BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1974

Review and reappraisal of United Nations information policies and activities

Letter dated 22 December 1972 from the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you about the following matter.

As you will recall, I drew your attention, during the twenty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, to the fact that the reporting of the work of plenary meetings and of the Main Committees of the Assembly by the Office of Public Information was unsatisfactory to an intolerable degree. In particular, I pointed out that, in one of the weekly reviews of the work of the Assembly, an excessive amount of attention was given to a statement on international terrorism by a single speaker in the Sixth Committee while no mention at all was made of statements in plenary meetings by 11 heads of delegation on the important question of the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

I am now compelled once again to draw your attention to the fact that this intolerable practice is continuing in the work of OPI and that the latter's reporting of the most important aspects of the work of the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly has been manifestly tendentious and lacking in objectivity. A striking example of this tendentiousness and lack of objectivity is the summary of the work of the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly published by OPI on 18 December 1972 (press release GA/4715).

This press release, which is intended to provide information to Assembly delegations, missions of States Members of the United Nations and world public opinion on the basic orientation of the work of this Assembly and the main results achieved, contains obvious attempts to belittle the importance of the most important questions of international politics which were discussed both at plenary meetings and in the First (Political) Committee, i.e. those relating to the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the
use of nuclear weapons, the convening of a world disarmament conference, the implementation of the Declaration on international security and various aspects of the problem of disarmament. Instead of giving attention to these questions, which are of the greatest importance for the future development of international relations and which are quite properly the first items on the General Assembly's agenda and are the focus of the Assembly's work, the press release lays the greatest stress on other matters.

It is sufficient to point out that, for example, the problem of terrorism is allotted one and a half pages and financial and budgetary matters almost two pages, while highly important questions of international politics - which were the focus of attention at plenary meetings of the General Assembly and in the First Committee - such as the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security are allotted only a few lines each - eight lines and four lines respectively. Moreover, the first of these two questions is given an incomplete heading: in place of "Non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons", as the item is referred to in the Assembly's agenda, an abbreviated title - "Non-use of force" - is given.

Not only is the content of the Assembly's discussion of this most important issue not properly reflected in the press release but the very essence of the discussion - the drafting and adoption of a resolution - is misrepresented. The fact that this USER proposal was actively supported by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations, particularly the countries of the "third world", is completely concealed. No mention is made of the fact that the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on this matter was drafted by the non-aligned countries and their liaison group, which, as is well known, was headed by the chairman of the group of non-aligned countries, the head of the Zambian delegation, Ambassador Luaka. Although the resolution was drafted on the basis of the Soviet proposals, it was introduced by a large group of non-aligned and socialist countries and had more than 20 sponsors. During the discussion of the item, both the sponsors of the resolution and the delegations of many other countries actively supported the Soviet Union's initiative and attached great importance to the idea that the Assembly should adopt a decision which, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, inseparably linked these two most important contemporary problems - the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. It is obvious that the authors of the press release acted deliberately in saying nothing about all this. How is one to explain the fact that the authors of the press release ignored this matter? Was it ignorance or misrepresentation? It is quite clear that it was intentional misrepresentation.

The authors of the press release limited themselves to a brief mention of the fact that the resolution contains a request to the Security Council to take appropriate measures to give effect to the resolution. On the other hand, in an equally deliberate and obviously tendentious manner, they publicized the fact that China had stated that the resolution, which was drafted on the basis...
of Soviet proposals and submitted by the non-aligned countries, was a "fraud". However, if China has that opinion of the proposal and of the resolution adopted by the Assembly on the matter, then it is directing its blatantly slanderous charge of "fraud" at the "third world" and is insulting the countries of that group. The resolution did, after all, emanate from the non-aligned countries. It was precisely the countries of the "third world" which drafted it, submitted it to the Assembly and voted for it by an overwhelming majority. China, on the other hand, voted against the resolution, placing itself in a position of confrontation with the "third world" and leaguing itself with the Republic of South Africa and Portugal, which also voted against the resolution. The United States, as everyone is aware, abstained in the vote on the resolution. This position adopted by the United States and China in the Assembly regarding the question of the non-use of force in international relations made it easier for the United States imperialists to renew their bombing of the cities and the mining of the ports of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and to intensify their piratical actions against that country. The press release also states that "the Western countries and some 'third world' countries abstained" in the vote on the resolution. The authors of the press release noted that detail but did not note a fact which is obvious and well known to all - that the resolution adopted by the Assembly was drafted and submitted by a large group of "third world" States and socialist countries and was adopted in the Assembly by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations, mainly as a result of the votes cast by "third world" countries. That point was missed both by the authors of the press release and by their chief, Assistant Secretary-General Akatani. One need only recall these obvious facts to understand that the writing of the press release was a case of blatant, tendentious distortion, misrepresentation and outright deception for the benefit of a small group of countries favouring the use of force in international relations and at the same time opposing the permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

The same may be said with full justification regarding the information contained in this press release on the Assembly's discussion of the item "Implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security". In the press release, the very title of the item is distorted and no mention is made of the substance of the Assembly's discussion of this extremely important question. The authors pass over in silence the great attention which most delegations gave to this question. They also concealed the fact that the resolution on the matter was introduced by 55 "third world" countries, showing that the strengthening of international security and the implementation of the Declaration on this question, which was adopted by the twenty-fifth anniversary session of the General Assembly, was given particularly great attention at the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly, particularly by the countries of the "third world".

On the other hand, the authors of the press release reported on the questions of terrorism and the financial and budgetary problems of the United Nations in the most detailed manner and with excessive diligence worthy of a better cause. Such exaggerated treatment of these questions, alongside the silence and misrepresentation with regard to the substance of three of the most
important problems of international politics - the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, the world disarmament conference and implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security - shows an improper, one-sided and tendentious approach to reporting of the work of the General Assembly by the staff of the Office of Public Information, an overwhelming majority of whom, as has been pointed out many times, are nationals of the United States and its NATO allies. Yet, it is precisely these questions which are directly related to the task of maintaining and strengthening international peace and security - the purpose for which the United Nations was, after all, established. The staff of the United Nations Secretariat cannot and do not have the right to forget, much less ignore, that fact.

In drawing your attention to this improper and intolerable practice in the work of the Office of Public Information, I request you to take steps to put an end to this clearly abnormal situation. In this connexion, there would appear to be an urgent need for the early establishment, under the Secretary-General, of a special body on information questions.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official General Assembly document.

(Signed) Y. MALIK
Permanent Representative of the USSR to the United Nations