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Interview with Joe Sills

April 15, 2005

New York

Interviewer: Jean Krasno

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JOE SILLS

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INTERVIEWER-JEAN KRASNO

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Jean Krasno: This is an interview with Joe Sills, the former spokesman for UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and we are in New York. This is April 15, 2005. I am Jean Krasno. To start out, can you give us a brief background on when you joined the UN, what you were doing prior to becoming the spokesman, and then how you became spokesman.

Joe Sills: First of all, thank you for the opportunity to do this interview. I actually did not do a preparation for the UN as many people do, or for international service. I majored in English as an undergraduate at Vanderbilt. I did do a Masters Degree in International Affairs and Arab Area Studies at the American University of Beirut. My first job, really significant post, was with Morgan Guarantee Trust Company in New York. I was in the international division working with the international research unit. I had always been interested in the UN since college days and had gone to a number of college UN programs, not so much model UN. I was never that interested in the model UNs here in New York. I left Morgan and went back to Nashville, which is my home and was in management consulting with a firm there. The chairman of the UN Association, Bob Benjamin, who was the head of United Artists corporation – I had been on the board of the UN Association first as a token student member and then they had some people from around the country and I was active in the UNA chapter in Nashville – they brought in a new president and Bob called me and asked me if I would be interested in becoming vice president of the United Nations Association to work with putting together a development, a fundraising, program which he didn't feel they had done well. And he also wanted me to work with the chapters and divisions.

JK: What year would this have been?

JS: This was in the early '70s, '73. I initially told Bob no because I didn't want to move back to New York. My wife doesn't like New York and she would not have been happy leaving. But it was appealing and what I was doing was not that appealing. So, I told him I'd give it two years. So, I came up to New York in 1973 to become vice president of the UN Association.

JK: Who was president then?

JS: The president was Ed Corey, who had been US ambassador to Chile and was very much involved in the furor over the overthrow of Allende by Pinochet, whether he knew about it and whether he was involved; or did the CIA do it behind his back? Ed left shortly thereafter and Jim Leonard became president. Jim and I had come aboard as the two vice presidents almost at the same time. Jim was in charge of policy studies. And Jim stayed as president for a while and then when President Carter asked Andy Young to

become ambassador to the UN, Jim was asked to be his deputy. This was to give Andy some real strong backup from someone who was a State Department veteran. Jim was a foreign service veteran. So, he left to become deputy permanent representative of the US and the executive vice president, Bob Ratner, became president of UNA-USA. Bob was not a person with a substantive background but he was a brilliant fundraiser and manager and got some very good people to work with him in the policy area that were more substantive; and the main person was Ed Luck. He appointed Ed to become head of policy studies and of course Ed is, as you know and people who know the UN know, very strong in substantive matters.

I stayed with UNA until 1981 and then in early '81, I decided to leave the Association and I was looking around. Yasushi Akashi was Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and he asked me if I would be interested in joining the UN Secretariat. Initially, I wasn't, just the same as with UNA. Because I had worked with the UN at UNA and I was frightened of the bureaucracy. It was just scary to realize how difficult it was to get some things done there. But again I realized it was a good opportunity. I came to the UN in 1981 as Deputy Director of the Press and Publications Division, which was a part of the Department of Public Information. The director of that division and also the spokesman for Secretary-General Waldheim was Rudi Stajduhar (?) who was a Yugoslavian. He was my mentor initially and I didn't really know too much about what I was doing those first few months. But Press and Publications essentially is public information about the United Nations, putting out the materials, doing the press releases, the brochures, the booklets. I had done a lot of that at UNA. There was a transition. The main difference I discovered was that at UNA you didn't have to have everything cleared by ten people before you put out. Whereas at the UN, it was a very difficult process, and understandably, understandably so. But that is how I got started. It was in July of 1981 that I joined the UN.

JK: OK, and then when and how did you become spokesman?

JS: There is a question there. There is a practice at the UN to name a spokesman for each president of the General Assembly. That person is spokesman for the president for one year. You do that in addition to your regular duties. They would try to cut back and reassign some things, but this is not a salaried or a post on the charts. It is a temporary, lateral move. I had just joined the UN and of course in July and the president was elected in September. One of the two candidates was Ismat Kitani. It was a competitive election which is rare in the UN for the president of the Assembly. He was running against ambassador Kaser of Bangladesh who already had enough commitments, more than enough to be elected, public commitments. Ismat became one of my very closest friends and who died just a few years ago in Geneva. He was known to everybody at the UN. He had been around the UN for a long time and it is a secret ballot. So, it is quite easy to make a commitment publicly, "we will support so-and-so," and then no one knows how you voted. When the election was held, Rudy van Wechmore (?) of Germany was president of the General Assembly and he announced that it was a tie. It was a complete tie between the two of them. So, Rudy literally drew out of – I am not sure if it was a hat – wrote their two names on pieces of paper and picked one out and it was Kitani. So,

Kitani was president of the General Assembly. That was one of the more unusual things. That was the fall of 1981.

Now, DPI always sent some candidates and let the president of the Assembly select one, as spokesman. Then they would give that person for the year's time, give its services. But in the past you always knew who the president of the General Assembly was going to be because there was an agreed upon candidate among the regional groups. So, this time it was a bit of a mess. Ismat got a list of five names just in case, just as did Ambassador Kaser. They were all Arabs and Ismat went to Bill Buffim who was under-secretary-general of the UN at the time and was in charge of General Assembly affairs. And he said, "I don't want an Arab spokesman; I want an American spokesman because the American press is really the critical press that we have to deal with." And Bill said, "Well, I have somebody to recommend to you." And it was me; I had known Bill for many years through his association with the UN. I met with Ismat and we hit it off very well. He informed Akashi that he would be very pleased to have me, should he win the election.

JK: Kitani was Iraqi?

JS: He was Iraqi; he was Kurdish. He was the highest ranking Kurd in the Iraqi foreign ministry. He was deputy foreign minister at one time and he was their ambassador here to New York. Ismat was a very fascinating, deep, bright person. He was not close to Saddam Hussein; he did not approve of a lot of what Saddam Hussein did, but he never broke off his relationships with the Iraqis. He never publicly criticized them. He didn't believe in burning bridges and he was close to people like Tariq Azziz. It was to Iraq's value to be able to have a Kurd in a position of responsibility that they could point to this. It just sort of worked out. There were people who were critical of him for not being critical of Saddam, but he felt, and I think very rightly, that he would have damaged his credibility and his access; and perhaps he could help the Kurdish people a little bit.

I served in that post for a year. It was very interesting. The Iraqis did not make much of a staff available to us. Traditionally, when you have person like your foreign minister elected president of the General Assembly the government will make three or four people available to him. The Iraqis made one person available. So, I had to do a great many things other than the spokesman's job. Fortunately, DPI was very tolerant and Rudi Stajduhar (?) gave me a lot of time. But I had to write a lot of his speeches and statements and take notes when he would receive guests and answer correspondence for him. Because the fellow from Iraq could only function in Arabic; his English was wretched. The spokesman is just supposed to do the press stuff, but I wound up doing a great deal more than that. The most interesting thing and I really want to get this in the oral history because it is a very significant point of UN history. I would go down to see Ismat everyday before the noon briefing. Because I would go to the briefing with the Secretary-General's spokesman, Rudi Stajduhar. One time I went down and it was when the election for the Secretary-General of the UN had really heated up.

