

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information
Press Section
United Nations, New York



SG/SM/3265/Rev.1*
13 April 1982

UN 27777
APR 14 1982

UN/ISA SECTION

TRANSCRIPT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN GENEVA, 8 APRIL

GENEVA, 8 April (UN Information Service) -- Following is the transcript of a press conference given here today by Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar:

SARI RAUBER (President of the United Nations Correspondents' Association in Geneva) (translated from French): I am happy to welcome you to Geneva on behalf of the United Nations Correspondents' Association and to tell you how pleased I am to have you here today. The very keen interest which your presence at this lunch aroused among our members is evident from the fact that more than 90 journalists representing the international press wanted to attend the lunch. There is no denying the fact that, for psychological reasons and because of the influence which the media have on readers, listeners and viewers throughout the world, the journalist has become the prime spokesman for States and for institutional agencies. It is through us that your activities are known in, and have an impact on, the four corners of the world, that your debates and the resulting decisions come to the attention of people in the most remote places on earth. If it is our duty to inform quickly and accurately, it is our right to obtain immediate, impartial and full information. Mr. Secretary-General, as you take up this very onerous office, which we congratulate you on being elected to, I should like, on behalf of all the members of our Association, to assure you of our collaboration and at the same time to express the hope that you will be able not only to understand the requirements imposed on us by our profession but to ensure that our work, which is complementary to yours, can be performed under the best conditions and in the same good spirit which enabled our Association to collaborate pleasantly with your predecessor. We all need one another. Your task is a fine and noble one and to make us understand it better there is no better spokesman than yourself. So I hope that I shall often have the pleasure in the future of welcoming you to the Palais des Nations to hear what we have to say. We hope that in performing your work you will reap the fruits you deserve and we wish you good luck, Mr. Secretary-General.

(more)

* This revision contains translations of the French and Spanish portions of the transcript contained in the original release of 8 April.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): Madame President, dear friends, it gives me real pleasure to have the opportunity to see you all gathered here and to enjoy this pleasant combination of duty and pleasure: the duty of informing you and the pleasure of sharing a meal with you. I am a diplomat by training. As I have said on several occasions, I have a special fellow-feeling for journalists, because I have always thought that there was a very close relationship between diplomacy and journalism. Both diplomats and journalists are always trying to obtain information, sometimes by discreet and sometimes by indiscreet means, but in any case we are always trying to obtain information. The difference, which I may say is to your advantage, is that you obtain information in order to pass it on to world public opinion, national and international, while for us diplomats our role is to pass on our information exclusively to our Governments. But you can see that there is a common denominator between diplomats and journalists, and that is why I have always felt very close to journalists. I know that you are called the fourth estate, and I must tell you that I am not afraid of that fourth estate and that, on the contrary, I want to count on its collaboration in my new task as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I have found that that relationship between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the fourth estate can exist and operate only on the basis of civility and trust, and I invite you, gentlemen, to ask me any questions that come to your minds. I believe it was Bernard Shaw, was it not, who said that questions are never indiscreet, it is the answers that are indiscreet, and I can assure you that I for my part shall not be indiscreet and that you have permission to be indiscreet. I shall not get annoyed, you may ask me whatever you like, and when we begin this conversation I shall say to you: "Fire away, gentlemen". Thank you.

ALAN MCGREGOR (The Times of London): Mr. Secretary-General, with reference to the Falkland Islands, even allowing for the existence of telecommunications across the Atlantic, could something not perhaps be gained were you at your desk in New York? And also in view of the escalating nature of the crisis, namely the start of a British naval blockade early on Monday morning, are you likely to change your further plans to go to Vienna and Belgrade and to have a nice quiet Easter week-end in Italy?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have said to the press in Rome that I am prepared to go back to New York when needed. I am a rather experienced diplomat and I know very well when and where I am needed. As you very well know, my plans are to proceed out of respect for the countries which have invited me for official visits; at the same time there is now an American effort to help solve the problem. It is not for the United Nations Secretary-General to interfere with the current United States efforts to solve this problem. That is why I would rather stay in Geneva where I am in touch with the British Ambassador, whom I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday evening, with the Argentinian Ambassador, and with the American Ambassador whom I shall be very glad to see this afternoon. Then you know we have evidence of the advances in technology from the number of microphones I have around me. The telephone has already been discovered, and there is the Caravelle or Concorde which can cross the Atlantic in just a matter of four or five hours. It is very important for the Secretary-General not to raise expectations. If I go back to New York dramatically and if I have nothing to do there, it will be a way of raising expectations. This I am not prepared to

(more)

do because I am not a demagogue. That's why I prefer to stay in Geneva, very much in touch with all the parties concerned, without raising false expectations.

