

Mexican Ambassador to the United States; President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico; President Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela; and U.S. Trade Representative Carla A. Hills.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra of the United Nations May 9, 1991

Iraq

The President. Welcome everybody.

Q. ——— police force in northern Iraq?

The President. We're not taking any questions today. Thank you very much. The Secretary-General might want to, but I——

Q. Are you hoping that all of the American forces will be out of Iraq soon?

The Secretary-General. Well, I think that that is the wish of our American friends, and as well as the wish of the United Nations.

The President. That's for sure.

The Secretary-General. I think the stations in Iraq are properly settled, but I think we have to be patient.

Q. Are you in favor of a police force—a U.N. police force in northern Iraq?

The Secretary-General. That's what we are going to discuss with the President and with his collaborators. But today I have received a very clear rejection from the Iraq Government. They do not want a United Nations police presence in the area. Right now, as we——

Q. They don't want the U.N.?

The Secretary-General. They don't want the U.N.

Q. That's par for the course, isn't it? I mean, so what? [*Laughter*] Does that mean you have to comply?

The President. Well, listen, we've got to get to work here. We've got to get to work. I want to discuss all this with the Secretary-General.

Q. Does that mean you have to comply?

The President. And we will discuss all this and then figure out what to do.

Q. Did it come from Saddam?

The Secretary-General. Well, I think—I have a special envoy there, Mr. Goulding, and he was the one who received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs the negative reaction.

Note: The exchange began at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Secretary-General referred to Marrack Goulding, U.N. Under Secretary-General, and Foreign Minister Ahmad Husayn Khudayir al-Samarra'i of Iraq.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra of the United Nations May 9, 1991

The President. I want to welcome you to the White House today. I discussed with you many of the issues on the world's agenda. In a moment I'll mention some of the challenges, common challenges we face, but before, permit a personal observation.

I think back to the times that we worked

together as Perm Reps up there 20 years ago, and I still wonder how it is that I ended up with the easier job. [*Laughter*] But the problems that arrive at your doorstep often are the product of years of violence and strife. It falls to you to find, through so much hatred and bitterness, the

path to peace.

For 10 years now, you've led the United Nations. Your years as the Secretary-General could merely have been difficult, a study in stubborn hope. But instead they've proved to be momentous, proved to be historic. And during your years of service, the U.N. has really come of age. After decades of ideological stalemate, conflict, and the cold war, the U.N. has at long-last taken a major step forward as a true force for peace. And today the U.N. can lay claim to a string of successes stretching across the globe.

In Africa, the U.N. played a leading role in the birth of an independent Namibia. Elsewhere on the African Continent, the U.N. now is at work to end the war in Angola and resolve the future of the Western Sahara. Across Asia, the U.N. continue to play a critical role in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan and Cambodia.

Right here in our own hemisphere, the U.N. has helped the people of Nicaragua and Haiti exercise their right to choose their own government, and is working to bring peace right now to El Salvador.

And of course, there is the United Nations role in the liberation of Kuwait. The U.N. sent its strong, steady signal every step of the way, and defending the defenseless against aggression, keeping faith with its founding principles, standing fast for what is good and right.

Mr. Secretary-General, a great measure of the success belongs to you, my friend: the product of your patience and perseverance, your immeasurable diplomatic skill, and your unwavering desire for peace. But as we talked at lunch, for each success, new challenges remain.

Consider the unprecedented responsibilities placed upon your good offices and the U.N. Secretariat by Security Council Resolution 687—the administration of UNICOM, the special commission for eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the compensation committee; the U.N.'s role in demarking the Iraq-Kuwaiti border, developing guidelines for the arms embargo against Iraq, and encouraging arms control in the region. All of these, all of them, are a daunting task which will challenge the U.N. as never before.

So, Mr. Secretary-General, we're responding to another challenge, too: the need to protect and care for tens of thousands of refugees who fled home and hearth to escape the brutality of one man, Saddam Hussein.

For our part, the U.S. has responded to this human wave of tragedy with massive emergency relief for the refugees in northern Iraq and Turkey. Working with other nations, in close consultation with you, sir, in accord with Resolution 688, we are building temporary camps to encourage these people to come down from the mountains into the camps and, ultimately, to their own villages and towns. We have always looked at this relief effort as limited in duration. We are now in the process of turning these efforts over to the United Nations, and we look forward to working with the U.N. to hasten the day when all these refugees can return home, free from fear, free to live in peace.

In the south, American soldiers provided refuge and care to thousands of Iraqis. Those who sought refuge are now in a safe haven in Iran or Saudi Arabia. The Blue Helmets are on the scene, and U.N. relief agencies are providing assistance to those Iraqis who have chosen to remain in the area where the U.N. is now working.

The U.N.'s work in Iraq is just one of many challenges. Beyond the Gulf, we must work to strengthen the U.N. system through appropriate reforms, to deliver development assistance where needed, to chart a common course of action on global issues ranging from the environmental to international drug-trafficking to terrorism. We must build on the U.N.'s ability to respond to humanitarian crises which, as we've seen most recently in the heart-wrenching ordeal of Bangladesh, speak a universal language of simple human compassion.

Mr. Secretary-General, meeting these challenges is our work—the work of the United States—and also the work of the United Nations. I thank you, sir, for coming back to Washington so that we could continue our practice of close collaboration. And I congratulate you on behalf of the American people for doing the world's work—the work of peace. Thank you very

much.

The Secretary-General. Mr. President, as you have just said, this visit has been an important opportunity to discuss the urgent issues which concern both the United States and the United Nations.

These discussions have been, as always, cordial, candid, far-reaching, and productive. However, our consultations, important as they have been, are only one part of the significance of this visit. For the United Nations, this occasion has again confirmed the support and commitment of the United States and its people to the world organization.

For me, personally, it has been a heart-warming expression of a longstanding friendship with you, Mr. President.

It is clear from this visit and from much that has preceded it that the United States and the United Nations share the vision of the Charter conceived and sealed some 46 years ago on the other shore of this nation. The Charter is a plan of action to achieve that vision. The world of which it foresees and towards which it commits us to give all of our efforts is a practical objective.

Events since 1945, including those which we have discussed today, have confirmed the Charter's declaration that true peace depends on the elimination of the causes of conflict. Those causes are complex and interrelated. Their worldwide scope and their difficulty demand collective action to solve them in accordance with the Charter. Poverty, threats to human rights and the environment, social injustice, and the full range of global issues menace peace and prevent a world worthy of future generations.

The nations of the world now call insistently upon the United Nations to be their forum and their agent for confronting these problems. Immediate emergencies and the

longer-range demands which they present will require the best the United Nations can give and all the resources we can muster.

The response of the world community to these challenges will have to match the needs. There is broader agreement than ever before on the nature and importance of the responsibility that we must meet. At the same time, however, the speed and size of the current events which these issues now create require us all to act even more effectively.

We are at a time which offers us suddenly and remarkably the hope and opportunity of great progress towards the kind of world the Charter describes. We must seize the moment before the forces and energy released by all rigidities can harden into new ones.

This visit, both in itself and through our work together, has again impressed all of us from the United Nations with your determination, Mr. President, and seriousness of purpose in that cause.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you—and through you, the people of the United States—for your warm welcome, your hospitality, and your support. The spirit of this time with you will sustain our continuing work at the United Nations to realize the promises before us and to turn to action the principles which you and we both serve.

Note: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Prior to their remarks, the President and the Secretary-General met privately in the Oval Office and with U.S. and U.N. officials in the Cabinet Room, and then attended a luncheon in the Old Family Dining Room.