

# Foreign Ministers Conference, Geneva 1959 ; Berlin question 1959 ; Outer sp...

*HS L 179:90*



Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Berlin - 1959

8-11 May

- a.) Transcript of press conference by D.H.  
at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
- b.) Text of statement by D.H. at opening  
of Conference of Foreign Ministers, Geneva

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE  
BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD  
AT THE PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA,  
ON FRIDAY, 8 MAY 1959, AT 6:00 P.M.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am pleased to meet with you, even if it cannot be for very long. I note that I have the honor of an attendance which is explained by your interest in other persons who will be here in a couple of days from now. Anyway, it is pleasant to see such a great number of journalists assembled in Geneva, which is the other center of United Nations activities, a center which we have taken over from the League of Nations. I hope that we have also taken over some of the great traditions of this house.

I would like to say one thing by way of introduction, and that is this: I am sure you fully appreciate that there is a wide range of subjects on which you cannot expect me to make any comments because it is certainly not my task to have any kind of preview of matters which you will go into and have reason to discuss with others in a few days from now. With this little warning, which I hope will be fully understood, I invite you to ask your questions.

Mr. WILEY (CBS): Will you speak at the opening session of the Foreign Ministers' meetings?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I will meet in the next few days with the participants in that conference, so excuse me if I postpone my reply until after I have seen them.

Mr. DUNCAN (Radio Canada) (Interpretation from French): We are told that the conference of Foreign Ministers that is about to begin in Geneva could be a prelude to the life or death of civilization. Do you, as Secretary-General of this most international of organizations, regret that you will not be present during these debates that may decide the fate of your "flock"?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I do not regret it in any way, and I can give you the reason, a reason which I have explained often to your colleagues in New York. Any effort which serves the purposes of the United Nations has the whole-hearted blessing of the Secretary-General of that Organization. Whether or not the Secretary-General is present at the table is a very minor matter.

Mr. NORSKY (Manchester Guardian): In what way do you think that the Secretary-General can be constructive in finding solutions for the problems before the conference?

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The SECRETARY-GENERAL: By, on the one hand, using as best he can whatever brains he may have, and, on the other hand, by being discreet.

Mr. BEGUIN (Journal de Geneve) (Interpretation from French): As there seems to have been some confusion since your Copenhagen press conference about the limits of the active and preventive diplomacy of the Secretary-General, could you tell us in what circumstances and in virtue of what principles we should expect of the Secretary-General a more active policy than that which limits itself to the execution of resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (Interpretation from French): The limits are imposed on the Secretary-General by two factors -- on the one hand, by the Charter and, on the other hand, by the desires of the governments. In other words, as soon as the Secretary-General approaches functions that go beyond the duties that have been established for him by the Charter, what he does depends upon the acceptance and the good will of governments. There is no action of the Secretary-General which is not based on the law or on the agreement of the interested governments.

I think I can add that the recent evolution has indicated an increased willingness by governments to accept a discreet but a more active role for the Secretary-General, whose task, I must say, even according to the Charter, goes very much beyond what you have said, that is, the simple execution of resolutions.

Mr. NORSKY (Manchester Guardian): Does the Secretary-General envisage any executive functions which the Great Powers might entrust to him which he, in turn, might not be in a position to accept?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: For the moment I do not envisage any specific functions at all. If you have seen the Copenhagen speech, to which reference has been made, you may have found to your surprise that I have excluded two possible functions which have been discussed in public in the press and also in interventions by some politicians. I do not believe that the Foreign Ministers, were they to arrive at the point where they would like some kind of functional role for the United Nations, would ask for something that the United Nations, constitutionally, or practically, would not be in a position to do.

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I also believe that among the gentlemen who will meet here in Geneva there is a very thorough knowledge of the possibilities of the United Nations, and for that reason your question is not one which would keep me awake at night.

Mr. EYTAN (Agence de Nouvelles Israeliennes) (Interpretation from French):  
Could you tell us something about Dr. Bunche's recent journey in the Middle East?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would not like to comment on the journey. I have just had Dr. Bunche's report which has convinced me that this new step in the chain of contacts which has been established over the years has been quite useful, but there is nothing remarkable about it and so there are no results to put on record. I congratulate ourselves, however, at least on the close and intimate relations which we have with the governments in the area and which have rendered it very natural to take an opportunity, when it came, to ask Dr. Bunche to go round and see the governments and check on United Nations operations. That is all I would like to say about it.