IBÁÑEZ MARTÍN (Radio Nacional de España) (translated from Spanish): The situation in Central America is brittle, disputatious and tense. It is a prime setting for reckless behaviour, death and violence, and even the two or three big ones are using that scenario to aggravate the crisis and the balance of forces. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, as Secretary-General of the United Nations and as a Latin American, what do you think about the situation in Central America and what is the role of the United Nations to be in putting an end to the violence in the region, ensuring respect for human rights and enabling the peoples to create free and democratic institutions of their own?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from Spanish): Well, I must say that your question is a speech in itself, so I do not know whether I can answer it as briefly as I should like. But in any case I must tell you that the United Nations, and I personally as a Latin American, take a keen interest in the problems of the area. At the same time, however, I do think that there are prospects for the beginning of negotiations that will help towards a solution of Central America's problems, negotiations that would include the United States, the countries of Central America and even Cuba. That being the case, I believe that the United Nations should remain vigilant until the proper time comes for it to act. I also believe that the solution to Central America's problems lies not so much in diplomatic negotiations as in going to the sources, to the very roots of the problems of Central America, which are economic and social problems, problems of injustice, as you rightly indicated, of injustice in the distribution of wealth and lack of freedom.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I said it is important for the United Nations Secretary-General to give an opportunity to diplomatic negotiations which I feel are about to start not only between the United States and Nicaragua and the other Central American countries, but as well with Cuba, and I am very hopeful that this negotiating process will produce some results. My feeling is that Latin American problems and more particularly the Central American problems are social and economic, and will not be solved by diplomatic negotiations. The respective countries have to go to the roots of the problems and put an end to social injustice in the whole area.

GIULIANO CAMBI (Télévision suisse) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, you know that there are some misgivings among the Swiss public about the possibility of our joining the United Nations. Do you think that Swiss neutrality could be guaranteed and accepted by other States if we did join?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): Listen, I served as Ambassador to Switzerland for two years. I am an old friend of your country and at the same time I am Secretary-General of the United Nations. I must therefore tell you one thing: I and all the Members of the United Nations are waiting for Switzerland with open arms. Switzerland, as you know, is already involved with the United Nations to a tremendous degree in I don't know how many of our activities. I am tremendously appreciative of Switzerland's

(more)

contribution to our peace-keeping operations, to all the humanitarian operations of the United Nations, and we believe that a country like Switzerland, with its political independence, is really needed in the United Nations. You will be a factor for balance in the United Nations, you will be a force to which we can always turn as a source of good advice, common sense and balanced judgement. For my part, I can assure you that I am an ardent advocate of Switzerland's full presence in the United Nations. The fact is that we all respect your neutrality and are accustomed to respecting it. In the United Nations we have, for instance, countries such as Austria, which is a neutralized country. That is an even more delicate problem because it is neutralized. Then you have Sweden and you have Finland. Those are countries which are full Members and which contribute to United Nations efforts for peace. Don't forget that the United Nations has never forced any military action on any Government. Military actions have always been voluntary, and in peace-keeping operations you have always provided the United Nations with truly admirable assistance, for which we thank you. As Secretary-General, I must thank Switzerland on behalf of all the Members of the United Nations.

ALI MOSTOFI (Tribune de Genève) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, I am going to ask you a question about a war that is actually taking place now, not one that it is feared might break out or that could be avoided. I mean this war between Iran and Iraq. There is information which gives reason to hope that there might be new prospects for United Nations action in the present state of affairs. Has that information been communicated to you and, if so, have there been any new approaches by the United Nations with a view to ending this war?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): As you know, I sent my representative, who is a very distinguished international figure, Mr. Olof Palme, to Iran and Iraq and he returned at the end of February. He made a further effort to find common denominators on which a process of negotiation could be started. Unfortunately, because of the ups and downs of the military situation, both Governments still have hopes of winning the war, and unfortunately that has a tremendous impact on all efforts not only by the United Nations, but also by the Islamic Conference and the non-aligned group. Now I am going to tell you something which is perhaps confidential; after all, you know that I am a Secretary-General who is not afraid of sometimes telling secrets to journalists. What I should like is for these efforts, by the United Nations on the one hand and by the Islamic Conference and the non-aligned group on the other, to be united so that real pressure could be brought to bear on the parties and they could be forced to come to the negotiating table. I for one am very much afraid that this may become a war of attrition in which both countries have really everything to lose. But I can assure you that I maintain a keen interest in the situation in Iran and Iraq. As I already told you, my special representative, Mr. Palme, who has just returned, is always ready, despite his political obligations of which you are all aware, to go back and try again to persuade the parties to come to the negotiating table.

