just a matter of reversing the downwards slide in Western aid or even of pumping more money into the UN (although that would certainly help). The growing gap between North and South is largely due to the globalisation of the economy (the 200 largest transnational corporations now account for nearly a third of the world's economy), the lack of political control of this process and the fact that human rights, democracy, and sustainable development are not uppermost in the boardrooms of transnational corporations (TNCs).

Nor have they always been uppermost in some of the UN's own specialised agencies, notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, whose harsh structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have wreaked havoc in developing countries with, in many instances, total disregard for the wishes of democratically elected governments. Many countries have been forced to privatise public industries, reduce public services and eliminate restrictions on currency exchange and foreign investments.

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Schools and hospitals are shut to pay off debts to Western banks. (Ironically, many of the teachers in these schools were trained under UNDP/UNESCO programmes, only to have their jobs taken away by 'structural adjustment' policies!) Africa spends four times as much money repaying interest on its loans as on health care.

In a recent article, Noam Chomsky (*Guardian*, May 15, 1998) attacked the IMF and the World Bank for their role in exacerbating poverty and world debt. Borrowing in developing countries had been actively promoted in the Seventies and Eighties, but the IMF is now seen increasingly as 'the credit community's enforcer'. Both the agencies have reversed their initial Bretton Woods role of regulating and controlling capital movement, to one of assisting the liberalisation of financial flows. In 1970, 90 per cent of transactions were related to the real economy (trade and long-term investment) and the rest were speculative. By 1995, it was estimated that 95 per cent of transactions were speculative, most of them short term (80 per cent with a return time of a week or less). It has long been known that 'liberalisation of capital flow serves as a powerful weapon against social justice and democracy'. The crises and upheavals in Mexico, the Asian economies, Rwanda, Zaire, Somalia and elsewhere are in part testimony to this.

The new proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), called 'the constitution of a single global economy' by the World Trade Organisation, is an additional assault on 'We the Peoples', a one-sided Bill of Rights for the TNCs and rich investors. Our economies will be further removed from democratic control. Foreign investors will be given legal status on a par with nations, allowed to sue governments, and yet be virtually unimpeded by governmental regulations or any social obligations. Workers rights and protection of the environment will all be weakened. Examples of suits already taken under the present GATT and North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) regimes include the Ethyl Corporation suing the Canadian Government for banning the petrol additive MMT as a public health risk and pollutant, and Metalclad, an

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American firm, suing the Mexican Government because of delays in opening a hazardous waste disposal facility. If the MAI is approved, things will get worse.

The strength of multinationals has reached new heights - or depths - when considering the controls which biotechnology firms are developing, not only over food and food production (a fairly fundamental commodity!) but over life itself. The recently approved directive on biological patenting in the European Parliament, passed despite strong opposition from the Green Group, will give these firms the right to patent life and facilitate 'bio-piracy' in developing countries. One of these firms, Monsanto, has a market value of \$96 billion, larger than the GNP of most countries, including Ireland. The World Trade Organisation and its food standards body, Codex Alimentarius, could threaten the EU with punitive sanctions if US genetically modified foods were not given access to European markets. In Ireland we have been told – and I think you were similarly informed in Britain last April, when your Government had to reverse a decision to impose a moratorium on genetically modified crops - that EU Directive 90/220 prevents any EU member state from banning crops which have been approved under EU law.

The UN must reassert its role in the economic sphere. The Preamble of the UN Charter says it is 'to employ international machinery for the promotion of economic and social advancement of all peoples'. Article 55 states that 'with a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development' as well as 'solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems'. Erskine Childers campaigned strongly to have Article 58 of the Charter properly implemented: 'The Organisation shall make recommendations for the co-ordination of the policies and activities of the specialised agencies' - policies, not just activities - and he constantly

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highlighted the role of the UN in macro-economic and macro-social strategies to be carried out under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for the General Assembly.