Waldheim was running for a third term and he was running very, very strongly. The so-called Austrian Mafia which were his staff, his senior people, were just working the halls ruthlessly. Ultimately, they got every vote except one, but that happened to be China, which has a veto. Salim Salim was his opponent and he had, of course, the Africans behind him and much of the Non-Aligned. They were making the argument that Waldheim had been there for two terms; it was not Europe's turn anymore. It was Africa's turn. And it was getting ugly. I went down there that day thinking I would just have a routine session with Kitani and his secretary said, "Go on in; he is waiting for you." I went in and there were Waldheim and Salim Salim sitting there.

JK: In Kitani's office?

JS: In Kitani's office, behind the podium, in the offices where General Assembly president has an office. Of course, I worked for Waldheim; I was a Secretariat employee. I knew Secretary-General Waldheim quite well because when I was a UNA one of the things I worked on was the Sutton Place mansion that Arthur Houghton gave as the Secretary-General's residence. He gave that through UNA for tax reasons. We had it for a while and leased it to the UN and then we passed it on to the UN. We raised some money to refurbish it and I had worked on all that. So, Mr. Waldheim knew me quite well. What Kitani said when I came in there, he said, "Joe, I want you to tell the press that I had a meeting with the Secretary-General and with Foreign Minister Salim and I have told them they really need to tone this down; this is getting out of hand. It is getting too ugly. They are both gentlemen and they need to act like gentlemen and cut some of this stuff out." And that is the way he talked. Ismat went to school in Illinois, Knox College. I just stood there and I said, "Well, yes." And he said, "Why don't you step outside a minute." And I did and the two of them left. And I went back. And I looked at him and said, "How the hell am I going to go into the briefing and tell them that you called the Secretary-General and Salim Salim in and chewed them out and basically told them to behave themselves?" I remember my words very clearly because we laughed about this many times. And I told this story at the memorial service for Ismat at the UN.

He looked at me and grinned and said, "You figure that out; that's what you get paid for." So, I had to go into the briefing that day and say that he had had a conversation with them; he had expressed his concern about the tone of the campaign, etc., etc.

But then, how did I become spokesman?

JK: Let me ask you one other thing about that particular issue because we had interviewed Olara Otunnu who was serving as president of the Security Council at that time.

JS: Olara broke the logjam.

JK: Please verify that; if you could tell that part and then we can go on?

JS: It was really jammed up between the two of them. The US was supporting Waldheim very strongly for a third term. I have often reflected that if he had been elected, all of the scandal over his wartime activities would have broken when he was a sitting Secretary-General of the UN. Olara came in as president for December, as president of the Council. They had not been able to move this. I forget who was president in November. It is a geographical rotation and that could be looked up. But it had not moved. So, Olara came up with and I am sure he told you about the blue ballots.

JK: Explain that.

JS: He wanted a straw ballot. He gave white ballots to the ten non-permanent members and blue ballots to the five permanent members. It could have been the other way around but it was different colors. He wanted to establish who among the candidates could survive a veto. It became quickly clear that there was one blue ballot against Waldheim and there were two blue ballots against Salim Salim. I don't know who they were; I would assume one was the US. He kept this process going and I'm sure he told you how many times he did it. I don't remember that. Eventually, one name came with no blue ballots [against him] and that was Perez de Cuellar. On the basis of that, he proposed Perez de Cuellar and the Council accepted him. It is a marvelous procedure and Olara Otunnu is one of the most innovative people I even met at the UN. I really think he would have been a marvelous Secretary-General.

The two people, just to digress, that I have thought would be very good Secretaries-General were Olara Otunnu and Tommy Koh from Singapore. I think either of them would have been a very good Secretary-General. Of course, the way things go, neither one of them had an opportunity to do that. There are others, but those two stand out in my mind.

JK: But Kitani's suggestion that the two candidates, Waldheim and Salim Salim, toned down their rhetoric contributed to the ability to get a vote.

JS: It did; after that meeting, and Ismat made it very clear to me that he wanted me to go public with this. He wanted me to say to the press; this was not to be a secret, private meeting. I think it did tone it down a little bit. I think these were good people and gentlemen and ladies. They get into an intense political situation and they get pulled and shaped by those situations. Those four or five Austrians who worked for Waldheim as his senior staff, they were tough nuts. They did a lot of arm twisting, but they could just not persuade the Chinese. China felt that it was time for someone from the third world to be Secretary-General. They didn't back down on that. The only Secretary-General from the third world at the time was U Thant. U Thant had been an emergency after Hammarskjöld was killed. I think it did contribute to the campaign, but Olara was absolutely instrumental in breaking the logjam.

JK: So, now let's move on to when you became spokesman.

JS: I finished that tenure in 1982 even though you are technically spokesman for the president through the spring and the summer, it's during the General Assembly. There was one time which was fairly intensive in the spring of 1982. That was the Special Session of the General Assembly on disarmament. We had to do a lot of work on that. And he presided over that session. Francois Giuliani became spokesman for Perez de Cuellar very quickly because Rudi Stajduhar was very closely associated with Waldheim. It was known that if Waldheim did not continue that Rudi would not continue. Francois and I worked together and residual capacity as spokesman for the president of the Assembly. In the spring, he proposed – I later discovered – to Perez de Cuellar that he wanted a deputy spokesman. Perez de Cuellar said, "Go ahead and pick whomever you want."

Perez de Cuellar is very, very French in his outlook. In fact, he said in Jim's book [Jim Sutterlin], Jim quotes him that, "I think in a previous life I must have been a Frenchman." Francois said, "I have the person I want, but he doesn't speak French." I later discovered that Perez de Cuellar was reluctant because of that. But Francois said, "He is an American." I think I had met Perez de Cuellar, but I certainly didn't know him at all. I had never had a private conversation with him or anything. He said, "I really need some help with the American press and he was spokesman for Ismat." This is Francois recounting this to me. I was not in on this conversation. Perez de Cuellar said to Francois, "Fine, if this is what you want. I know this guy; he is capable. I wish he spoke French because we need to operate in both languages and that runs against my grain."

Then he told the Secretary-General, "There is a second thing. It is going to be bureaucratically difficult for me to make him my deputy because he is at the same level as I am." We were both D1s. In fact, Francois laughed about it. He said he told the Secretary-General that in seniority I was more senior than he was. I outranked him. So, he said, "I would like to create the post of associate spokesman rather than a deputy and have you think of us as interchangeable." So, that is the way he did it and that is why I became I think the only associate spokesman. Since then, it has always been a deputy spokesman. It just worked out very, very well. Francois taught me an enormous amount. He was a fine spokesman. I realize he rubbed a lot of people wrong; he could be a bit abrasive. He was marvelous to work with and as a boss, he was the boss. I understood that.

Perez de Cuellar was really very good. He basically told us, for instance, on trips, he said, "You two just decide who is going to go on the trip. There will be a slot for a spokesman." We understood that if it involved a French speaking major element, that Francois would do the trip, or later even some of our other people, more junior people, would go on usually shorter trips. It was really a good relationship. We had during the first term of Perez de Cuellar good press relations. We are talking about his tenure from 1982 to 1992. Now, I served through the first term and I was also simultaneously still doing work in DPI in the press and publications division. Francois was the full-time spokesman, but I was not.