LUIS ESTEVES (Agence de presse portugaise) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, I should like to ask you a question about the situation in Namibia, which also seems to be frozen. Are you considering any measures to

(more)

get things moving, or even the possibility of another conference on independence for Namibia?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): I have said since taking over this post of Secretary-General that, if I were allowed to establish priorities, one of those priorities, or perhaps the first priority, would be to assist in the independence of Namibia. Efforts are now in the hands of the five Western countries, known as the contact group, which are in touch with the African authorities -- the front-line countries, as they are called -- and, on the other hand, with the South African authorities, with a view to reaching an agreement on the electoral system and on how people are to vote. So you might say that we, the United Nations, are on the doorstep; we are waiting for the Western countries and the front-line countries to agree, so that we can immediately go in and set up our whole machinery for supervising the elections. So I am more or less awaiting the outcome of those talks between, I repeat, the five Western countries, the front-line countries and SWAPO. I must say, and I am not afraid to say it, that I believe there is interest in settling the problem, and for me that is a source of encouragement.

J.G. DANES (ORF, Vienna): Mr. Secretary-General, we are following or most of us, the conference of the Committee on Disarmament here. Now very soon will take place the second special session of the United Nations on disarmament. In your first press conference, your answer to this question was that you needed first to brief yourself on this problem. I presume that this has happened already. Could you tell us what you think about disarmament?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: This is one of the questions which really has for me a tremendous importance. I have had a chance of seeing in Italy the authorities there and the Italians are very much interested in the disarmament problem. I have had the honour of being received by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, and there I have found as well a tremendous interest in the special session of the United Nations on disarmament. As you know, President Reagan has decided to attend. I understand President Mitterrand, the Prime Minister of England, the Prime Minister of Japan, the Federal Chancellor of Germany and many other high-level authorities will be there. But I can tell you very honestly that for me that is not enough. I very much welcome all these distinguished personalities but what is important for me is that they start working. What we have to achieve in this second special session is a real programme of disarmament, and what I have been discussing this morning with some of my collaborators is how to help inject ideas, how to present indirectly proposals to the Member countries in order to get from this new special session on disarmament more than just principles. We all know the principles of disarmament, we all have expressed our anguish and impatience about the disarmament problems, but we have to start working on a concrete basis. Let's hope that this special session will present, as I told you, a programme on disarmament. I should even say a real policy of disarmament. But when I refer to disarmament, I do not only refer to the big Powers. Disarmament is in no way a problem confined to Europe. The disarmament problem is a problem as well for all the developing countries, who divert enormous amounts of money to armaments instead of employing this money for

(more)

their own development. That is why I think the disarmament question is of a tremendous importance, because it is so closely linked, not only with peace, but as well with development.

Mr. DANES: Would you assume that the meeting between Brezhnev and Reagan as it is proposed on this occasion will be of some help and be useful?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: As a man, and as a diplomat, I am always for dialogue, and I think that dialogue in itself is always constructive, and I hope that President Brezhnev will be in a position to go to New York or wherever it is, and that he meets with President Reagan. I think a meeting between the representatives of such tremendous Powers will be beneficial for humanity as a whole.

