

Peking story (American prisoners in China) - correspondence, letters and ca...

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Peking story

24 Dec. 1954

Statement by U.N.'s Press spokesman
(conc. D.H.'s mission to Peking)

STATEMENT BY UNITED NATIONS PRESS SPOKESMAN IN ANSWER TO INQUIRIES

Friday, December 24, 1954

There are two aspects to the problem of press coverage of the Secretary-General's mission to Peking which are entirely distinct from each other and should not be confused.

One aspect concerns the many requests made to the Secretary-General that he bring with him correspondents either individually or on a pool basis. These requests the Secretary-General feels he must decline because of the nature of the mission entrusted to him by the General Assembly. This will not be an international conference, nor a "good-will" mission, nor in the nature of a "visit of state". He envisages his mission as much closer to a diplomatic contact of the kind that is customary in foreign offices in all the world's capitals. He is not going to Peking for propaganda or publicity purposes. He is going for private talks which he believes should be conducted without fanfare or public display, in the hope that these may contribute to a positive outcome under the mandate given him by the General Assembly. He has very much on his mind not only the very important international interests that are at stake, but the personal interests of the individual human beings whose future is also at stake. He believes both these interests will best be served by adhering strictly in all respects on his mission to Peking to the customary forms for individual diplomatic contacts as distinct from those customary for international conferences and "state" visits.

The second aspect of the problem of press coverage involves the principle of access to whatever news there may be, even on such a mission. This is an entirely separate question. It goes without saying that the Secretary-General fully supports the principle of free and equal access to news. He intends, for his part, to do all he can to see to it that the world press is informed directly from the United Nations of whatever can be said during and after his mission. He would, furthermore, be very happy indeed if as representative a group of correspondents as we have at United Nations Headquarters should be able to cover his stay in Peking. In the light of the nature of his mission and of the mandate given him, the Secretary-General feels that this, however, is a matter which is one for the press and radio representatives to take up directly with the appropriate authorities of the People's Republic of China.

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