I don't know what to say about that time. It was not a time when the UN was doing particularly well in political matters. In his memoirs Perez de Cuellar said, "I cannot think of one single problem that was solved by the UN during that first five years, political problem. Perez de Cuellar was like many Secretaries-General; he was mainly interested in political matters. He would talk about economic and social issues and he would talk about the necessity for good management and running the UN well. But neither of those was his interest. His interest was being a player in the political arena and inserting the Secretary-General into the arena. I don't think he was imperialistic; I think he genuinely felt that he and the UN could help in many situations. He deeply resented particularly the United States when he was excluded from things, when he was not filled in on negotiations that were taking place. This was a difficulty for him to deal with. Bear in mind, in his first years, we had the Reagan administration; we had Ambassador Kirkpatrick. We had Alexander Haig as Secretary of State. I don't want to go into a lot about Ambassador Kirkpatrick at the UN, but she was certainly very much of a school marm, very assertive of the US position. I think that it is fair to say that Perez de Cuellar respected her a great deal as a person and as an intellect. But I don't think he felt quite as much about her as an ambassador, doing the hard day-to-day work, putting together consensus, putting together agreements, that sort of thing. There is no question that when the Bush administration came in, and Baker as Secretary of State, that also coincided with a turn in which the UN was playing a greater role; the Cold War was winding down. He got along much better with that administration.

The pivotal event here was the Iran/Iraq war. He felt that the UN really played a major role in resolving that. Again I keep quoting his memoirs, but I studied them a bit before I came up here for this. He said that announcing the cease-fire in the Iran/Iraq war was the single most satisfying thing he did as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Things were turning. He had a better working relationship with the United States. Still the big, huge, giant gorilla in the room was the US debt to the UN and the insolvency of the UN. When he came in he spoke immediately to President Bush about that and the President said, "I want to have that cleared up; I am going to get it cleared up in two or three years." It didn't happen. A succession of meetings and I went to many of them in Washington. "Well, it's Congress; we can't get Congress to go along." And everybody knew who knew anything about US politics, if the president had really wanted to make this a priority and use some bargaining chips, he would have done it. But it just never was done. This just remained as a problem all through his tenure, all through Boutros-Ghali's tenure, and a continuing difficult problem.

The second five years of Perez de Cuellar were really far, far better. The mood was better. There was a bit of a euphoria about the UN. As you know, the end of the Cold War happened. Bush said on one occasion that, "I think the new world order can be realized and the UN can play a major role in it.

JK: And Gorbachev as well.

JS: Gorbachev, of course, that was a key, key thing. The P-5 coming to work together in the Security Council was really critical at this point.

JK: Can I get back to the relationship with the press. How comfortable was Perez de Cuellar with the press?

JS: He wasn't very comfortable with them. He wanted us to be an interface. We had press conferences. He really didn't want to do it. He did like one-on-one interviews, particularly if they were conducted in French. There were some journalists he was very fond of. Every Secretary-General does that. They have some that they have known previously or they wrote a story they thought was really great, usually because it praised them. Particularly the French press, Perez de Cuellar was always ready to meet with them. He wasn't hostile toward any of the media. It just wasn't at the heart of what he was doing. He didn't regard the press as a key element in building up the kind of support the UN had to have. That had to come from governments. He understood once removed that the press influenced governments. I think he was highly respected by the press corps as a person. He was straight; he didn't mislead. On several occasions he would say, "I don't want to talk about that, don't want to go into that." I can't really think of any situation where he just intentionally misled them, a press person.

JK: Was there a time when the press was negative toward him or toward the UN?

JS: Not really, in his first term there were a number of articles – I can't remember them specifically – but sort of said the UN was irrelevant; the UN has just been shoved aside by the Cold War; the Secretary-General is largely a ceremonial post. Waldheim had started a process which I still have doubts about. It's been embraced by every Secretary-General and that is the idea of the official visit, in which the Secretary-General would go to a country, be received by the chief of state. There was usually a dinner. He would speak to the parliament. We would have meetings with the foreign minister and go over things. All Secretaries-General liked this. They would complain, of course, they all complain for the record about how much travel they have to do. But they all love to do it because they are received like heads of state. Someone once told me and I don't know if this is true; it would be interesting to verify it. That the two people who are given head of state rank who are not a head of state are the Pope and the Secretary-General of the UN. They are treated like heads of state. I thought these things took a lot of time. And my gosh, we had to tramp through a lot of museums and sit through a lot of ethnic, folkloric music programs which I dislike intensely. Sometimes they were good. I remember the Austrians on the Austrian visit they asked us to take a couple of days aside. It was the time of the Salzburg festival; so we went down to Salzburg and they got us marvelous seats for two days. That was nice. But usually it was not quite that nice. Generally the discussion at these meetings would be a tete-a-tete with the head of state. That was usually not more than 15 or 20 minutes. The party including the spokesman was in on all the discussions. They just didn't have any depth to them, by and large. They were reviews of situations and people stating the obvious and they took a lot of time. But there was a building up of personal relationships here and that's very important. I know a number of people who were called on in the future to be special representatives who had been foreign ministers and had gotten to know the Secretaries-General. So there is a residual value. But Kofi Annan said, to jump ahead to the present, someone asked him

what was the biggest surprise that he had. And he said, "It is the demands on my time. Just the constant, never ending inability to do everything I'd like to do."

And these visits take up a lot of time. That is one thing that worries me. I felt, and I felt this of all the Secretaries-General; I don't think any of them have been attentive enough at running the house. I think they should have spent more time with the Under-Secretaries-General for administration and management, finding out what's going on with their different heads of departments, even occasionally having meetings with staff from departments, more on top of the budget, all of those things. No Secretary-General that I worked with had any interest in those things. They wanted to get someone to handle it and the less they had to do with it the better. The main headache on personnel was that they would get calls from governments asking them appoint people to posts. That's just a never ending part of being Secretary-General. You have to put up with that. We did a lot of these visits, to get back to the main point.

I think that Perez de Cuellar was liked; he was respected by the press corps, as indeed he was by almost everybody. But the UN just wasn't doing very much. There was just not much news coverage of the UN during that period. In the second term, it was better. I think he did respond. Now he had some very sticky problems. Afghanistan, which was a major issue, was being handled by Diego Cordovez. The relationship between Diego and the Secretary-General was not good. But the Secretary-General felt that Diego was doing a good job on Afghanistan. He felt very strongly that he should let Diego do this job even though he felt Diego was a bit of a prima donna. To illustrate some of the problems that arose: Diego's relationship with Francois Giuliani was so bad that Francois and Diego didn't speak. Diego would not receive Francois. So if it were something related to the briefing and Francois was briefing that day and we had to get from Diego, I would go do it by myself. I would get the information from Diego and I would come back and tell Francois so he do the briefing. It was a very intense negative relationship.

The second term was better. There was a breath of fresh air. There was more press coverage. Some things were breaking well. The finances had still not been solved; that was still a huge problem. To move on in my story, a new Under-Secretary-General came to the UN for public information, a Canadian, Mrs. Sevignet (sp?) and she wanted me – all this time remember I am still working for DPI – she wanted me to become director of a new division. Like every new person that comes in, the first thing they do is reorganize, usually before they really know what they are doing. This was true in her case, absolutely. She insisted on this complicated reorganization and she wanted to establish a division for program management to put all of DPI's products on an assembly line. It is very much the fad in management consulting, comprehensive program management. She wanted me to head this and appointed it to me. I was supposed to get a promotion to the D2 level, as part of it to become a director. It turned out that the Secretary-General had promised her a number of D2 posts when he was recruiting her and it was reneged on. She asked me, "Will you be a director, act as a director, have authority over the division, everything except you don't have the director's level?" I was very unhappy about that, but I thought it needed doing. I had been brought into the UN at a pretty high level; D1 is a high level. So, I agreed to do it. It quickly became clear to

Francois and myself that I couldn't do both things. It was just too much. The Secretary-General wanted to make trips and I had problems keeping things moving in the division. So, we decided jointly that I would leave the position at spokesman's post. It was very painful for me because I had enjoyed it so much. It was simply something that had to be done.