Mrs. LIESL GRAZ (The Economist, London) (translated from French): In your replies to the questions about the Falklands and Central America, you mentioned the American efforts. Does that mean that you think the United Nations should exercise, or is exercising, its power to mediate through the United States?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): A distinction must always be made between the United Nations as a whole and the Secretariat; the Secretariat is one of the six organs of the United Nations. So at this time I know -- as you have probably read in the newspapers -- that there is apparently going to be an effort not only by the United States, but by the parties concerned, to initiate a dialogue and try to settle the problem of Central America. For the United Nations, there is always a problem; the United Nations is a body and an organization that needs all the Member countries, the 157 Member countries; so if there is an effort of the kind the United States, Nicaragua, Cuba and El Salvador are going to make, we must not push in and say: "Listen, you know nothing about it, leave it to me, I am going to settle the problem." We are an organization of Governments, and we must let those countries have their chance; if they fail, we are always there, ready to try to see whether we can help them. And the same applies to the question you raised about the Falkland or Malvinas Islands; the point is that now there are the good offices of the United States, and I must respect those good offices. I must give the United States an opportunity to play its cards, to see what the possibilities are, and it is exactly the same thing in the case of Central America. I myself am a Latin American, and so in both cases I feel a personal interest, I feel that I probably have a responsibility as a Latin American, and at the same time I am Secretary-General of the United Nations. I do not represent Latin America, I do not represent the third world; I am Secretary-General of 157 countries comprising both developed and under-developed countries, countries of North, East, West and South. I must therefore be very careful at all times to respect the initiatives of Member countries. It is only when I see that there is a vacuum that I think the United Nations should try to come forward and take an initiative.

CHAKRAVARTHY RAGHAVAN (Interpress Service): In your response to the question on the Falkland Islands and with my understanding of your answer to the last question also, I get the impression that you are taking a somewhat different philosophical view of the Charter responsibilities of both yourself

and of the United Nations. The Charter emphasizes that bilateral negotiations should first take place before the United Nations comes into play. The Charter did not envisage the United Nations to be a court of last resort after everybody had tried their hand and failed.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: What I can tell you is that the United Nations Secretary-General under Article 99 of the Charter has some responsibilities, but there is something which I think is very important in the Secretary-General's hands and that is his mission of good offices, his initiatives, when he feels that he can be helpful. As you know, Article 99 of the Charter says that the Secretary-General has the right to raise questions and to draw the attention of the Security Council to problems which affect peace and security. There is another article which says that the Secretary-General can be entrusted by other organs of the United Nations with specific missions. But there is something which I think is very important; these are the initiatives of the Secretary-General when he sees that bilateral efforts have failed to come up with an initiative when he knows that this initiative will be of some help. And in the particular case of the Falklands the United States is trying its hand. I don't think that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has to interfere. There is a resolution which has been adopted by the Security Council. A Security Council resolution, as you know, is a decision, it is not a recommendation. This resolution asks for three things: first, an end to the hostilities; second, the withdrawal of the troops; and third, it asked the parties to try to solve the problem by negotiations. I have to allow the United States to try its hand. And if I see that there is a failure, which I hope won't happen, of the United States initiative, I shall say, as I have already said, both to the Argentinians and to the British, that I am available if I am needed. But the Secretary-General cannot of course impose either his good offices or his discreet diplomacy for solving the problem.

PIERRE GRANDJEAN (Agence France Presse) (translated from French): I should like to ask you two questions, Mr. Secretary-General: what do you expect from your meeting with Mr. Denktash after conferring with Mr. Kyprianou and, secondly, what possibility do you see of any change with regard to the representation of Cambodia in the United Nations?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): As regards the distressing problem of Cyprus, you know that in Rome I had a meeting with President Kyprianou at his request and tomorrow I shall be meeting Mr. Denktash at his request. So I am a listener, as they say in English; I am there to listen. And once I have heard first Mr. Kyprianou and second Mr. Denktash, then I shall be in a position to make an appraisal of the situation and see what are the prospects of continuing this process of negotiation. I must tell you that, so far as Mr. Kyprianou is concerned, he is already in agreement with my suggestion that the process should be expedited, because they were working on the basis of one meeting a week, which in my view is not enough if we really want to make progress. I am prepared to state publicly that there is some progress. I understand that there is also some impatience, but this is an extremely complicated problem. We have nevertheless achieved some progress, as I took the liberty of telling President Kyprianou and as I shall also tell Mr. Denktash. Then, once I have had the two talks, I shall be

(more)

in a position to make an appraisal of the situation and see whether the pace of the negotiations can be stepped up.

