

Reorganisation of Secretariat 1960-1961: Reorganisation of Secretariat 1960...

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Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Reorganization of Secretariat

10 Oct. - 9 Nov. 60

Pandit, V. L. (High Commissioner of India
to the U.K.)

- 3 letters to D.H.
- 2 letters from D.H.



October 19, 1960.

Thank you for your letter of the 10th October. I have delayed my reply until I could consult my brother as, in any event, I would have been unable to leave my post without Government sanction.

I have had a talk with Lester Pearson who was here when your letter arrived. He approved the idea of consultations between us and seemed eager that we should meet as early as possible. I myself felt such consultations could do no harm even if no magic formula was evolved by us. My brother, however, feels that certain aspects of the question should be borne in mind in this connection.

Your remarks in the Annual Report have been overshadowed by the strong criticism of the existing Organisation voiced during the debate in the current session of the General Assembly. Mr. Khrushchev's demand has not, of course, been subscribed to by others but many countries, specially in Asia and Africa, feel the inadequacy of the Organization and have



SECRETARY GENERAL'S OFFICE

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expressed their feelings that the U.N. Secretariat at the highest level should reflect the urges and feelings of West-East and non-aligned countries. If this basic issue were to be passed over and only limited proposals considered, a number of countries might take exception to the approach. It is, therefore, necessary to be clear regarding the scope of our discussions. What exactly would they embrace - also would your proposal be kept apart from the general question of reorganisation of the Secretariat?

I should be grateful if you could let me have an answer so that I could more clearly advise my Government about the proposal.

With warm regards,

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold,
Secretary-General, United Nations,
New York, NY, U.S.A.


INDIA HOUSE,
ALDERSHOT,
HANTS, ENGLAND.
November 4, 1960.

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I did not answer your detailed letter of the 23rd October earlier because I was waiting to hear from my brother. As I have not heard from him yet I am just writing this to tell you that I have read your letter with care and am to-day contacting the Prime Minister to see what his views on the matter are. I hope I shall have something specific for you in a few days.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold,
Secretary-General, United Nations,
New York, NY, U.S.A.



New Delhi,
5th November, 1950.

Dear Mr Hammarskjold,

Thank you for your letter of October 23rd. I have read with much interest your letter of the same date to my sister, Mrs Pandit. Although you had written to her in her capacity as a past President of the General Assembly, her association with the review which you have in mind would inevitably bring India into the picture. She therefore consulted us soon after you had spoken to her.

Your letter gives a fuller picture of the scope of the enquiry which you expect Mrs Pandit and her colleagues to undertake. As you are fully aware, the question of a fresh approach to the functions of the United Nations Secretariat at the top level has now become an important political issue. I am not expressing myself at present on the different views expressed on this subject. It is obvious, however, that whichever body is called upon to undertake the proposed enquiry, it will have to take note of these views. I myself referred to this question briefly in my address to the General Assembly. I had no precise scheme in my mind at that time, nor do I have any at present.

Broadly, I have felt that the Secretary General's authority and capacity for taking quick action should not be impaired. At the same time, no impression should be created that the Secretary General has not got the benefit of the views and advice of the representatives of the major groups of opinion in the world today. The Secretary General, I have no doubt, does take these views into consideration. But it is important that people should realise that this is normally done.

I did not have any basic change in the functions of the Secretary General in view. Indeed, any attempt to amend the Charter would give rise to new problems and controversies.

The General Assembly adopted a resolution on the 15th December 1950 which envisaged a review of the organisation of the Secretariat "to meet changing requirements and achieve maximum economies and efficiency". The Committee which has

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His Excellency
Mr Dag Hammarskjold,
Secretary General of the United Nations,
NEW YORK.



been set up in terms of this resolution would presumably look at the problem primarily from the organisational and method point of view. But, in view of the various criticisms and arguments that have been raised, I suppose they cannot wholly ignore the more basic issues involved. Your intention appears to be, from your letter to Mrs Parnit, that any proposal made by the past Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly would be referred to this committee. It seems to me that this might prove rather embarrassing. Recommendations of a high level body consisting of the past Presidents of the General Assembly should be dealt with at the highest level and not be subjected to review by a committee of experts.

