

INTERVIEW

U.N. Ambassador Dr. Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor

Dr. Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor is the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations. He was until recently chairman of the Group of 77, which represents the more than one hundred developing sector nations. The interview was conducted in New York on Oct. 22, 1991 by Warren A.J. Hamerman and Dana Scanlon.

Fidelio: George Bush came to the U.N. General Assembly and gave a very imposing speech of his version of a *Pax Universalis*, which would take the form of the hegemony of America and its allies over the entire world economy. How do you see that overall strategic situation?

Dr. Awoonor: I want to return to the concept of the *Pax Universalis*, first. I think there is something rather simple-minded about it. And the simple-mindedness derives from the self-perception of big-powerism, the arsenals of power, and of course this is a post-Gulf war syndrome. It is also helped along by the fact that the Soviet Union and its empire had collapsed.

A uniform, or unilateral world, which is based on a single perception of reality and which has got ingredients such as the free market—well, to many of us, the free market is largely predatory in many instances. That free market concept was constructed over a long history of exploitation of other people. The British Empire was not set up because the coconut groves of the west coast of Africa were greener than any other trees anywhere else! It was predicated on exploitation. But if that is the principle with which we are entering into the so-called New World Order, then we are going to have problems.

Fidelio: In the last few years, a series of documents written by Dr. Henry Kissinger at the U.S. National Security Council—when George Bush was



Ambassador Dr. Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor (left) presents his credentials to U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

head of the CIA—has been declassified. And in these documents, the U.S. National Security Council said that it was in the strategic interest of the United States to drastically reduce the population of the developing sector, and to prevent any organizing for a new, just world economic order. These documents target thirteen key nations in the developing sector, for what has been called genocide or Malthusian depopulation. Have you seen these documents?

Dr. Awoonor: I have seen these documents, and I think they are authentic documents. And I'm not surprised that this was the thinking which was coming out of a certain kind of political mentality. Having said that, of course, one has to resist this over-simplification of the problems of the world.

We talk in the United Nations—at least we *talk*—about an interdependent world, where each nation is linked with the others. And of course, we are all part of the same species, *Homo sapiens*. Now we say, on the question of population alone, for example, there is no reason why popula-

tion control by itself will answer the question of poverty and underdevelopment. It is the other way around. If you are able to provide the developing countries the tools for development, afford them the opportunity to be able to earn their way in an equitable marketplace of the world—and I'm stressing the word equitable—they will, given education, given environmental work, they will reduce their populations. They will *not* reduce their populations as a result of any pressure from any sector that says, "We are afraid of being swamped, and so therefore let us impose a Malthusian solution."

Having said that, we are aware of the distribution of resources in the world. The developed countries of the world still have control over the vast remnants of resources that the world has. Yet, we are calling for a balance in the consumption of these resources. And therefore, a Malthusian effort to control population will be seen by us, as an attempt to reduce the populations of our countries in order to have greater access to the resources on which we sit.

Fidelio: In his speech to the U.N. General Assembly, the foreign minister of Ghana quoted Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which was issued earlier this year. Your foreign minister said that the encyclical raised the obvious necessary solution, that development is the new name for peace, quoting Pope Paul VI. I would like to ask you to comment on this.

Dr. Awoonor: Yes, indeed. Our foreign minister underscored that point. And I think it's a point that we are also insisting upon within the framework of the United Nations. We are saying: If you talk about population, we must deal with development; if you talk about environment, we must deal with development; if you talk about any element you must talk about development.

Fidelio: January began the United Nations' Fourth Development Decade. The Schiller Institute has circulated at the U.N. a proposal for a True Fourth Development Decade, which was prepared under the direction of the American economist Lyndon LaRouche. This proposal calls for going outside the collapsed Bretton Woods system, to create a true fourth development decade. I would like your comments on this proposal.

Dr. Awoonor: I think it is a brilliant document of immense originality. It takes a lot of courage for anybody from the developed part of the world, the advanced part of the world, to see the problem in that global perspective. The document spells out the technical possibilities of providing the infrastructure with which many, many parts of the world, which are now racked with hunger and poverty, can lift themselves up. When they say you must lift yourself up by your bootstraps, it's like providing the boots first. This system of doing that technical work, the development of water, and such elements that are part of the program, sounds to me as one of the most innovative and original ideas that I've seen.

I have talked in that direction when we were dealing with the question of humanitarian relief. When we talked about humanitarian relief, I have said,

we must think about development also. And I gave as an example, which coincides with what the Schiller document and the LaRouche document ["The Oasis Plan for the Middle East"] also gives, the example of the cyclical drought in the Sahel, or in the Horn of Africa. The problem is of water. We wait every year, and when the drought comes, we rush, airplanes come, dropping food around, and quickly they go back. Next year, the same drought will occur. Why don't we sit down and say: "Let us develop a water system for this area, which once and for all gives the people the capacity to grow their own food."

Fidelio: Mr. LaRouche was found to be an irritant, and, as I think you know, he has been in jail now for almost three years. Have you had a chance to look at how his trial was conducted? Do you find it shocking that in the land of liberty, the United States, this kind of procedure would have been carried out?

Dr. Awoonor: I have not yet gone into the details of that trial. But I could see how a man who is promoting the kind of program that he is promoting, would be seen as a thorn in the flesh. He would be a very uncomfortable person to the powers that be, and this is not the first time in the history of the world that those who really are coming with new messages, new prophets, are regularly crucified!

