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FULBRIGHT-KOMMISSION

UNITED NATIONS
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Kommission für den Studenten- und Dozenten-
austausch zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutsch-
land und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika

Dr. Barbara Ischinger
Executive Director

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Commission for Educational Exchange between
the United States of America and
the Federal Republic of Germany

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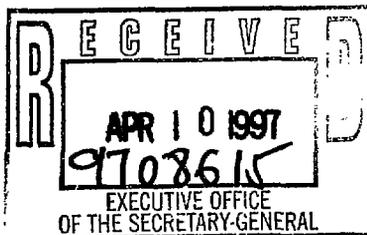
Secretary General
Kofi Annan
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017

U.S.A.

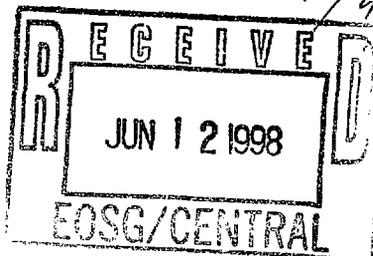
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Dear Secretary General,

In response to your call on American colleges and universities to better educate young people about the role of the United Nations, as reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* daily report of February 25, 1997, I enclose now an article that appeared in the most recent issue of the German-American Fulbright Commission's newsmagazine, *The Funnel*, which may be of interest to you.

In this article, Heiner Staschen, a 1996/97 German Fulbright grantee studying at the New York University Law School, reports on his experience at the 1996 Student Conference on United States Affairs at West Point Academy, which addressed the topic: "The United States on the World Stage: Themes, Actors, Roles." As you will note in the enclosed English translation of the relevant paragraphs, Mr. Staschen frequently found that he had to defend the U.N. and more accurately explain its role to his fellow students.

I look forward to seeing you at the dinner hosted by German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Klaus Kinkel at the Peterberg in Bonn on April 14, 1997. I, myself, served as member of the United Nations family from 1992-1994, when I worked as Director of the Division of International Cooperation at UNESCO headquarters in Paris--which was indeed a very good experience.

With best wishes for a pleasant trip to Bonn,

Barbara Ischinger

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Cited from pages 39-40.

"...As soon as we began to discuss the contradictions of the real world, the conversation became much livelier: when we reached the unavoidable topic of the relationship between the U.S.A. and the United Nations, the general opinion changed noticeably. One of the American students expressed the prevalent understanding of the United Nations: "We (the U.S.A.) invented the UNO. We (the U.S.A.) founded the UNO. The United Nations headquarters are on American soil. It is only natural to expect the U.N. to orientate its activities to suit our needs." The general belief among the majority of participants was not only that the UNO orientates itself to meet the needs of the U.S., but also that it is wasteful and too expensive. Hence, they continued, it is logical and correct that the U.S.A. has only partially fulfilled its financial obligation to the United Nations since Reagan's presidency--at this point, for over 10 years--in the meantime building up a debt of over one billion dollars.

This sudden change of opinion left me momentarily speechless. Were these the same participants who had voted against an isolationist policy for the U.S.A. earlier that day? The next day, after a long evening in the West Point Library, however, came the unavoidable confrontation between myself and the majority of the group. I can count myself lucky that at least the law professor from California agreed with my arguments; without his support, perhaps no one would have listened to me. For example, that the entire administration of the UNO, including the Peace Keeping Missions, is just as expensive as the New York City Police and Fire Departments; that the U.S.A. is number 13 (absolute, not relative), in terms of how many troops it provides to the UNO, which means that it ranks lower than countries like Jordan, Bangladesh, and Tibet; or even, that based on its portion of the world's gross national product, the U.S.A. should actually finance 36% of the UNO, but in reality doesn't even pay its expected share of 25%, meaning that poorer countries and developing countries pay more proportionally.

These are facts that speak for themselves. A large part of the group was convinced by these facts; some of them even apologized for their earlier claims. Others, however, including one of the Military Academy's cadets, continued to support their original opinions. The self-perception as "world sheriff" seems to be deeply rooted for many; since the fall of the threat of communism, however, the readiness to supply the expenditure necessary for this self-proclaimed role is no longer there. And if it is indeed there, then only under conditions set by the U.S.A."