This has not been allowed to happen. The UN has been disenfranchised. It should now reassert its role in global governance of the economy, with the World Bank and World Trade Organisation brought firmly into the UN policy framework as they are supposed to be. If both the planet and its peoples are to be saved, this framework must be based on Rio's Agenda 21: the pursuit of sustainable development. We must act quickly to ensure that not only are our democratic rights protected, but that life itself does not come under the control of Billion Dollar Man.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations

For the UN to reassert itself will require not just will from the top, but, more decisively, will from the bottom. Erskine Childers, in his last speech, stated his common theme: that the UN will only work well when 'ordinary citizens as well as the privileged' are informed and active on its behalf. There is a powerful role here for 'We the Peoples' and representative groupings of civil society, the NGOs.

What more concrete proof of their role do we need than the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize winners, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines? This campaign brought together more than 1300 organisations in over 75 countries. It managed, in the Nobel Committee's words, to change a landmines ban from 'a vision to a feasible reality'. It changed the position of governments, challenged their inaction, shamed major powers, and managed to get a landmines convention drafted, signed and now to become binding international law on 1 March 1999. The World Court Project brought together NGOs from around the world to successfully challenge the legality of nuclear weapons in the International Court of Justice at The Hague.³

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The important role of NGOs has also been well shown in the various international conferences, on the environment, (Rio and Kyoto), on women, and on development. At the Earth Summit in Rio, the alternative NGO forum of 4000 NGOs from 70 countries managed to negotiate forty-one treaties, and to capture the imagination and broaden the environment agenda much better than the General Assembly. The NGOs already have significant inputs into ECOSOC but not into other UN institutions, in particular not into the General Assembly and its main committees. During 1996, for example, there were five high level General Assembly working groups dealing with various areas of UN reform which NGOs were not allowed to observe or attend, although many of the suggestions under consideration had been adopted at world conferences in which they had been involved. However, there are now suggestions to formalise these inputs and even suggestions of establishing a UN NGO Assembly, or Civil Society Forum, alongside the General Assembly.

Meanwhile, NGO influence at national level is increasing, and this should be reflected at UN level. Influence is also seen at local level where NGOs have, for instance, established alternative banking systems (Zimbabwe) and housing co-operatives (Uruguay), and helped to combat assaults on the environment. Groups like Amnesty International and Greenpeace can set standards, conduct independent research, and effectively lobby on our behalf, not only with Governments but with the UN.

In May 1998 Geneva, an NGO conference (predominately from southern countries) took place on how to combat globalisation. Different approaches emerged: lobbying, non-violent confrontation and the construction of alternative trading systems were all considered. The Manifesto from the conference called for the strengthening of the local market systems 'by developing producer-consumer linkages and co-operatives' and stated that 'direct democratic action' against 'undemocratic' globalisation should be combined with the constructive building of alternative and sustainable lifestyles. This is strong stuff, and examples of civil disobedience

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mentioned included destroying imported foodstuffs to protect local farmers (India), and the destruction of genetically modified maize in France and beetroot in the UK and Ireland. The conference was split on the use of such direct action. However, the Fair Trade network, and the concept of 'Thinking Globally, Acting Locally' in order to counter globalisation and regain some control of our lives, was strongly backed. Vandana Shiva, the Indian environmentalist, argued that globalisation had forced people, North and South, into 'a common condition of exclusion'. 'It's the first time that Northern citizens have experienced this - it's a situation we have always experienced and we now have grounds for a new solidarity'.

A People's Assembly

Increased NGO influence at the United Nations will make the UN more representative. But to make it more democratic, another reform is advocated, by Erskine Childers amongst others. This is for a People's Assembly, first mooted by Ernest Bevin in 1945, which would give citizens a direct input into the UN. Erskine Childers advocated that this Assembly could be modelled on the European Parliament but I am doubtful of that model - the Parliament's wishes are often ignored. But the power of a UN Peoples Assembly is that it would contribute to the objective of making the UN more powerful by making it more relevant to the ordinary citizen, the very point already cited in Erskine Childers' last speech. To bring the issues of the UN to the level of the ballot box would be a tremendous achievement. It would both influence the UN and those countries who are not very keen on democratic elections or universal franchise, and, increase pressure for the opening up of those societies.