Mr. DARMSTETTER (Radio Diffusion Suisse) (Interpretation from French):  
I would like to ask whether you will authorize us to use for radio broadcast tonight the words you have just spoken.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (Interpretation from French): Yes, if you want to do so.

Mr. GOLDSMITH (AF): Would you tell us when and where you are meeting the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic, what subjects you will discuss, and who took the initiative for this meeting?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I can only refer to what I said about Dr. Bunche's visit. We maintain rather continuous personal contacts over the whole area, and that of course includes Cairo. You may remember that last year Dr. Fawzi took some time off in Switzerland, and I then had occasion to sit down with him and talk over all sorts of matters of mutual concern or interest. The situation is the same now. Dr. Fawzi will be here for a few days. I have not yet seen him, but I am certain to meet him. There is no agenda, no specific subject. You must remember that for very practical and obvious reasons there is a specific relationship between the United Nations Secretariat and the United Arab Republic because

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of the fact that it is host government for the most extensive field operation which the United Nations has at present. Beyond that there is really nothing to say apart from what follows already from my comments on Dr. Bunche's journey.

Mr. WEISS (Bildzeitung): Mr. Brandt, Mayor of West Berlin, said recently that he is ready to come to Geneva if he is asked. I think you talked to Mr. Brandt recently. Could you give us any information as to whether you were talking about the possibility of Mr. Brandt coming here?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I met Mr. Brandt some time ago when he was in New York, but we had no word about any practical arrangements of this nature.

Mr. SCHOENBRUN (CBS): A number of countries have developed programs of aid to some of the poorer countries which cannot do it themselves, and the suggestion was made recently by General de Gaulle that the Great Powers of the world should contribute to a fund for underdeveloped countries. What success are you having in channelling this idea through the United Nations specialized agencies?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: First of all, let me say that I noted with very great satisfaction the support given by President de Gaulle to a policy which has been ours for a long time, and that he has added his authority to what we, perhaps with less success, have tried to get across previously. In fact, the whole very extensive program of technical assistance in all its ramifications is based exactly on the notion which President de Gaulle has in mind.

As to contributions from the Great Powers, that is a question which has been considered by the governments of those powers over the years, but I would be the first to congratulate us all if General de Gaulle's words were to prompt the governments concerned to intensify their efforts. In saying that, I want to make it perfectly clear that the contributions already made by the Great Powers, although not sufficient to meet the enormous needs, have been highly valuable and much appreciated. So there is no implied criticism of the policy so far pursued.

I do not believe in the creation of new organs or new administrative arrangements because I believe we have sufficient machinery already at our disposal in the United Nations family of organizations. I am very much against some kind of variation of Parkinson's law as applied to this special operation. I feel I am

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also entitled to say that the yield we have got out of the money given to the United Nations family has been very great indeed. If we talk about yield in terms of results in relation to the money put in, I think the record of the United Nations organizations is very good indeed.

Mr. BEGUIN (Journal de Geneve) (Interpretation from French): Is there any relationship between the return of Mr. Spinelli and the resignation of Mr. Rifai? Can we consider that both these events confirm the end of a period of tension for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (Interpretation from French): There is no relationship between the two events. Mr. Spinelli has come here because of the conference of Foreign Ministers, and he left well before Mr. Rifai resigned. I do not see that in either event there is anything which changes the situation as far as it concerns the United Nations. Especially as far as Mr. Spinelli's role is concerned, his mission continues. He has come here because of the conference of Foreign Ministers and nothing has changed as regards our policy concerning Jordan.

Mr. SCHORR (CBS): Will you be seeing the Foreign Ministers of the Big Four, or their representatives, between now and Monday, and if so, will you be seeing them together or separately, and when?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: A meeting is rather likely for reasons of courtesy. I am a kind of host. I cannot say when, because they have not arrived and no arrangements have been made. But, if it happens, I take it for granted--given the kind of heading I have put over those visits--that they will be separate.