JK: I know Fred Eckhard is very concerned about how Secretaries-General have dealt with negative press. So, there was a period of time, particularly under the Reagan administration, at which the UN itself was getting hit. How did you handle that?

JS: We did not do a great deal of responding from the spokesman's office. We would try to get people to write articles, OpEd pieces. We did a lot behind the scenes. We worked with UNA to try to get them to do things. Perez de Cuellar did not want us to be confrontational. He was not a confrontational person. It was totally against his style. He would have been very upset if I had criticized a Member State by name in a briefing. That was just not the way he worked.

JK: Or been defensive in some way?

JS: Defensive was probably a bit easier to do. The whole Kirkpatrick staff just swept across the UN. Frankly, we didn't know what to do with it initially. Not Jeanne Kirkpatrick herself, but when you have people appointed, like her second tier people, to the staff at the UN who are really negative about many things the UN is doing – that reverberates with the Bolton nomination as we speak – it's a problem. Chuck Lichtenstein who was on her staff and then went to the Heritage Foundation and with whom I had a good personal relationship, was viciously anti-UN. Jose Sosano (?) was very much anti-UN. And then there was the prince of darkness, Alan Keyes, who had an intense dislike of the UN. They centered around one theme in the final analysis and this theme is still there through the Boutros-Ghali administration, through the Annan administration, and that is they were intensely upset when the UN would do anything, or the Secretary-General would do anything, that would impede US policy, or that would not go along with what the US felt should be done.

There was not that much of that in the first five years because the UN was not doing that much. So, there were attacks on UNESCO; you remember the US withdrew from UNESCO. There was some really unfair things written about the agencies, which are autonomous organizations. The Secretary-General does not control the World Health Organization. But it was quote "the UN." I just picked WHO out of the air, not for any special reason.

We had to deal very carefully with criticism because I remember Perez de Cuellar saying, "Let's not make Jeanne mad." I can remember him saying that very line. So, the answer was I think we didn't deal with it very well. I have always felt the UN should be more aggressive and more preemptive where possible in dealing with criticism. I know governments won't like this. It is extremely unusual to expect governments to be able as they should be just to lambaste the UN in every way possible and for us to just turn the

other cheek and not speak up and not speak back. A succession of Secretaries-General have felt that this would create problems, would create ill will. I think you need to strike a balance and we are too far in the wrong direction. I don't think we should call the United States a liar or anything that silly. Even though there have been times when the president has said, "We will do something." And it hasn't been done. I have never felt we handled criticism as strongly and as up front as we should have.

JK: Let's move on to Boutros-Ghali.

JS: Let me bridge this. I served about three years in DPI in this function running this division. I finally did get promoted to the D2 level, two or three years after I was promised it, but that is the UN. Mrs. Sevignet left and a new Under-Secretary-General came in, an Italian, Marco. In the interim Boutros-Ghali was elected. Perez de Cuellar's term ended. Francois and I spoke about the new Secretary-General. He had had a very good working relationship with Perez de Cuellar. None of us knew Boutros that well. His election was something of an accident. As you probably know, the US abstained in the vote because Tom Pickering had no instructions. Bush and Baker couldn't agree on who the US supported and it came up for a vote and Pickering abstained. And Boutros was elected 14-0-1. Because Tom Pickering said later he had no instructions.

JK: Who had proposed Boutros-Ghali? Do you remember?

JS: Boutros says in his memoirs that at a meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or the G-77 they were talking about this and several African names were mentioned. As Boutros tells it, President Bongo of Gabon spoke up and said, "Well, there is not a single person in all this list that speaks French, all these names we are talking about." And he turned to Boutros and said, "Boutros, why aren't you a candidate? Why don't you make yourself a candidate?" This is the way Boutros tells the story. He said he got interested in it. He certainly thought he was prepared for it. His portfolio in the foreign ministry of Egypt had dealt a lot with African matters and the Egyptian relationship with African countries. He was in effect deputy foreign minister; the title was a little bit different. I am not sure about his exact title. In effect, he was the number two man in the foreign ministry.

So, he went to Mubarak and said that he was interested in this. And Mubarak apparently said that it would be humiliating to Egypt if you lost. But Boutros said, "Will you approve my running?" Mubarak gave him the green light and Boutros proceeded to run full steam. He began calling on people, talking to them, building up support. He came to New York one time and Abe Rosenthal told this story and he asked to see Abe at the *New York Times*. He went into the office and Rosenthal said, "Why do you want to see me? Are you running for Secretary-General?" And Boutros said, "Yes, that is exactly why I wanted to see you." And Rosenthal said, "Well, thank God, someone is finally honest."

President Bush as you may recall was initially was supporting Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada for Secretary-General and this was a non-starter. This was just not going to go. The US did not have a strong candidate. Boutros just gradually pushed to the fore.

He got French support. John Major was supported Gro Harlem Brundtland, but that didn't go anywhere, because this was another European. It was not Europe's time. When they came to the vote, Boutros had done his work very well. He had gotten the Non-Aligned support. He had the French lined up. The British were ok with him, if not enthusiastic. The Chinese were ok with him, and the US abstained. And he was elected.

When he came in, Francois was his spokesman and Nadia Unis (?) was Francois' deputy. When I left the associate spokesman's role to be full-time at DPI he brought Nadia in as his deputy. Nadia, as many know, was killed in Baghdad. She was Sergio de Mello's deputy in the Baghdad operation and she was killed in the explosion. Nadia was an Egyptian; she was a very good deputy. She was a career DPI person. They continued. It was not a good relationship from the beginning. Francois did not hit it off with Boutros-Ghali the way he had with Perez de Cuellar. It went on through the first part of the year. Then in the middle of October of 1992, Jean-Claude Ammee, who was the chef de cabinet of Boutros, called me up to his office and said, "Do you want to be spokesman?" I said, "Good God, no, I don't have any interest in that." Because Boutros did not have the best reputation after his first year. He had a reputation of being arrogant and difficult and many things like that. It was not a smooth first year for him. And Jean-Claude said, "You may not have any choice." This was on a Thursday. He said, "The Secretary-General is in the Security Council. I want you to go down there to the office beside the Council and when you get there, tell the secretary you are there. He's going to come out from the Council and talk to you," which is somewhat unusual.

So, I got there and Boutros came out. I knew him, but it was very similar to Perez de Cuellar. I had never worked with him closely. He came in and he said – bear in mind, this is Thursday – and I thought I was going to be interviewed. I knew that I was the one they had wanted but I thought I was going to be interviewed. And he said, "Well, you start Monday morning as my spokesman." I said, "Yes sir." He said furthermore, "I have picked your deputy." That, incidentally, is an error which has to be corrected in the summary paper of the history of the spokesman's office, where it says I selected Ahmed Fawzi. I did not select Ahmed Fawzi. The Secretary-General said, "He used to be Mrs. Sadat's spokesman. He is an Egyptian journalist and he is very good and you will like him." So I was sitting there thinking, "I have been given a job I don't want by an Egyptian Secretary-General whose has picked an Egyptian as my deputy who will undoubtedly have a back channel to him far better than I will ever have."

He said, "Is there anything you want to ask?" I said, "I would like to ask the normal question about access. That is really very important and that is the main thing I would like to discuss now." He said, "Look, I am not a big one for meetings. I am not going to have a daily staff meeting." He said, "When you need to talk to me, the secretary, the person who handles the appointments, will be instructed that that message is to be given to me immediately, that you need to talk to me. And as soon as we can do it, we will do it. If you don't need to talk to me, don't bother me." He said, "I do not feel it necessary to talk to you everyday, but I will talk to you five times a day, if I have to." I don't think he said "five" times, but many times a day. He clearly wanted me to take some responsibility, I think probably a bit more than Francois had been allowed to take.