I tell you, someone once said, if Christ walked into any of these great advanced democracies of the world, they would lock him up! Because he would be a troublemaker.

Fidelio: Overall, worldwide, we're looking at foreign debt in the trillions of dollars. Much of this debt is illegitimate, it is the result of usury, of high interest rates, of repeated devaluation of currencies, and so forth, making it impossible to repay. What would the Group of 77 like to see happen in this respect, both in terms of the debt stock and the debt service?

Dr. Awoonor: We had made a statement in Geneva on behalf of the Group of 77, where we were considering the question of the collapse of East-

ern Europe, of the Soviet empire, and its impact upon the global system. And I made a point, on behalf of the Group, that the kind of concessionary arrangement that was made by the United States, and a number of other countries, with Poland, must be a model with which we can begin: which is a generous forgiveness of debt. Almost seventy percent of Poland's debt had been written off. And when we raised this point, we are told: Poland is a special case.

We don't know why Poland is a special case. Why is Haiti not a special case? Why is Argentina not a special case? Why is Brazil not a special case? Why is Nigeria not a special case? Why is Ghana not a special case? Finally, what one wants to say is that the debt is *unpayable*. We cannot pay that debt, because it is a cycle of dependence, a cycle of poverty that has been constructed, within which we are whirling and whirling. The center cannot hold.

In 1988, the IMF took one billion dollars more out of Africa than it put in. Tell me, what is that? You use the term usury. What else is that? It is usury of the most horrendous type. But we are saying that the world, beginning with those who claim that they control it, must sit down and analyze the collective burden of debt on each country, and by a stroke of the pen, cancel all debts.

Fidelio: A worldwide debt moratorium could be part and parcel of creating a new post-Bretton Woods economic system. This is an aspect of the True Fourth Development Decade proposal.

Dr. Awoonor: Absolutely. I agree with you entirely, that we have got to begin with debt, because that is already on the table. A year ago, we in Ghana used sixty percent of all our foreign exchange earnings, just to service our debt. Sixty percent. So we have forty percent left, with which we have got to build schools, which the British never built when they were there for over a hundred years. We have to build clinics, which they didn't build. We have to make provisions of water for our villages and towns. How do we do

that, if all we work for goes back to the same people who had exploited us over the centuries?

Fidelio: Do you have any thoughts that you would like conveyed to the readership of *Fidelio* that we've not covered up until this point?

Dr. Awoonor: I would like to address what I consider the post-Gulf War and the post-Cold War period: We are seeing some ingredients of that so-called New World Order, as being no different from the old world order. In fact, we are seeing other things coming up—when we had the Soviet empire, at least there was what one commentator called a balance of terror, and so therefore, arrogance of power was slightly more muted. We are seeing, as one person used the word, a unipolar world, in which there is only one power and its way of doing things, its way of perceiving reality, its ideology. They talk as if communism is the only ideology that we have. Capitalism is also an ideology; and that capitalist ideology is based on concepts of democracy, liberal democracy which is individualism, and its attendant greed-machine, based on the so-called free market, which is another word for “get the best of your friend, sharp dealing, cut all the corners,” which also reveals a lack of compassion for our common humankind.

And we are saying: if that is the world that we are constructing, then we are in for trouble. And I want to say that we in the developing countries, who form the majority of the human population of this planet; we who are the ones who are poor, malnourished, without education, without adequate shelter; who are the ones who are ill with diseases both old and new, who lack clinics and hospitals: we are supposed to earn our way in this marketplace, which, even though it is called free, we know is not free.

We are going to be insisting—we are going to be here, we are going to be making as much noise as we can make, and nobody can lecture us—we will put our needs on the agenda, and we will insist that the world look at these needs.



Cavor Šifrar

Maestro Pavle Dešpalj

Croatian Conductor Pavle Dešpalj

Pavle Dešpalj was born in the 1930's into a musical family. After completing his formal education in Zagreb at the Musical Academy under professor Šulak, he conducted several chamber and symphony orchestras in Zagreb and Belgrade. In 1967 he came to the United States, where he became the permanent conductor and artistic director of the Florida Symphony Orchestra and of the opera in Orlando, Florida. Later he became permanent guest conductor of the Chicago Festival in Grand Park, and in 1975, at the invitation of Leontyne Price, he conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Returning to Zagreb in 1980, Dešpalj became chief conductor of the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, whose principal conductor emeritus he is today.

This interview was conducted for Fidelio by Hartmut Cramer on January 7, 1992.

Fidelio: Finally, some important political forces have recognized Croatia. What do you think is the most important thing to be done right now?

Dešpalj: The main thing is recognition. We were trying to get it for quite some while. Our greatest allies are Chancellor Kohl of Germany and his Foreign Minister Genscher, and the Pope in Rome, of course. These three friends of ours have always lifted up our spirits.

Fidelio: You know that classical art, especially music, has played a very crucial role in the various revolutions of the last years; beginning in China, where the students played Beethoven's and Schiller's "Ode to Joy," then all over Eastern Europe. Did you do similar things in Croatia?

Dešpalj: Yes, we did. To think of Beethoven's Ninth is a very proper thing to do in such a situation, and Zagreb's Philharmonic Orchestra performed this great symphony right at the beginning of last season. But we also played Beethoven's Eroica under my direction in the city of Osijek.

Fidelio: What other music did you