Mr. EYTAN (Agence de Nouvelles Israeliennes) (Interpretation from French): Was the passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal discussed by Dr. Bunche, and will it be discussed by you with Dr. Fawzi?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (Interpretation from French): No comments. As I do not know the basis of your question I think it would not be very wise under these circumstances to enter into a discussion.

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(Politika, Belgrade): Mr. Secretary-General, with regard to the forthcoming conference, have you any knowledge of the participation of any other Foreign Ministers in addition to the four?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: No, I have not.

Mr. PARK (Jewish Telegraphic Agency): Mr. Hammarskjold, do you have any idea as to how long Mr. Fawzi will be staying in Geneva?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: No, not having been in touch with him, I have not -- or I would rather put it this way: not having been in touch with him personally, because of course I have been in touch with him.

Mr. NORSKY (Manchester Guardian): Does the Secretary-General feel that recently the chances have improved for a formal peace settlement in the Middle East?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That is the kind of judgment I avoid if I can. We live a little from one day to the next, and my firm belief is that the longer we can maintain the kind of relative quiet we have at present the closer we come to a situation where at least a constructive approach to the problem you mention should be possible, or easier.

Mr. NOYES (Washington Star): Mr. Secretary-General, would you elaborate on your statement in Copenhagen that a summit conference might be held within the framework of the United Nations?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: No, I would not like to elaborate on it, for the simple reason that I think it was complete and self-explanatory. What I said was that I did not want to prophesy or anticipate anything but -- and this was, you remember, a survey of the United Nations in the present situation -- I felt that it was of interest to remember that when a summit meeting was discussed last year it was at a certain stage the intention -- I think, even the agreement -- that a summit meeting should somehow be related to the Security Council. That was a simple registration of an historical fact, and I would not go beyond that when it comes to the question of what is wise, or what can be done at the present stage, in the present situation.

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Mr. BENCHLER (D.D.R.): Mr. Secretary-General, could you say something about the progress of the conference on the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would be happy if you put that question a couple of days from now, because it is my intention to run over the ground orally, when I can do it, with some of those who are taking part in those talks. I have not so far had time to do so because I have been in the Administrative Committee on Coordination meetings. Of course, I am not out of touch in any way, because I have had very full reports in New York, but I am out of touch with the latest stage of development, and I think for that reason I should abstain from any comment.

In general terms, I have been impressed not only by the seriousness but also by the serious intent and intensity with which, obviously, the parties have been trying to find a way forward. I have no reason to believe that I would change that very positive judgment in the light of the latest developments.

Mr. SYDNEY GRUSON (The New York Times): Mr. Secretary-General, to go back to the question of the summit meeting and the United Nations, have you had any individual consultations or talks with any of the four powers involved regarding the subject of your speech at Copenhagen?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is a very good rule -- established, even, in the oath of service of the Secretary-General -- not to take or seek advice from any member government. That is true also when it comes to official statements. I speak for myself. Nobody is committed to them in any way.

The other side of the matter is that as Secretary-General and, apart from that, also as somebody who happens to know the four gentlemen concerned fairly well, on the various occasions I have had a chance to do so I have, of course, discussed the whole situation in this way or that way with the four Foreign Ministers. That is necessarily reflected in my thinking, but that is the only link that exists between such discussions and what I said in Copenhagen. As you refer again to the Copenhagen speech, I may perhaps ask you, if you have not done so, to have a look at it, not because it is very interesting but because you will then see that it is in fact a little "handbook" concerning United Nations practices, United Nations history and United Nations law which is handy for anybody who wants to form his own view regarding the possible role of the United Nations. I was a bit surprised when such a survey was translated into the terms of a proposal. I have shown what possibilities exist in the United Nations. That is not the same

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as to say that those possibilities should be used. I leave it to you as a kind of "handbook" and I think it is a reasonable contribution for the Secretary-General in this way to give us as comprehensive a survey as possible of the United Nations in the present situation, especially as United Nations operation and United Nations possibilities are not everywhere quite fully known.

Mr. MORSKY (Manchester Guardian): The Secretary-General has a personal representative in the nuclear test conference, which is not exactly a United Nations meeting. Is there any reason why the Secretary-General is not going to have, or may not have, a representative at the Foreign Ministers conference or, subsequently, the summit?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is no constitutional obstacle at all. It is for the Secretary-General to decide how far he can go in having a formalized contact with organs which have not been established by the General Assembly or the Security Council. In this case, for example, I have found it possible to provide the Foreign Ministers Conference with all the services we usually provide only for organs established by the General Assembly or the Security Council. But, mind you, again I warn against the translation of a reply to a question into something which is very like an initiative or a proposal. I have said that there is no constitutional obstacle. That does not mean that in some subtle way I plead for it.

