

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Question of UNSG: Conversation with Ambassador Donald McHenry, Permanent Representative of the United States of America - Wednesday, 15 October 1980

The meeting with Ambassador McHenry took place at my office at the Tanzania Mission on Wednesday, 15 October 1980. It lasted from 11:20 a.m. to 12:48 p.m.

The discussion almost exclusively focussed on the question of next year's elections for the post of UNSG and in this regard on my possible candidature. It should be stressed that the conversation was private and confidential in character and Ambassador McHenry's views and analyses were his own. Following are some of the points made by Ambassador McHenry:

(i) From all indications, it would appear that the incumbent is campaigning for another term. Though he himself has not said so, officials close to him who are known to reflect his views have been telling people (including United States' officials) of the Secretary-General's desire for another term.

(ii) As part of this campaign, these officials had at one time been talking about the Secretary-General's wish to serve for another but limited term (of 2 to 3 years). The reason adduced is ostensibly the question of pension.

(iii) Last year, during the early part of the Iranian hostage crisis, the United States - both President Carter and Secretary Vance - had felt that I as President of the Assembly could help by possibly going to Teheran to discuss the question with the Iranian authorities. But when the Secretary General was informed of this, he did everything to frustrate the proposal. Among

other things he, the Secretary-General, put the suggestion to the Iranians in such a way as to ensure that the Iranians would not accept it. As it happened, the Iranians gave no response which suited the Secretary-General fine. It was obvious that he was opposed to the idea of my being involved in the undertaking. It was clear that his opposition related to 'electioneering considerations'.

(iv) As part of his campaign efforts, the Secretary-General has had the habit of direct contacts with the Secretary of State (Vance and then Muskie) and of recent, also with President Carter. There is basically nothing wrong with such contacts but when they are overdone then they have a counterproductive effect. He gave the example of Waldheim's telephone conversation with President Carter during the Special Session on Development. All that that conversation achieved was that if we here in New York were unable to arrive at a negotiating position he would have had to go directly to the President to get his concurrence. Consequently, this type of intervention was ill-advised. Don said that he has drawn the attention of the Secretary-General to this.

(v) Their Government has not yet addressed itself to the question of next year's elections of the Secretary-General. As far as he knows, the USSR have not made known their position. While it is understandable that they, the Soviets, would prefer the incumbent, there is no basis to the claims (reported in Newsweek and Christian Science Monitor) that they have decided to block my possible candidature.

(vi) The USSR does not want a strong Secretary-General. They do not want a Hammarskjold. The United States, on the other hand, want a strong

personality. Yet, the fact remains that the present international situation is such that no Secretary-General can be a Hammarskjold. Indeed, had Hammarskjold lived, he might himself have changed to attune to realities of the Organization. It is clearly evident that any Secretary-General has to take into account the interests of the USSR (and by implication, the USA - writer)

(vii) When I asked specifically as to what he felt would be Washington's reaction to my possible candidature, Ambassador McHenry responded that while the issue has not been discussed, certain observations are pertinent:

(a) If the Carter Administration is returned to power, I have the advantage of being known and respected by many people inside or allied to the Administration. He mentioned for example that both former Secretary Vance and present Secretary Muskie have a very high esteem for me. So do many senior officials who know me and have worked for me. (Thus the impression Don conveyed was that my candidature would have a sympathetic hearing from the Carter Administration);

(b) If, on the other hand, Reagan won, it would be a different ball game. There will be new people and new concepts. And though eventually they will also have to reckon with the realities of the Third World, etc. it will take some time. It will also take them time to know people, bearing in mind at the same time that many in the possible Reagan Administration would be people with stereotype concepts and approach about the Third World and Africans.

(viii) It was his view that my candidature should not be taken in a classical campaign fashion, but rather through quiet diplomacy and

soliciting across-the-board support. He cautioned against regionalizing the campaign as that would 'politicize the office with difficult consequences' for the holder when elected.

At the end of the conversation, we agreed to meet again after the United States Presidential elections to assess the situation in the light of the outcome of the elections.

New York, Thursday, 16 October 1980
SAS/amg