

Monday, 14 December 1981

UNSGfile

Meeting with the Secretary-General designate, Javier Perez de Cuellar

In the course of the morning, a little after 10:30 a.m. the newly nominated Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, telephoned. He expressed his thanks for the message of congratulations which I had conveyed to him last Friday, soon after his nomination by the Security Council. I had conveyed that message verbally through the Permanent Representative of Peru here in New York since I was unable to get in touch with Mr. de Cuellar in Lima when I tried to do so by 'phone.

Mr. de Cuellar recalled our relationship and what he described as our friendship of more than 10 years and expressed the hope and confidence that he can count on my co-operation, advice and assistance. He also said he would like to have the opportunity to meet with me before he leaves for Lima.

I thanked Mr. de Cuellar for his call and once again assured him of my co-operation and my confidence that he will function effectively as Secretary-General of the Organization. I also read to him the message which I had received this morning from President Nyerere addressed to him.

Later I asked Angela to arrange for a meeting with Mr. de Cuellar either for tomorrow or today. The meeting was arranged for this afternoon and took place at the Peruvian Mission, 45 East 67th Street. It lasted from 4:10 p.m. to 4:37 p.m.

Mr. de Cuellar began the conversation by expressing his appreciation for my expressions of confidence and goodwill. He said that he highly appreciated and valued that. He said that he was impressed by the elegant way I had conducted myself, including my decision to withdraw from

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the ballot. He was sorry that I was not elected because he was cognizant of the great support that I had from the member states and particularly from the third world. He was also among those who were hoping that I would be elected.

He recalled that we had known each other for over 10 years and more specifically when we were colleagues as Permanent Representative of our respective countries in the early 70's. He said he considered me as one of his friends, "... a close and distinguished friend". He therefore valued very much my co-operation and assistance and hopes he can count on my advice.

He very much wants to maintain a direct channel of communication with me in order to be able to solicit my advice in tackling the various problems facing the Organization and the world.

He said that we are passing through a very difficult time and pointed out, for example, that the present crisis in Poland, as well as the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights. He said he was going to leave for Peru on Wednesday, 16 December so that his shadow should not inhibit Waldheim from performing his role for the remainder of his term, particularly in respect to the present crises in the world. (He in fact said that bearing in mind the particular developments in Poland, he thought it best for him to leave and go back to Lima so that the Secretary-General does not have to operate and be looking over his shoulders).

Propounding on his perception of what has to be done, he said that he was very conscious of the responsibilities that he is about to assume. He is from the third world and he will do his best to live up to the expectations

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of the third world and to satisfy the aspirations of the third world while of course being conscious of his universal responsibilities. He said that the Organization needed a "shock" and he was determined to do what he can so as to live up to the expectations of the international community. He also made reference to the Secretariat where he said he would also devote an important part of his time.

Salim: I assured the Secretary-General of what I told him in our telephone conversation of this morning. Namely, he can count on my fullest co-operation. I told him that based on his background, both as Permanent Representative of his country and his intimate knowledge of the Organization as a one-time senior member of the Secretariat, I was confident that he would be a good Secretary-General.

I pointed out that once it became clear that the U.S. opposition would continue, both myself and my President took the view that it would still be an important victory if a credible third world personality were elected to the post. I was therefore happy to see him assume that responsibility. I remain ready to be of any assistance. I also reciprocated his own desire that we should maintain a direct channel of communication. At that juncture I again referred to the message which my President had sent him and handed him a copy of the same.

Mr. de Cuellar again expressed his warm appreciation for my sentiments. He again reiterated that he would very much appreciate my advice and continued assistance and emphasized that he will be keeping in continuous contacts. He asked me to express his appreciation to President Nyerere - for whom he said he had the highest respect and admiration - and observed that President

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Nyerere's message was the first message that he had received from any Head of State since his nomination.

At this point Mr. de Cuellar alluded to his pending confirmation by the General Assembly tomorrow and I told him that I was sure that he would be confirmed by acclamation. In this connection I referred to the discussions I had on Friday evening with the Chairman of the Latin American Group, the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua and also with the Ambassador of Panama. Both of them had expressed to me the wish that Mr. de Cuellar would be appointed by acclamation. I had then told them that I saw no problem with that and suggested that it would be ideal if the President of the General Assembly were himself to propose that method of appointing him.

In assuring Mr. de Cuellar of Tanzania's support and my own support as he embarks on his important responsibilities, I also took the opportunity to invite him to Tanzania whenever his responsibilities and time allowed it. I assured him that I considered him as a friend, both on personal terms and in the context of being a personality from the third world. In responding to this Mr. de Cuellar said it would give him great pleasure to do so as soon as possible, not only because of the high respect he has for me but also because of the fact that President Nyerere has been the first Head of State to send him a message, and above all he has the highest respect for my country.

Mr. de Cuellar then said that it was his "aspiration that I will succeed him when he completes his term of office". To this end he said he wanted to confide in me that he wants to be a one term Secretary-General. He is now 62 years and knows very clearly the vagaries of the job. But even

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if he were 55 years, which he is not, he would still have wanted to serve for one term only.

Salim: I told Mr. de Cuellar that I appreciated very much his sentiments and his confidence in me. But 5 years is a long time and since he has been kind enough to make reference to the fact that he hoped that I would succeed him, I would be presumptuous and also give him my own opinion. It was my considered view that what was most important was for him to do his utmost in the conduct of his responsibilities as Secretary-General. To this end the institution needs and expects change. The morale of the Secretariat is very low. The United Nations' role has been reduced to a peripheral one. He therefore has enormous responsibilities. The expectations of the world community and particularly of the third world are great and I am confident that he would live up to these expectations.

But above all, I thought I should also emphasize that no Secretary-General should make the mistake which Waldheim made. It is common knowledge that from the day he was elected, the Secretary-General was thinking of his next election and in this connection I wanted particularly to recall the discussion which I had with the Secretary-General on the eve of his re-election in 1976. He had then told me that nothing would give him greater happiness than to see me succeed him when his term expires five years hence, that is in 1981. As it turned out however Waldheim embarked on another campaign. The problem with such an attitude, I pointed out, is that instead of focussing on the job, one tended to focus on how to please everybody in order to be elected. Therefore, I felt it was only fair that I should be very frank with him and tell him what I and many of my colleagues want most is to see him succeed

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as a good and effective Secretary-General. Whether he served one term or seven years becomes irrelevant. In the interest of the third world, of which he is one of the distinguished representatives and in the interest of the Organization and in the interest of all of us who fought for the principle that a third world personality should occupy that post, it was important that he should succeed and he can count on my definite and unreserved co-operation in that direction.

Mr. de Cuellar said that he agreed one of the mistakes which our friend Waldheim had made was to be on a constant campaign trail and it is common knowledge that he had been campaigning all the time.

He reiterated his hope and expectation that we can co-operate fully and once again reiterated his desire to keep a direct channel of communication. He ended by asserting that he would like to count on me for advise and assistance in confronting the many problems that he would face.