I have not at all been clear in my mind how far it would be advisable, in this rather complicated state of affairs, for a few past Presidents of the General Assembly to deal with these subjects rather in a superficial way. They can hardly give all the time necessary for a full consideration of all the aspects involved.

Yours sincerely,

10 October 1960

PERSONAL

Dear Madame Pandit,

In my introduction to the Annual Report to the General Assembly I drew, the 31st of August 1960, attention to certain weaknesses in the Organisation of the Secretariat in the following words:

"It does not dispose of a sufficient number of highly qualified senior officials for all the tasks that now have to be met - in spite of the feeling sometimes voiced that the Organisation is 'top heavy'. There is, generally speaking, within the Secretariat not enough of a diplomatic tradition or staff with training in political and diplomatic field activities to meet the needs which have developed over the years. And it is, finally, a considerable weakness that the Secretariat has not in its ranks a highly qualified military expertise which is able, on a current basis, to maintain a state of preparedness for the kind of situation which the Organisation has suddenly had to face".

I feel that it would be useful to give urgent consideration to the problem thus outlined, so that adequate proposals might be made to the present Assembly. This need for re-enforcement of the Secretariat is emphasised by the present very heavy tasks. It would be of the greatest value for me to be able to profit from the experience of some people with broad and deep knowledge of the United Nations and the operations of the Secretariat. I would, therefore, like to ask you if you, together with Dr. Victor A. Belaunde and Mr. Lester B. Pearson - as you see all ex-Presidents of the General Assembly, but from different regions - would find it possible to devote a couple of days to such consultations.

In the course of the consideration of the problem which I raised in the Introduction, the group might also like to give thought to various ideas which later have been expressed by some delegates in the general debate; I think especially of the question whether and, if so, how these ideas could be developed in a way that would correspond to the explicit

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H.E. Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit,
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terms of the Charter, increase - or at least not reduce - the efficiency of the Organisation, and meet the desired for a broader representation of geographical areas now predominant in the composition of the General Assembly.

I would highly appreciate your cooperation and hope that you will be able to give me an early reply.

With warm personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dag Hammarskjöld.

23 October 1960

PERSONAL

I received your kind letter of 19 October, following your telephone call from London a couple of days before. In that letter you raise, on the basis of your contacts with your brother, certain questions which you would like to have clarified. I shall do my best to reply so that you can advise your Government about the proposal.

1. The problem facing the Secretariat at the senior level is a dual one: a lack of highly qualified persons with diplomatic experience who are available for the many and varied tasks that arise in the present phase of international development - a good example is the mission of Rajeshwar Dayal in the Congo - and the narrowness of regional representation after the considerable widening of the membership of the Organisation
2. At present the budget provides for 11 posts of Under-Secretary which, according to what I have reported to the General Assembly, are to be considered as being subject to the rule of geographical distribution. These posts are to be distributed in principle as follows: one for each one of the permanent members of the Security Council, two for Europe and the "white" commonwealth, two for Asia and Africa and two for Latin America. Due to the pattern inherited, the present distribution deviates on one point in that there should be one European less and one Afro-Asian more; this improvement I want to make at the earliest convenience.
3. The pattern indicated provides for three political Under-Secretaries of whom one is in charge of the Department for Security Council Affairs and the others are available for special assignments. The Security Council post is held by the Soviet Union, the other two are held by Ralph Bunche and C.V. Narasimhan of India (until the New Year Narasimhan is seconded to the Special Fund). Originally I had Bunche and the Soviet representative both placed in the same position as Under-Secretaries for special political affairs in my own office, but, in accordance with the wishes of the Soviet Union, their man was moved over from this post to the Department of Security Council Affairs.

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H.E. Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit,
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England.

4. What I would like to see is the addition of, let us say, two political posts as Under-Secretaries for special political affairs, giving me the possibility to broaden the representation of the non-committed world with highly qualified professionals, who would be available for special assignments. Nothing would help me more, both personally and in relation to the new countries - by meeting both aspects of the problem posed at the very beginning of this letter. It would be perfectly adequate for me and it would not raise any questions of structure, constitution or policies.