I never had the feeling that I had to prove myself. I don't quite know how because I really should have had to prove myself. But it turned out when I met Fawzi who was my deputy the whole time I was there. He is a marvelous press guy. He comes out of the media. He knew the media well. His English is impeccable, British educated. He and I worked very well together. He was very supportive and he never in any way that I know of undercut me with Boutros, because there was no need to. It was really a good relationship from the beginning. Boutros basically honored everything he told me. I remember one time at ten minutes to twelve and we did our briefing at twelve everyday. Something came up and I really needed an answer. I called Frances, who was the name of the secretary. She sent a note in to him and he looked at it and he wrote something across the bottom and handed it to her. He said to call Joe with the information. I don't know what the topic was. Frances told me later that he was in a meeting with the foreign minister from some place. There were six or eight people in the room and he interrupted it to read the note because she had written on it that Joe has to have an answer to this. So, he honored that. He did honor it.

I did feel there were occasions -- he is a very clever man -- where he wanted me to do something, to say something, in order to see what the reaction to it was before he committed himself. That was one of the devices he would use, to see how things would float. One of the trial balloons, and I didn't really object to that too much. He never in the entire time I worked for him -- and I say this for Perez de Cuellar as well -- never asked intentionally to misrepresent something for political reasons, never. Now, one of the things I tried to do, if I can just interject this. I have talked to other people who have been press spokesmen about this. I think it is extremely important that you be honest with the press. If there is a piece of information that they are hunting and you know it, but you are not authorized to give that information to the press and you lie and say, "I don't know." There is a very good chance that will get back to you. I tried to be very impeccable about this to try to make a distinction between "I don't know" and "I am not authorized to go into that." I have seen many occasions with press representatives from the US, from the quai d'orsee (?), others that I have known who did not honor that. They have later paid for it because they misled the press. They said, "I don't have that information." I think that is a very important distinction. That is one I really tried to honor as spokesman.

Again, from the very beginning, Boutros had problems with the Americans. He got off very well to a good start because in the first month of his Secretary-Generalship, was the meeting of the Security Council at the head of state level, the first time that had ever taken place.

JK: Yes, that's right, in January of 1992.

JS: That had been set up by Perez de Cuellar and very carefully orchestrated. Prime Minister John Major (UK) presided. The Brits were in the chair at the time. And they asked the Secretary-General to present his thoughts on the future role of the UN in peacekeeping. That is where "An Agenda for Peace" came, which I personally think is

the finest written product of his Secretary-Generalship. It was very well received. It has – I don't want to go into the details – a number of proposals that for the life of me I have never been able to understand why they were objected to by a number of states, particularly the United States. It was a very forward looking role for the United Nations. He later did "An Agenda for Development" and at the very end of his tenure, the "Agenda for Democratization."

JK: He also did, as Jim [Sutterlin] explained to me, the supplement for the Agenda for Peace.

JS: It really wasn't a version two. Jim is right, because it didn't rewrite it; it supplemented it, the supplement to the Agenda for Peace. But again, he started off with the same huge financial difficulties. The total arrears were almost twice when he came in as what they were when Perez de Cuellar came in. He had to deal with this. Boutros, at the beginning, he had real flurry of showing "I'm running this organization." I had said the Secretaries-General really didn't want to do this and mainly they didn't. But for his first six months he abolished much of the senior posts. He was horrified to find how much UN people traveled. He put a rule in that was enormously controversial that every Under-Secretary-General had to get his permission to go anywhere. He had to sign off on their travel. He was actually right. These people are in the air all the time and many of them spend far too much time traveling rather than managing the store. But it is part of the deal. He was very strict on that. I was not his spokesman at the time, but during the first year when Francois was his spokesman. One of the things I did at DPI was do the public information program for the Rio Conference on the Environment. I designed that whole program and put it together, had several meetings in Brazil to get everything in place.

JK: That was in 1992.

JS: I will never forget the first meeting we had in Brasilia with them. We were talking about press arrangements. I said I would like facilities for 2500 journalists. They said, "That's too many. We don't think there will be that many." I said, "I know there are going to be a lot of Brazilian journalists; I know there are going to be a lot of foreign journalists. We built into our planning 2500. At the conference in Rio, we accredited 8,600 journalists. I was biggest, chaotic thing I have ever done in my life. We somehow made it work. But we would have heads of state press conferences staggered every 30 minutes. I would stand by the door and when my clock hit the minute, I would open the door and go in and interrupt the head of state and say, "I'm sorry, you have to get out; we have got somebody else here." Some of them asked me to chair the press conferences and I had to do it as a courtesy. Mrs. Brundtland, whom I have known for years asked me if I would chair her press briefing when she was there.

It was a very successful conference, almost in spite of the logistical problems. I think one that had an impact. The other one that I did, just give you my story was when I was with Perez de Cuellar and was associate spokesman. The head of the UN drug control program at that time was a Canadian by the name of Tamar Oppenheimer (?) who would

be an excellent person for you to talk to for the oral history about the development of the UN drug and crime control program in Vienna. I had known Tamar over the years very well and she had asked Perez de Cuellar to lend me to her to run the information program for the international conference on drug abuse and illicit trafficking. I remember going up to his office. He told me that Tamar had come to see him. I said, "I know what she asked you. Did you agree?" He said, "What choice do I have?" He said, "When she descends upon you?" So, I worked on that for about four or five months and that conference was in Vienna.

To get back to the point that tied us to the Rio Conference when Boutros-Ghali came. I was not his spokesman. One of Francois' deputies named Mario Zamorano came with him as the spokesman for the trip. Boutros blew up. He exploded. He said, "Is anybody at UN agency there? They are all here. Every head of a specialized agency, every Under-Secretary-General of the UN, everybody is here in Rio. What do they think this is, a holiday?" He was livid. He felt very strongly that this kind of thing should not be done, that there should be limitations on the people who came to UN conferences. It was true. But it was valid; there is a health aspect to it. There is a labor, employment aspect to it. And all of these guys and gals like to come and like to travel.

JK: Well, they had to get their two cents in. If there were going to be a treaty on this, what was the language going to be?

JS: Exactly, and the final statement, to be sure their agency is mentioned and their programs are mentioned. It is part of the game. It is an equation, a balance. And he felt the balance had gone too far in the other direction. Then you had the problems with the state department. As you know, [US President] Clinton put Warren Christopher in as secretary of state and Madeleine Albright as UN ambassador. Boutros said in his memoirs, "I know that I am a difficult person, but Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright are difficult people, too." That is a direct quote.

It was a difficult relationship from the beginning. If you look at his memoirs, he wrote them after he had been Secretary-General. And he describes in his memoirs the impressions he had at the time. This is a great problem of history. I think anybody tends to recast things in the mood that they come out of a situation with. But I think basically it was pretty straight. It is fair to say that he never had much respect for Madeleine Albright. He says from the beginning that she was not a diplomat; she did not know how to be a diplomat. She liked to lecture people. She just was totally impatient with the kind of patient, behind the scenes work that it took to build a consensus. He says at one point that she seemed to feel that just the very fact that the US wanted something was a reason for the countries to agree.

Boutros loved the diplomatic process. He used to talk glowingly about something that took eight years of negotiations to do. He just thought this was marvelous. To him it was part of how people and nations and cultures worked together. It was slow and intricate and difficult. It involved finding common ground and compromising. He didn't feel that Madeleine was interested in doing that. He found Christopher very aloof. Both of them

constantly were telling Boutros how to do things as Secretary-General, "Don't take this trip."