International Peace and Security

If we can bring 'We the Peoples' into the UN Chamber we might be able to recapture the original spirit of the UN Charter. One of the main motivating

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forces, in the aftermath of two devastating world wars, was 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', and 'to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'. I finally turn to the issue of war and peace, and why the UN must have primacy of control in conflict resolution.

There have been well over 150 wars since the UN Charter was signed and many millions killed, the majority of them civilians. In the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, another four million have died in wars and one in every two hundred people in the world today is displaced or a refugee.⁴ At the end of 1997, there were fifteen UN mandated missions still in existence, involving nearly 15,000 troops, military observers and police drawn from seventy-one countries. We in Ireland are very proud of the UN peacekeeping role of Irish troops since our first days at the United Nations.

When the Berlin Wall came down, many in the world hoped, and felt it possible, that the UN would now come into 'its own', able to at last fulfil the hopes of its Charter free from the tensions of the Cold War. UN activity did increase. There were notable successes (in El Salvador, Mozambique, and seemingly in Cambodia). But we have also witnessed the unhappiest of times for the UN, with the turmoil in such areas as Somalia, Rwanda, the Gulf, and the former Yugoslavia throwing up tremendous challenges to the entire UN system. But, as we know, the UN can only function as well as its members will allow. Some of 'its' failures were due to the UN not being able to carry out its role because that role had been usurped by the United States: this was the case in both Somalia and the Gulf (and in Haiti). Operation Desert Storm was dressed up as a UN operation under Chapter VII, but neither the Security Council nor the UN Secretary General were involved in the conduct of that war.

We are now greeted with the spectre of over one million Iraqi children dead because of sanctions imposed by the United Nations (UNICEF and WHO figures), and kept in place at the insistence of the United States government. The recent bombings of Sudan and Afghanistan were acts of

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state terrorism, a direct contravention of the Geneva Convention and a defiance of everything the UN stands for. All those who believe in the rule of law and in the United Nations should have strongly condemned these bombings. At the time, I compared them to the actions of the Real IRA in Omagh. I stand by that analogy and see it as hypocritical to condemn one while supporting the other (as Tony Blair did). Both were inexcusable, unlawful, and caused the deaths of innocent civilians. Our world is definitely not a safer, better place as a result.

There is growing concern that the Chapter VII enforcement powers of the UN are being given higher priority than the Chapter VI (Pacific Settlement of Disputes) and Chapter VIII (Regional Arrangements for settling disputes) sections of the Charter. It is also a very unsatisfactory and dangerous development for the UN to be allowing not only the United States, but NATO, to act on its behalf. This flies in the face of the most fundamental values upon which the UN Charter is based, and a superstate or a military bloc - both in this case based on nuclear weapons policies which have been found counter to international humanitarian law by the UN's own World Court - should not be mandated to carry out the UN's will.

Both the European Union and NATO are attempting to undermine the UN's role in peacekeeping and are posing, I believe, very serious threats to world security in the process. The Green Party has opposed this development strenuously. The Amsterdam Treaty has brought NATO's European wing, the Western European Union, further into the EU. The WEU's Petersburg Tasks are now EU 'tasks', and include peacekeeping, humanitarian missions, and crisis management/enforcement missions. The Petersburg Tasks do not require a UN mandate. Irish troops have never acted abroad without a UN mandate. The Amsterdam Treaty leaves it open (through its 'crisis management' tasks) for the EU to become involved in interventions anywhere in the world, facilitated by the WEU and NATO. By what right, on what basis of international law, does the EU take on this world policeman's role?