Mr. SCHORR (CBS): Mr. Secretary-General, you will recall that at a news conference in New York you said that the Secretary-General represents the interests of the small nations. While what you say today does not sound like a plea for your participation in the summit conference you did seem at that time to indicate the desirability of small nations being represented, perhaps through you.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think you give a wider implication to what I said there than is warranted. I think, if I remember the press conference correctly, that you are looking at the statement in a somewhat changed context. As I remember the situation, I pleaded for the significance of the small nations because of a reference by one of the press representatives to some statements to the effect that it would be dangerous to have any kind of part for small nations in the judgment on issues from which they were separated geographically or historically.

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I said in return that I felt that the small nations, too, have a capital of experience which could not be disregarded, and that they have indirect interests. I did not link that up with any specific formal role for the Secretary-General. It was in a somewhat polemical reply to a spokesman unknown to me who had questioned the wisdom of the small nations.

Mr. SCHOENBRUN (CBS): Perhaps I might ask one more question on the subject of the United Nations and its relationship to this Foreign Ministers' Conference and an eventual summit conference. The whole tenor of your remarks, while not including any special plea, seemed to give the impression that you would not mind having these meetings held under the aegis of the United Nations. If we were to report the view that Mr. Hammarskjold thinks that these ought to be held under the United Nations, would you deny such a report?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes, most definitely, and I would think you had put into my words much more than had been said.

Mr. SCHOENBRUN (CBS): How much more?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think my reply is exhaustive.

(The Conference ended at 6:30 p.m.)

UNITED NATIONS

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Office of Public Information  
United Nations, N. Y.

(For use of information media--not an official record)

Press Release SG/820

11 May 1959

TEXT OF STATEMENT BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

AT OPENING OF CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS, GENEVA, 11 MAY 1959

(The following was received here from the Information Service of the European Office of the United Nations, Geneva.)

As spokesman for the Organization which has the pleasure to serve as the host for your signally important Conference, it is for me a privilege to welcome you on this particular ground today.

The Palais des Nations was built for the League of Nations, the first experiment in international cooperation for peace on a universal basis. Its successor, the United Nations, is now the owner of the building which houses the headquarters of all the European activities of the Organization. Your deliberations take place outside the United Nations, and the Organization is not, in present circumstances, a party to the work on which you are embarking, but I know that I speak for all the members not here present when I extend to you the best wishes of the Organization for your efforts, which truly serve the purposes of the United Nations; their success will be of vital significance for every single one of its members. With the feelings which I thus interpret, I did not hesitate to put the services of the United Nations at your disposal when the four governments were agreed on asking for them. The special subjects which will engage your attention make it especially appropriate that those services are extended to you here at the European center of the Organization.

It may be worth noting that the scope of the services which the Organization is happy to give to this Conference is similar to the services provided to an organ set up by the United Nations. The significance of your task, and its close relationship to the main aim of the Organization, has rendered that only natural. Were the Conference to be in need of other assistance, my response is obvious, in the light of the position already taken in the agreement reached with the four participants on various practical arrangements.

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For the United Nations and its spokesman every step taken toward a reduction of tension and for a peaceful solution of conflicts on the basis of justice is something to be warmly welcomed, whatever form of collaboration or negotiation governments may choose. Let me, in this context, recall the words of Article 33 of the Charter. In that Article, the members of the United Nations have engaged themselves to seek a solution to disputes, the continuance of which would be likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, first of all by negotiation or other peaceful means "of their own choice." These last words clearly set out how the founders of the Organization, which today assumes its duties as your host, looked at the work for peace. They spelled out in the Charter how and when the United Nations, as a means to be used by governments in the solution of conflicts, has to assume its responsibilities and exert its corresponding rights. But they left the necessary scope to governments to choose the approach which they found best adjusted to the needs of the situation. In concluding, I would like to voice again the good wishes and great hopes with which your work will be followed.

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