JK: They were dictating to him.

JS: They were trying to. I went with them to Korea and we visited South Korea and crossed at the DMZ and spent Christmas in North Korea, which was one of my less favorite Christmases. We had Christmas lunch with the "Great Leader." They told him, "Don't go to Korea." They didn't want him to go to Korea. He would come to Washington to meet with committees or make speeches and Albright would call him up and say, "We don't want you to come to Washington." He took great umbrage at this. In fact, in one of his speeches one time, he said, "Ambassador Albright has told me not to go to an African country, that it wouldn't be helpful for me to go there because she thought it might be dangerous for me. And she also told me not to come to Washington because she thought this must be dangerous for my health, too." He told that as a joke. I think he was speaking at Georgetown University or GW [George Washington University]. He constantly got invitations to speak at commencements. He would go down there.

I will say this for Albright, that [speaking at colleges] they didn't object to. It was the meetings with Congress and with committees in Congress. They were sometimes difficult. I remember a meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when in the first part of the discussion, the first two or three things the members of the committee raised had to do with finances and management and UN expenditures and staffing. And he just lost his temper, not in a horrible way. He said, "What is this all about? I want to talk about issues. I want to talk about the Middle East. I want to talk about Cyprus and all you want to talk about is housekeeping." That is what he said, "All you want to talk about is housekeeping." And the committee was taken aback. We are not supposed to do that. We are supposed to be the good UN that accepts whatever is done. He was impatient with that. He really deeply resented the kinds of criticisms that he felt were trying to tell him how to do his job.

JK: We are talking about his relationships with Member States. But did he feel also this tension in the relationship with the media?

JS: The media were probably more critical of him than of Perez de Cuellar because Boutros was a bit of a lightning rod. He had a way of saying things and when he did press conferences such as his famous statement that, "Security Council resolution 224 was not binding." This caused him a great deal of trouble. What he meant was that it was not under Chapter VII. The media jumped all over him on that one. His famous statement, and I could of strangled him, when he said in Sarajevo that, "I can name ten places in the world that are worse off than you are," when they were being bombed and shelled on a daily basis. Later he said, "What I meant was that yes they have problems in Bosnia in the former Yugoslavia, but the European nations and the US and everybody is concerned about them and working on it. And you've got places around the world, particularly in Africa, where nobody is concerned about them. They are not getting any

money; they're not getting any troops." From that standpoint, you can see what he was saying, but it is still not a very good thing to say. He had a lot of one-liners that were not that good.

He was more comfortable with the press than Perez de Cuellar was. Boutros is also very French oriented. Both of the Secretaries-General that I worked for, French was their second language. In Boutros' case, it was Arabic and Coptic. So, French was his third language, to be proper. But for Perez de Cuellar, French was certainly his second language. They both were more comfortable in French than in English. I used to very gently try to deal with this. I will give you two instances. Perez de Cuellar when he meant economic, e.g., economic issues, he always said "economical" issues. I tried several times to explain to him the difference between the two and I said, "It is not that people don't know what you mean, it is just really not accurate." But he still says economical issues. Boutros, in addition to dropping the "s" on United Nations all the time, one of his favorite words, if you know French – I know a little bit, not a lot – "manifestation" which is the English, in French means an event. If you go to Geneva and get weekly agenda that they give in the hotels, it will say, "manifestations." I tried to explain to Boutros that in English it is sort of like an apparition appearing. He would constantly talk about there was a "manifestation" and the press would look around and wonder what he was talking about. But they both were less comfortable in English. Boutros was less intimidated; he just didn't care. He knew he understood English very well and he sometimes had some problems with some words but it didn't bother him that much. I think he was more comfortable with the press.

The spokesman will sit in on interviews and usually tape them. This part of the ground rules, because if the Secretary-General is misquoted then we can have evidence. When he is doing one-on-one, it is just like we are. There would be two tape recorders, one by the journalist. Every Secretary-General I have worked with accepted that fact that their interview should be recorded, on the record, interviews, which made things a lot easier. Boutros was more at ease. He was a bit more outspoken. He probably put his foot in his mouth much more than Perez de Cuellar did. He certainly did, not probably. He was better with the press. He understood a little bit more than was needed for the press to get a story. I tried to push this on him. I remember one conversation I had with him and he said, "Awe, they are going to get their paycheck anyway." I said, "Look, Secretary-General, the far majority of the people in the UN press corps are stringers; they don't get a paycheck. They get paid if they sell a story. The ones that are fully employed like *Reuters* and BBC and *New York Times* they are in a very competitive environment. They can't get their stories in the paper unless there is something in those stories. Barbara Crossette has spoken very eloquently to this over the years, about how tough it is to get UN stories into the *New York Times* unless they are on breaking, hard news type of stuff.

I didn't have a lot of complaints with Boutros on the press. He was accessible. He enjoyed press conferences. He liked to give the press conferences, even though we had to fight our way through his chief of staff; Jean-Claude Ammee did not like the press and was very hard to deal with in that regard.

JK: Let me just ask you, because you had the noon press briefing. And the Secretary-General did not appear at those briefings, is that correct?

JS: Very rarely, on occasion if there were a major announcement or if he wanted to, he would come down to the noon briefings. Just a little aside, if you look at the briefing room, room 226 on the second floor, when we remodeled it, we put a door to the side of the podium which opens into the protocol offices. That was purely to give us a way when the Secretary-General or some head of state came to the briefing, to get them out without taking them out through the whole press corps. They would come down on occasion. The way the briefings were done were like this: there was a noon press briefing. All accredited journalists could attend the briefing. Much to their chagrin we made a very strong rule about not letting NGO (non-governmental organization) people attend. They were for the press.

JK: I have tried to get into them and they would never let me in.

JS: This was a real source of irritation with NGO representatives, but the press made it very clear to the UN Correspondent Association that they would take extreme umbrage even boycott if we let them in. One of the constant things we had – it's a miniature version of the travel to the conferences – of course Secretariat people wanted to come. They wanted to write notes to their bosses. This is back before we moved ahead in technology. Now the noon briefing is broadcast throughout the system and in Geneva through the computer. I watch the briefings live. This was a big, huge issue at the time. The briefing notes are now by four o'clock in the afternoon a near exact transcript are put on the internet on the UN's webpage. We had a big thing on the top of the briefing notes, "for Secretariat only." We tried to make sure they didn't get out to other people. There has been a real sea change on this. Fred Eckhard has been just marvelous and far better than I ever was in understanding and adapting to the new technology. He has got some really good staff who are computer savvy. But back then this was a big issue.

We would brief at 12:00 and it would end at 12:30. We had a commitment to the press not to go beyond 12:30. It might end earlier than that. Before it was telecast, it was broadcast on UN radio. So, there was an interim step between no circulation and the internet. I am not sure of the chronology, but the journalists could listen to the briefing. But if they didn't come to the briefing, they couldn't ask questions.

A lot of journalists would not ask a question at the briefing because they didn't want to give their story away because they were on to something. So, we would talk privately with them. But we had to be very careful with them not to give information privately to them. If a journalist let's say would ask, "I understand that the Brits are going to propose a new peacekeeping force in such and such at the meeting of the Security Council this afternoon." I would say, "Yeah, I think you are on the right track." But if a journalist would say, "Can you tell me what's going to happen in the Security Council?", I'd say, "Listen to the Council; use the press seats." Again, that's a distinction. It's an art as it is in business or a university. You get to know the people you can trust that will

honor background, that will report reliably, that understand what their writing about. And you do better with them. You give them more stuff; you work more with them.