5. Originally, the top echelon of the Secretariat was organized on two levels, the "Assistant Secretaries-General" and the "Principal Directors". The first group was supposed to be appointed on a political basis and the second administrative. In fact, this proved to be a very unsatisfactory arrangement, the main burden of the work falling on the Principal Directors, while the others seemed to be more or less an ornament. When I first came here, I got the impression of continuous competition, conflicts and duplication of work between the two levels. I therefore suggested to the General Assembly that the two levels should be scrapped and only one level used instead, corresponding in rank and seniority to the old Assistant Secretary-General level, but with the new name of Under-Secretaries in order to show that they had not just stepped into the shoes of the previous Assistant Secretaries-General but also had assumed widened administrative responsibilities. Thus, we have now a top echelon with the same senior position but wider responsibilities than the top echelon during Mr. Lie's time. This has led to savings both in money and time, and has facilitated my job by reducing the number of people with whom I have to deal directly.

6. It is a fact, however, that during his last General Assembly session, Mr. Lie proposed the introduction of three Deputy Secretaries-General to be interposed between himself and the Assistant Secretaries-General. Perhaps Mr. Lie felt that, rather than run the Secretariat as an elected President runs a national government, it might be advantageous to make himself a constitutional monarch with a ruling triumvirate, protecting him from exposure to the cold war conflict. I considered that formula as unacceptable for a number of reasons. In the first place, it would divest the Secretary-Generalship of the significance which must have been intended when it was made the only post in the Secretariat to be filled by election. In the second place, it would involve a de facto delegation of political responsibility which I felt would run counter just to the fact that it was the political responsibility which had led to the rule that the Secretary-General should be elected with the concurrent votes of the big powers. Thirdly, the three deputies, without a very strong and decisive leadership from the Secretary-General, would be only too likely to stymie the operations, especially if they felt

in any way bound by the political policies of their respective governments or blocs, a situation that would lead to their being suspected by other Member Governments of taking instructions from, or giving information to, their own governments which, as you know, is prohibited by the Charter.

7. From what I have said above, you will, I am sure, understand why I feel that what I said in the introduction remains valid, in spite of what was proposed in the general debate from various quarters. However, I would not like to reserve to myself the judgment about the wisdom of my own proposals and about the advantages or disadvantages of other proposals made, and accordingly I want to have the consultations now proposed.

8. It follows from what I have said that in those consultations you and your fellow ex-Presidents would have an opportunity to run over the whole ground regarding the way in which the work is organised in the Secretariat on the top level. What I need is your best advice and I do not wish to exclude you from any point regarding that level on which you would like to put forward suggestions.

9. My reply to your questions follows from what I have said. What you call "the basic issue" would not be passed over and the discussions would not be limited to certain specific proposals. On the other hand, you will appreciate why I use my own statement, made prior to the general debate, as the peg on which I would wish to hang the consultations; if I should engage in those consultations, without pointing out the root of my own problems as stated before the general debate, I would give them the flavour of a concession to the proposals made in the general debate with their heavy accent of lack of confidence. This I have no reason to do.

10. As for the general question of reorganisation of the Secretariat, you may be aware that the General Assembly at the fourteenth session passed a resolution establishing a committee for the review of the organisation and activities of the Secretariat. This Committee of Eight has started its work and will make its principal report next year to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly. A list of the members of this Committee is attached. The proposals I might make on the basis of the consultations would, naturally, not go in the first place to the General Assembly but to this review committee, to be taken into consideration in their proposals which are due to be made to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly.

11. Summing it all up, I can therefore say that the scope of the consultations would be largely determined by you and your colleagues. In view of the work already begun by the Committee of Eight, you yourselves may not wish to go into the "general question of re-organisation of the Secretariat". But I do believe you should look into all aspects of relevance for the efficiency and authority of the top echelon of the Secretariat.

12. In the light of what I have said in this letter, I hope that you would be able to indicate your willingness to serve as a member of this group, and that you can all begin your work very quickly.

With kindest regards,

Dag Hammarskjöld.

Members of the Committee of Eight

Mr. Guillaume Georges-Picot - France - (Chairman of the
Committee)

Sir Harold Parker - United Kingdom

Mr. A. A. Fomin - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

His Excellency Mr. Omar Loutfi - United Arab Republic

His Excellency Mr. Francisco Urrutia - Colombia

His Excellency Mr. C. S. Venkataschar - India

Dr. Herman B. Wells - United States of America

His Excellency Mr. Alex Quaison-Sackey - Ghana