With regard to Cambodia, as you know, the General Assembly has always voted to accept the credentials of the Khmer Rouge Government. So there my hands are tied, because if the General Assembly recognizes the Cambodian Government I have to work with that Government and it is my interlocutor. But at the same time, since the resolutions adopted in the General Assembly are not accepted by Viet Nam, they cannot be implemented and the Secretary-General cannot begin to operate. I myself have been to the region twice, but I cannot go to Cambodia as Secretary-General, or previously as Under-Secretary-General, because that Government has not been recognized by the General Assembly of the United Nations. At the same time, I am going to make efforts to settle the problem which exists between the countries of Indo-China -- including Cambodia, which is now the Heng Samrin Government, even if we do not recognize it, and also China -- in short, all that huge complex of South-East Asia. This is a case where the Secretary-General sees that there is a vacuum in the negotiations. He is going to fill that vacuum, through negotiations, through good offices which do not replace the resolution but are, as it were, efforts parallel to the negotiations, because we have one aim, which is to try to obtain a peaceful settlement of international problems.

Mrs. KATHY DAVID (Netherlands Press Association) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, for some years now the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council have been playing an ever-increasing role in United Nations meetings, particularly meetings on human rights. Do you think that this quite recent development is a positive one?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): Extremely positive, and I want to encourage it.

Mrs. DAVID (translated from French): A second question also -- dare I ask your opinion? There has been talk of establishing a post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. What do you think about such a post?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): I have taken a step in that direction by upgrading the Division, which is to become a centre and will, once I have solved the budget problem, be headed by an Assistant Secretary-General. Of course, this is not a decision I can take myself, it will have to be taken by the General Assembly, but I would be rather in favour of such a change, because I believe that great importance must be attached to human rights problems.

DJIBI THIAM (Jeune Afrique) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, my question is actually supplementary to the last one. We have this resolution adopted by the thirty-eighth session on the proposal of the Commission's Working Group, which talks about encouraging and developing effective respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This resolution puts one in mind of the idea of establishing the post of High Commissioner. My questions are the following: if the proposed post were actually established, would it be integrated into or separate from the existing

(more)

Division of Human Rights? My second question: in either case, and whatever arrangement was adopted, how would you view the question of respective functions and prerogatives?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): You have raised a very interesting question and I must say very frankly that, in my view, the High Commissioner should be completely independent, he should have nothing to do with the Division, so that he can state his position quite independently of the position of Governments.

JOHN CHADWICK (Reuters): I understand that on Saturday Mr. Cordovez is going to start a new mission to Afghanistan, or rather to continue a mission with which you yourself were associated. I wonder if you could tell us what prospects you hold out from this latest visit.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: As you know, I dealt myself with the Afghanistan question last year, and I went twice to the two capitals, Islamabad and Kabul. I will be honest with you and I am not exaggerating when I say we have achieved some positive results. First of all, both parties, Afghanistan and Pakistan, are now interested in a peaceful solution of the problem. Second point: they are both interested in a direct United Nations involvement, I should say the Secretary-General's good offices, for the solution of this problem. The third point is that they agree on a general agenda of discussion for solving the Afghan problem, and the visit of my personal representative will help both consolidate what has been achieved before and try to obtain a little more progress in this process. I must admit very honestly that what we have achieved so far is mainly procedural. But you know that when we get something on procedure, actually we are getting something of substance. Anyway, the fact that my personal representative will go as well to Iran is an indication that the scope of the talks is enlarged. I think this is very positive. Now we are making progress as far as the procedural aspects of the problem are concerned, and I hope that after the visit of my personal representative we could perhaps get to the substance of this very serious problem in the centre of Asia.

PHILIPPE GRANDJEAN (Radio Suisse Romande) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, going back for a moment to human rights, I should like to put to you a brief and very direct question: in what has been called the van Boven case, were you subjected to pressure from the Latin American countries not to renew Mr. van Boven's contract as head of the Division of Human Rights?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): That is a question I have been expecting for a long time; it is almost the reason for my coming here. It would really be a way of discouraging my activities as Secretary-General to accept that I could be subjected -- and could not only be subjected but could yield -- to pressure from Member countries. I can tell you with some pride, and I make no secret of it, that I did not seek this post, that I did nothing to obtain it, that I owe nothing to any country, which means that I accepted it because I was independent, and if I feel independent towards the big Powers I feel even more independent towards those that are not as big. So I accept no pressure from any Member country, on any subject, whether staff appointments or the resignation of a staff member,

(more)

because that would be the best way of betraying the mandate I received from 157 countries.

OTTO GOBIUS (Voice of America): Getting back to Afghanistan, do you intend to meet here with the Free Afghanistan Association of Europe which is in Geneva, and if so what can you tell them?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I haven't heard about any request from them to be received.