JK: What were some of the major events happening at the time during his tenure and how did you field those kinds of issues when you dealing with the media?

JS: There were a lot of them. Let's start with Somalia: UN forces in Somalia, the breakdown, the clans, the technicals, everything that went with it, the Pakistani soldiers who were killed. I think there were 35-38 killed. This was traumatic for the Secretary-General. He was really shaken by this. I remember it. Then the Americans, President Bush, said, "We are going to come into Somalia; we are going to do it." A humanitarian operation, and the Secretary-General thought that was fine. He endorsed it completely. But he told the president and made it very clear – this is in the records of the Security Council – these gangs, and he used the word "gangs," have got to be disarmed. "We have no chance in Somalia." And the US military took the position, "We will not make any effort to disarm them." So, they set up the humanitarian operation.

The UN troops remained, the Malaysians and the Pakistanis. For a while there were US troops, mainly logistical, that were under the UN. At the request of US, Jonathan Howe who was retired admiral, was brought in as the Secretary-General's representative. But there were several US units that were not under UN command and there was no contact. They didn't in any way check with the UN. One of which was the Delta Rangers. They went out on their mission to get Aideed's people and Aideed, if possible. They had information they were having a meeting in this hotel in Mogadishu. The UN did not know it was taking place. Jonathan Howe didn't know it was taking place. Even Howe was not told. And, of course, you know the history of what happened. Eighteen of the Rangers were killed; one pilot was taken captive; a body was dragged through the streets. The way this was handled by the Clinton administration – and I don't know who did it; I can't say – was to me the single most shameful thing the US ever did in my tenure at the UN. Because the US DoD spokesman immediately thereafter in a press briefing said that the UN was responsible for what happened to our troops.

JK: I remember that very well.

JS: The US tried frantically to put the blame on the UN. Months later, President Clinton made a statement that these were under US command.

JK: Yes, they retracted that but that article was buried.

JS: Yes, buried. The spokeswoman for the Defense Department whose name I don't recall, I talked to her later. And she said she had been given bad information and she admitted it was wrong. But she said she had spoken on the information she had been given. This did tremendous damage in this country to the UN, damage in the US to the UN. The whole question of US troops under foreign command has been very sensitive. Americans forget the fact that during the Second World War, it was done routinely. British and French troops were under Eisenhower; US troops were under Montgomery

(UK). This was standard. But when it came to the UN context, it became a very, very sensitive thing. Somalia was really damaging to UN peacekeeping, to the image of UN peacekeeping. It irritated us a great deal when the Malaysian troops came and extricated the Americans, one Malaysian was killed in the process of rescuing them and a number of them were injured. In fact, some 80 or 90 Malaysians and Pakistanis were injured in the rescue operation. President Clinton never once said a word of thanks or gratitude to these countries. It was really poorly, poorly handled. Everybody was running for cover.

JK: How did you handle that as the spokesman?

JS: I was pretty aggressive on that.

JK: To try to correct this.

JS: Once I got the information and I talked to John Howe personally. And I said, "I want your assurance. I have been told that you did not know what was happening, but I want your assurance to me before I say this." And he said, "Absolutely." He said, "In fact, I was coming in to land at the Mogadishu airport, which had UN and US troops there." He said, "The plane circled and the pilot didn't know why we were circling. And the reason was this operation was underway and they were not letting planes land at the airport." So, he was in a holding pattern for a few minutes, not for long.

I made the point very strongly in briefings and in private interviews to the press that this was a US operation and that we were not involved in it. We were not aware of it.

The Secretary-General was a bit vulnerable here because in the Security Council when the resolution had come up that Aideed should be captured and put on trial and brought to justice rather than trying to negotiate with him, the Secretary-General vocally supported this. He was on record as giving no quarter to Aideed. It was a mandate of the Security Council that he be captured and brought on trial. So, it was hard for the Secretary-General to be critical of the mission itself. In fact, if you look at the book *Blackhawk Down* and the history of it, many of the Rangers, while they regretted that their colleagues had been killed, they thought it was a successful mission. They said, "We captured a large number of the key Aideed people." And they did; they brought them in handcuffs back by helicopter. Incidentally, most of the American servicemen who were killed could have been evacuated alive but their code was that they would not leave the body of one of their colleagues behind. So, they stayed until they could get them and probably two thirds of them were killed trying to do that. But that is an aside and I am not casting any aspersions on their code of honor regarding their colleagues.

Let's look at Rwanda. Here I think we have Boutros from the very beginning trying to call attention to the situation in Rwanda. It was an African country. As you know, there was a very small UN force there under General Dallaire. Kofi Annan was head of peacekeeping at the time. The history is still being written and is not totally clear in my mind as to where the blame lies. Dallaire sent a communication to the office of the Secretary-General. I frankly do not know of Kofi Annan ever say it. I know that Iqbal

Riza saw it who was Kofi's number two person. But as Iqbal told me and I think has told other people, he said, "We have peacekeeping operations all over the world. We are always getting these cables that disaster is at hand unless you do this or that." I know Dallaire; I have talked to him about this. I know what he said in the cable. And there was no excuse for that not being given top priority.

JK: So, the cable never got to Boutros-Ghali?

JS: It never got to Boutros. Boutros was aware of it several months later. He was very clear on this. He was not made aware. It was not passed on to him.

JK: Did you know whether or not Iqbal Riza had passed it to Kofi Annan?

JS: I don't know the answer to that. That is something to ask them. I don't know if Kofi made the decision, "Tell Dallaire just to cool it; his mandate is such." That magic UN word: "mandate." There is no question that everybody failed in Rwanda. Boutros did call attention to it, but he was not as strong as he could have been. I think he really should have just banged the drum as loud as he could bang it on that. If you look at it in retrospect, stories that these people were just going to eliminate the entire Tutsi people, that there were huge crates of machetes that were being sent in from China for this purpose, all of these things. I didn't know the full account of it. Once it got started, there was no way in the Security Council. The Secretary-General proposed sending in more troops. Nobody would make troops available. The ten Belgian troops had been tortured and murdered. Nobody was going to send troops in there. I think Rwanda is just a stain on everybody. The major Western countries didn't want to make troops available. The UN was not sufficiently aware of what was going on or responsive to what the people on the ground were saying. The Security Council certainly abdicated its responsibility.

JK: What kinds of questions were you getting from the press?

JS: Not a lot. Not when it was happening, a lot afterwards. I would have to go back and listen to tapes but this was not a dominant, every briefing, what's going on in Rwanda; what's being done, no. Nothing, not at that level. Not to say there was no attention, there was. But bear in mind, there are very few African journalists at the UN press corps. This was just not a big priority item among most of the press corps; it was not one of things they were looking at.

The third area, and we are running out of time, that I want to spend a minute or two on is Yugoslavia. Because this is one that the Secretary-General did himself honor. He said repeatedly, "The conditions do not exist to send a UN peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia and the Council just ignored him and sent it anyway. I was there in the private, closed consultations, which I was allowed to go to as spokesman, incidentally. Perez de Cuellar let Francois do this and Boutros continued it for me, to the closed consultations. It was hard getting that initially approved, but once it was established and they saw that we were not going to undercut them with the press, it worked out very well. He constantly said that conditions do not exist for UN peacekeeping.

JK: UNPROFOR had been set up originally to monitor the agreement between Croatia and Yugoslavia.

