

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

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Question of Secretary-General ship: Working luncheon
with Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim - 26 June 1980

Today, Thursday, 26 June, I had a luncheon with the Secretary-General, Dr. Waldheim in his private dining room on the 38th floor. The Secretary-General had called me last week Friday to suggest that we have a private luncheon sometime this week and although I am scheduled to leave this evening for Freetown, I responded to the Secretary-General's invitation since in his telephone conversation it was quite clear that he wanted this luncheon to take place before I left.

I had thought that the luncheon would be confined to discussions on various problems relating to the international situation, and more specifically to the forthcoming special sessions of the General Assembly. During the lunch these items were discussed but it appeared that the main purpose of this private get-together was the point raised by the Secretary-General after we had exchanged views on the aforementioned points. Indeed, it was only when coffee was being served and when I had indicated that I had to rush to make final preparations for departure that the Secretary-General raised what clearly became the main purpose of the working luncheon. This was the issue of the election of the Secretary-General next year.

To this end the following is a brief resume of the discussions on this subject:

Secretary-General: There has been a lot of rumours and gossip within the United Nations concerning both my intentions and your intentions. I thought since we have always been frank with each other and since you have always been a good friend and we have talked over many matters and you have always been helpful, I should let you know my thinking and position because I

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think if you know my position then this will also help us to co-ordinate matters.

Some Governments have asked me about my intentions so that they can make up their minds on what to do. Some have also asked about my availability for the third term. I want you to know that quite frankly I have not yet made up my mind. I have not decided my position. One has to see how the situation develops next year and only in the course of next year will I be in a situation to make a decision. But what I want you also to know is that in the event I decide that I will be prepared to make myself available for another term, then it will only for a limited period. I will be frank with you and I hope I can have your confidence on this. If I decide to be available for another term, I will do so but at the same time synchronizing my service with the events in Austria. As you know I ran unsuccessfully for the Presidency of Austria more than ten years ago before I became Secretary-General. I lost narrowly because then I was not known. Things have now changed. I am quite popular in Austria and when the term of the present incumbent, Dr. Kirchsclaeger, expires, it is my hope to run for the Presidency. But in order to do so I will need to engage in political campaigns. What I have in mind therefore if I were to serve for a third term is only to do so for a period of about three years and then go to Austria in order to contest the Presidency of the country. The Austrian Constitution does not allow for a person to serve for more than two terms so at any rate when the present incumbent's term expires, he will not be able to run again I will be 63 next year and by the time of the election I hope you understand my position. I think it is only fair that I should consider what to do. You also know that my situation is somewhat different from that of U Thant because as you know,

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U Thant had his own difficulties with his country and he could not go back home. While in my case, I can go (and the possibility is that I can become President). Let me repeat that (i) I have not yet made my decision; and (ii) even if I decide to make myself available, it will only be for a limited period. I think it is important that you should know this because in that way you will also have a clear perspective of what my intentions are and this can help us to co-ordinate matters.

I am saying all this in confidence to you because as you realise if word leaked out that I was contemplating to go to Austria for a political office this could create a lot of headlines.

Salim: I very much appreciate the candor with which you have discussed this matter with me. I am also aware of the rumours and speculations and particularly the gossip within your own building. I want to make clear a number of things. Contrary to some speculation, in my trips abroad and in my meetings with the Heads of State, I have never raised the issue of the Secretary-Generalship. Indeed, even when asked by the press I have always been careful to say that there is an incumbent and that I was fulfilling only my responsibilities as President of the General Assembly. Secondly, it is however a fact that a number of colleagues and even Foreign Ministers have approached me and have been urging me to present my candidature next year. But my classical reply to them and to the others has always included that firstly it was premature for me to say anything, secondly it depended on what your own intentions are and thirdly it also depends on the state of the international situation next year. One thing has always been foremost in my mind and this is the friendship which you and I have, a friendship which has been of long standing. Because of this friendship I have always felt that

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whatever decision I make I will let you know. In other words, it is not something which should be a topic of pure speculation. More importantly, it is, in my opinion, necessary to avoid a situation where people try to draw a wedge between us.

In light of the foregoing therefore, I particularly appreciate your candor and your frank views about your intentions and your assessment of the situation. I would therefore also appreciate that when you do make your decision on what you intend to do you should let me know because then I will also be ⁱⁿ a position to let you know my own reaction and position.

Secretary-General: I am very grateful for your comments and for your friendship. It is quite understandable that some colleagues should approach you concerning your possible candidature. It is perfectly normal that they should do so since this is my second term and for my part I think it is important for us to know each other's position because as I told you before, I have the highest respect for you. You have the experience of the Organization; you have the knowledge of the Organization and it is only logical that you (can succeed me). I remember for example when I was first elected in 1971 I came to call on U Thant in his office right here on the 38th floor and he told me how glad he was that the person who succeeded him had some experience in the Organization. You are an old hand and you have had various responsibilities not only as a representative of your country but you also have chaired so many important organs.

I wish to repeat that I have not yet made my decision and one thing is obvious - I will not engage in a campaign. I have been with the Organization for some time now and in my position should I decide to make myself available

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I will only do so if member states express a specific interest in my continuing. But I wish to emphasize that even if that were to happen, in other words, if I was to decide to make myself available, it will only be for a limited period. In this context therefore it is important for the two of us to co-ordinate because such co-ordination will be in the interest of the Organization

At any rate we still have a long way to go and anything can happen between now and then - the state of the international situation and the state of my own health.

Conclusion: Before we parted, I again thanked the Secretary-General for his comments and I told him that I will be keeping in touch with him. I agreed with him that we still have a long way to go and we should keep in touch. In as much as he would let me know when he makes his decision one way or the other, I also undertook to do the same.

As we parted we reiterated the sentiments of our mutual friendship and understanding.

Observations: It seems to me the Secretary-General was trying to convey a message which simply put would read as follows:

He is likely to seek a third term. I should be patient since he will not serve for a full term. That type of arrangement can suit him because he can go back to Austria and become President and in his judgment should suit me (he is assuming, of course, that I have aspirations for the post of the Secretary-Generalship) since he would only be there for a limited period.

SAS/amg
New York

Thursday, 26 June 1980