(The Secretary-General was then informed that such a request had been received just before lunch.)

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I see, I will consider it with great interest. I have just learnt about it. Give me some time to consider it.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL (Associated Press): Considering that the Security Council's resolution on the Falklands has so far effectively been ignored, and given your continuing presence in Europe and the fact that no one has asked you to play a role in this dispute, I am wondering if this issue points clearly to the failings of the United Nations to resolve international disputes, and secondly, does your distance from active efforts to mediate a settlement of the Falklands dispute mean that during your term you are going to take something of a figurehead role rather than serving as a vigorous and visible arbitrator? Is the Secretary-General of the United Nations really so powerless?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is something which is extremely important and that is to preserve the Secretary-General's usefulness. He cannot at this time present a formula or any proposal which he is not sure will have some chance of success, because otherwise he will lose his credibility. The Secretary-General has only moral power; it depends very much on the Member countries to implement his decisions. The Security Council as well is supposed to be very powerful. As you know there are many resolutions which are not implemented. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is powerful because he acts, in a way, with moral authority, and the best way of preserving his moral authority is not to be too hasty in presenting formulas which have not been carefully pondered. That's why I, for the time being, am waiting and seeing what are the chances of other efforts; but I have already told the British and the Argentinians that I am available when I am needed. You don't expect me to come out with a miraculous formula and to interfere with Mr. Haig's efforts. I think that the only way of preserving my usefulness is by preserving my credibility and by not making wrong use of my office as the Secretary-General.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Are you a figurehead without much power at all?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Well, if that is your opinion, I would feel extremely unhappy. I am sorry, but I don't think that you get the point. What is important for the Secretary-General is to preserve his credibility,

(more)

his usefulness. I am trying to preserve my usefulness and my credibility by waiting to see what are the chances of the American efforts. That is what I consider to be my duty.

ALBERTO DUFFEY (Televisión mexicana) (translated from Spanish): My question is still on the subject of the Malvinas. The problem is that lack of action by the United Nations, leaving the countries to continue the mediation, is having the effect of polarizing the issue, and we see that on one side Western Europe is supporting the United Kingdom while on the other side the Latin American countries are showing solidarity with Latin America. So the problem that arises is that, if the United Nations does not act, we may be faced with a war situation.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from Spanish): I do not know whether to answer you in English, in French or in all three languages at once. But I have here a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations, which means that the United Nations has acted, and here is its resolution that must be complied with.

ROBERT KROON (Time-Life Magazines): A general question and a specific question. Getting back to the van Boven affair, what were your reasons for not extending the contract of your Director of the Human Rights Division beyond 30 April? Among the previous Secretaries-General of the United Nations, who inspires you most in your present job?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: As far as Mr. Van Boven is concerned, I would like to have again an opportunity of saying that I have great respect for Mr. van Boven's integrity. My problem with Mr. van Boven or rather the Secretariat's problem with Mr. van Boven is not a problem of substance. I don't think that the Secretariat disagrees with what Mr. van Boven might think about some specific human rights problems. Our problem is of a procedural nature. It is a fact that as an international civil servant, unfortunately, the personnel rules ask staff members not to interfere in the internal affairs of any country. That is our problem, but of course I don't pass any judgement on what Mr. van Boven thinks about specific issues. As I repeat, I have great respect for Mr. van Boven's integrity, his morality; I think he is a man of enormous moral conscience and qualifications but the problem we have at the Secretariat is a matter of staff rules and it is our only problem with Mr. van Boven.

As far as the other problem is concerned I am a very close friend of Mr. Waldheim, but I think that I have a different style. We have more or less the same background, we both were diplomats, we both were representatives of our own countries, but we have different styles perhaps because we come from different parts of the world. I am an entirely Latin-minded man and my very dear friend is an Austrian man, not exactly Latin. Turning to your question about my source of inspiration, I can tell you that I have some inclination to think that Hammarskjöld was a marvelous Secretary-General, a man with a marvelous intellect which I always admired very much. There was a man who was a mystic, U Thant; I don't know whether our times are for mysticism, but I had great respect for him as well.