JS: But I mean when the fighting started and “Let’s send in more and more.” The second area on the former Yugoslavia I wanted to say was the criticism he got over the so-called “duo-key arrangement” on the air strikes. Boutros was very emphatic. He said, “If I got a request from any of the UN troops on the ground from the British or the French -- they were the main ones – for an air strike, and the civilian agreed with this – it was Akashi – I approved everything. I approved every request; I didn’t block anything.” Where this was a bit disingenuous was that Akashi wouldn’t approve it. So, it didn’t go to Boutros. Boutros very vigorously distinguished between air support for UN troops when they were being threatened and air strikes which are to further a military goal that’s really apart from the UN troops. You had the Vance/Owen plan which the US denounced and refused to have anything to do with because it was too favorable to the Serbs and it gave the 43 percent of the territory and a few months later you had the Dayton agreements that gave them 49 percent of the territory. In essence the US would have been far better off if they had accepted the Vance/Owen plan which started under Perez de Cuellar and then extended into Boutros-Ghali.

I would say these are the three major substantive areas: Somalia, Rwanda, and former Yugoslavia that I remember politically. Just to wind up the tale, I spent a lot of time with the Secretary-General in Washington. I knew Washington well. One of my assignments with UNA was to create UNA’s Washington office. I hired Steve Dimoff as the deputy director and then he became the director and he is the vice president of UNA. I don’t want to speak ill of my colleagues, but we had a [UN] director in Washington who was causing a lot of problems. Boutros was getting feedback, “You are not being well represented in Washington,” from people he respected. There was also some feeling that I was not aggressive enough in responding to attacks on the UN. I knew I was not campaigning for his reelection actively. I am not supposed to do that in the Secretariat. His wife felt I should have been. His wife, Mrs. Boutros-Ghali, felt that somehow the spokesman should block any articles that were critical of her husband. I wanted to tell her that I really don’t tell the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* what to print. “Mrs. Boutros-Ghali, this isn’t Cairo.”

So, Jean-Claude Ammee called me in and he said, “He would like you to go to Washington because this is really a very difficult situation. We have Jesse Helms to be dealt with. He had privately explored this with Mrs. Albright and Princeton Lyman who was assistant secretary of state; they both know you and would be delighted if you would down here.” There were messages coming that this was a move that needed to be made. In the last year of his tenure, I moved to Washington. It was my sad duty to tell him, as others did, that the Americans were not going to support him for a second term. I remember thinking that I knew him well enough, he is not going to shoot the messenger. This was in March and I had gotten word that this was happening. He discounted it and he said, “It’s the Republicans; they are having fun, “BooBoo” and all of this and let’s get the election over and it’s going to be ok.” But in April, Cy Vance called on him and told

him that he had been asked to relay the message to him that they would not support him. And then when he met with Christopher he asked Christopher, "Why?" And Christopher said, according to the Secretary-General, "I cannot go into the reasons." It is very clear to me that it is the same thing that happened to a lesser extent with Perez de Cuellar and happened with Kofi Annan on Iraq. They simply do not accept a Secretary-General who will not go along with what the US wants the UN to do. If they regard the Secretary-General as impeding US goals and US aims, they think it shouldn't be done, or being critical of US policies.

They also felt that Boutros – and I got this from several people and don't want to attribute it to anybody – that Boutros viewed the UN as a counterweight to the US. And this is absolutely an anathema in Washington. I am not sure that is quite true. I don't think that is quite fair to him because the man is very bright. He knew how strong the US was and he knew the role of the US. I was sitting at a dinner and I remember he asked Madeleine Albright in exasperation, "What did you ask me to do that I haven't done?" And she just wouldn't respond to that.

The appointment of Carol Bellemy, there was strong opposition to having an American as head of UNICEF. The US wasn't paying its bills and had cut its money. The US had a candidate who was not Carol Bellemy who was, I think, the head of the Institute of Public Health. I can't recall his name. But he went against the Europeans and appointed an American to this post because he felt that they wanted it so strongly. They argued so strongly. He did tell the US, "Give me a list of qualified women because I to appoint a woman." And Carol was one of the ones on the list.

One cannot underestimate the personal antipathy between him and Albright. They really disliked one another very much. I guess there was a little bit of respect, but certainly no personal thing. I think that was a major factor, so my last year at the UN, he was not reelected and Kofi Annan was elected whose has been a friend and colleague for many, many years. I remember my first assignment was to prepare Kofi's first visit to Washington, on which I worked very hard. If I may say so, it was extraordinarily successful. It is when he came out with Jesse Helms' arm around him, beaming. Jesse said, "I now know how to pronounce his name; he said it rhymes with cannon; just rhyme it with cannon." A lot of the press still don't do; they want to "Annon." I asked Kofi at the time, "I have a year to go and I will do whatever you want me to do." He said, "You stay right where you are. You stay right in Washington." That's how I played out my last year and then I retired.

Part of the job in the Washington office was dealing with the press. I did more of it than my predecessor because the press all knew I was the former spokesman. I would frequently get calls that normally they would not have sent to an information center. They knew that I was a bit more keyed in. I was in Washington three years all together. The last year of Boutros' term and two of Kofi's. Sylvana Foa came in as you know as my successor and was one year spokesman for Boutros.

It was a marvelous career. I enjoyed the people I worked with at the UN. I was lucky in terms of my fears about the bureaucracy. Other than the time, the three years I was running the department for DPI, when you are the spokesman or the associate spokesman for the Secretary-General, that focuses people's attention within the UN. They return your phone calls. You can get things done. You can move things. We didn't have a big staff. The spokesman's office was fairly small. The three years I was running the DPI program I had almost one hundred people and I spent half my time on personnel issues. It just drove me nuts. That's why I was so happy when that ended.

My first job was with Morgan Guarantee Company which is one of the finest banks in the world. Morgan had a bell curve. You had a few super stars; you had most of the people doing their job as they should be doing it competently well. And then you had a few slackers. The UN is just the same. Most of the people at the UN who are doing day-to-day management, making conferences take place, interpretation, documentation, all of these things, statistical office, they do their job very competently. We have a few super stars and one of the problems that we have at the UN that you don't have in private business is that other side of the bell curve. It is hard to get rid of those people because there is frequently politics involved. The ambassador will be in your outer office. One of the maddest times I ever saw Boutros-Ghali is he got a call from an ambassador saying it was urgent that he meet with him. He told the secretary to clear 15 minutes. The ambassador came up. A P4 appointment – you have P5, then you have D1 and D2 – is mid to upper mid-level. The urgent thing was that the ambassador wanted to push Boutros to appoint one of his countrymen to a P4 post. And Boutros exploded. He said, "I want you thrown out of the office." It was one of his African ambassadors which made him even madder. The personnel issues were difficult.

It was clearly great fun being spokesman. There were frustrations. More than anything was the frustration that the UN didn't have the authority and the resources to do what I thought it should be doing and what people expected of it. That was the single year-by-year frustration. In DPI, we would be called on to do a program on the international year for something and we would have two staff people to work on it, for the whole world. The gap between what is expected of the UN and what it can deliver is just huge. This is something that pained me and still pains me.

JK: This has been great and we thank you so much.

JS: You know something about my history with the oral history program, finding the Brian Urquhart tapes. I was the one who locked the cabinets and said that we need to figure out what to do with these. I want to give you my new book, *The Trauma of Terrorism*, published by Hayworth, Maltreatment and Trauma Press. My two co-editors, Yael Danieli and Danny Bonn (?) are both psychologists. It is a series of 55 essays and it focuses more on what individuals and communities and organizations can do to deal with the consequences of terrorism, the victims and how they are dealt with. It was quite a project, but it is done.

JK: Thank you again.