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The EU has earned great respect for bringing together age-old enemies in a co-operative community. Its greatest contribution to world peace would be to continue this contribution to peace-building – co-operation built on non-military means. Instead it is trying to evolve into a militarised nuclear superstate, undermining not only the UN itself but the UN's regional Chapter VIII body in Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). It is also supporting the continued existence of NATO, a Cold War military bloc that should have followed the Warsaw Pact into oblivion.

NATO's so-called Partnership for Peace is another weakening of the UN's role and another means of perpetuating NATO's existence, and - in NATO's own words - of assisting its 'expansion', (to the delight of the arms manufacturers, as it opens up lucrative arms markets in Eastern Europe, thought to be worth over \$30 billion). Neutral Ireland is under great pressure to join the PfP, pressures we have so far thankfully resisted. However, nearly every country in Europe - including Russia - are now members. Part of the myth of the PfP (and of a militarised EU) is that it will be assisting the UN, helping it to respond earlier and better to crises like that in the former Yugoslavia. But a well-resourced supported UN/OSCE is the proper vehicle for doing that. The PfP is not answerable to the UN, its actions do not have to be UN mandated and those that are will be under the control of NATO, not the UN.

When the UN's own World Court finds that the nuclear strategy underpinning NATO is illegal, and nuclear weapons are clearly seen as anathema to the UN system, it is incredible that NATO is allowed to continue and grow in this way. Acceptance of NATO nuclear doctrine prompts India and Pakistan to set off nuclear bombs and undermines the entire Non-Proliferation Treaty process. I hope that the dangers for the UN in allowing a northern nuclear alliance to become its agent can be recognised, and that there will be a re-focus on the primacy of the UN as the guarantor of international peace and security.

Conclusion

When one asks whether the UN is democratic and representative and who rules it, the reply is that the UN at the moment represents a political and economic elite wielding inordinate and undemocratic power. However, as Erskine Childers said, the UN is also an 'extraordinary' forum: flawed, yet the most representative gathering of all the people that the world has ever had. Ultimately 'We the Peoples' can rule; and reform the UN into the body it was meant to be. There are clear and feasible ways to provide the UN with adequate, independent finance, such as a pound on airfares, taxing arms sales or a levy on currency transactions. Enough money in itself would allow a revolution in the workings of the UN, strengthening its ability to fulfil the promise of its Charter.

Raising popular participation in the UN and awareness of its work, a People's Assembly, empowering NGOs and citizens groups will all assist revival of the UN. An international meeting of NGOs is already planned for the Millennium. An International Criminal Court has now been established, despite the opposition of the world's remaining superpower. The present World Court must also be more vigorously supported: it is under-utilised and its jurisdiction is not compulsory (my own country fails to accept it). A major conference, The Hague Appeal For Peace and the Abolition of War,⁵ will revitalise and reaffirm the role of international humanitarian law and push for general and complete disarmament. At that conference, the Green Group in the European Parliament will be joining with the Quakers and Peace Brigades International to examine the role that civilian non-violent action can play in conflict areas. Mary Robinson - with the strong support of Kofi Annan - will, I hope, raise human rights awareness, and enforcement, to new levels. And Kofi Annan, earlier this year, dramatically reinstated the role of the UN in the maintenance of international peace when he travelled to Iraq, negotiated, and halted yet another wave of destructive bombing of the Iraqi people.

The UN and its Future in the 21st Century

The oneness of this planet has been brought home increasingly to the world's population this century, with most of the latter half clouded by possible global annihilation from nuclear war. This threat has abated somewhat but the move to General and Complete Disarmament must be more convincingly pursued in the 21st century. The oneness has also been heightened by awareness of the environmental destruction that awaits us if the world's inhabitants, particularly the wealthier and more destructive, do not co-operate in creating a sustainable planet. We are connected in the oneness of common threats. We are also connected, not only in danger but also by the common bond of our humanity, as neighbours and family on one planet. This is the positive side of globalisation, a communications revolution interrelating and inter-linking us as never before. People power has never been so possible or so potent. We must organise and make common cause for our extraordinary common planet.

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(Delivered 25 September 1998)