(more)

Mrs. MIREILLE LEMARESQUIER (Radio France) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, it is often said, the credibility of the United Nations is often questioned, because conflicts and crises drag on. One example is Poland since 13 December. How is the Secretary-General of the United Nations following the situation in Poland, and do you not think that it would perhaps be a good thing for you to go to Warsaw?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): So far as Poland is concerned, that is one of the problems I am following most closely, but I must draw a distinction between a problem that is essentially a matter of domestic policy, such as the problem of martial law, and the problem of the implementation of martial law. The latter does of course affect the implementation of human rights in Poland and I must tell you, since I have no reason to hide it from you, that I keep in regular contact with the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations in order to ask about the implementation of the human rights conventions signed by Poland not only with the United Nations but also, as you know, with ILO. Mr. Blanchard on his side and I on mine are exercising, if I may say so, constant pressure; we are constantly expressing our concern for human rights in Poland. As regards a visit to Warsaw, you know, don't you, that I cannot parachute in there. A visit -- that requires a lot of preparation, diplomatic negotiations to see when, on what conditions, and so forth it can be made. But at the proper time I shall be delighted to go to Poland, where I have in fact served as ambassador of my country. One way or another, if I can help to uphold human rights in Poland and if I can see for myself whether there really is a direct violation of human rights, it would really give me tremendous pleasure to have that opportunity.

Mrs. LEFEBRE DE WIRZ (Radio Mia/Panama) (translated from French): I should like to know, Mr. Secretary-General, whether the affairs of Panama can be regarded as interrelated with the affairs of Central America as a whole, in view of the fact that the President and negotiator of the Panama treaties between the Republic of Panama and the United States has submitted a document to the United Nations complaining of cases of violations of those treaties. My question is whether, if that document has greater repercussions in the situation now prevailing in Central America, you could agree, as Secretary-General, to act as intermediary in order to prevent the situation from becoming more acute.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): Your question is tremendously complicated, but anything to do with good offices, anything to do with serving peace must always be given consideration by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I apologize for not being specific in my reply, but your question is extremely involved. I am prepared, if you give me your question in writing, to study it and give you an answer. But in any case, I repeat that as Secretary-General of the United Nations I am always ready to undertake actions for peace.

ANDRE NAEF (Tribune de Genève) (translated from French): Mr. Secretary-General, by the nature of things you have an intimate knowledge of Latin America and of the way Latin American Governments react. I therefore

(more)

wanted to ask you whether you think that the Security Council resolution on the Falklands, the Malvinas, which, as you said, is a decision, do you think that that resolution is realistic; in other words, could the Argentine Government agree simply to withdraw its troops without a little sweetening of the pill?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (translated from French): I am the Secretary-General of the United Nations, am I not? In a way, although this may seem a little presumptuous, I am the guardian of the United Nations Charter. I must therefore hope that Argentina will implement that resolution, because it is a decision of the United Nations Security Council. I shall hardly be able to demand that other countries implement that resolution, decisions if I do not ask the same of Argentina on the ground that I am a Latin American. I think that I should be remiss in my duties. I strongly hope that full implementation of the resolution will be achieved. I very much hope so. And, I repeat, I have informed the parties that, with regard to paragraph 3 of the resolution, I am at the disposal of the parties whenever they consider that I should intervene. But I repeat, it is not for me to impose myself, to say to them, here, here I am, listen, I am the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am here to implement paragraph 3 of the resolution. There is at this time a very important effort by the United States which we must respect, which must be given its chance. But as Secretary-General of the United Nations, my hope is that the resolution will be implemented.

Mr. MCGREGOR: Mr. Secretary-General, the thing that worries many of us is that you are talking about waiting until the United States initiative has worked its way through, but we are moving very quickly towards a situation now where they may be use of force and more loss of life because some people have already been killed within a little more than 72 hours.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am sorry to answer your question with a question. Did you hear me when I told you that I was in touch with the parties? And then that yesterday I was in touch with the British Ambassador and I told him that I was available. As I said, I cannot impose my good offices but if they ask me to do something I'll do it because it will be my duty. But at this stage I have the impression that the parties don't want me to intervene. Do you expect me to tell Mr. Haig: "Well, stop your mission because I have an idea of my own?" There is an exercise which has already started, and I don't think I should interfere. However, if the exercise fails, which I hope won't be the case, of course I will be immediately at their disposal and I will perhaps produce a formula, but I think I have to respect the present American exercise.

Mrs. RAUBER: We thank you very much and are looking forward to seeing you here again.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Well, I will see you in July. I will come for the ECOSOC and I am prepared to see all of you then.