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QUESTION: Ambassador, about your early life: you were saying that you were educated in primary school in Venezuela, and then you went to -

PEREZ GUERRERO: France.

QUESTION: France and Switzerland.

PEREZ GUERRERO: France and Switzerland. We were supposed to stay in France and I was supposed to go to Germany to continue my German education. But in the end the whole family went to Lausanne, Switzerland, and since my sister had got the French background she was put in school there and I was put in a school next door to hers, where I and a brother of mine stayed for a number of years, for five years. And from there, since I was studying in a French school there - there were mainly French students and some foreigners that were educated - in the end I preferred to finish my baccalauréat - my bachot - in Paris, and, together with a Brazilian friend and a French friend, we went over to a French school in Paris.

QUESTION: And what was your major field? Was it economics?

PEREZ GUERRERO: At that time, of course, the bachot, but then I entered the law school -

QUESTION: Oh. Law school.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. And I went on with law school. But at the same time I took up l'Ecole des Sciences Economiques, and I studied there economics, public finance and I graduated after two years there; I had my diploma. I continued my law school. I entered the Sorbonne to study some history and Latin and other things, and I got a degree there again in - my Licencié ès lettres. And I continued my law school, finished my License en droit and took the doctorat. The doctorat, I split it as was the custom in France at that time: with economics and international law. And my thesis was on relations of Latin America with the League of Nations. That was my thesis that I presented.
QUESTION: Now, that's very interesting, because immediately, I think, after you got your - finished your university work in Paris, you joined the League of Nations secretariat in Geneva. Did that grow out of your thesis? How did it come about?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, that was the only thing that I planned in my life. (Laughter) I wanted to join the League of Nations. I was interested in this experiment and I read everything about it. So I said, the best way - my passport - would be a thesis an international theme related to the League. And I chose that one, together with my professor, Georges Szell (?????), who was a very famous - is still a very famous - professor in international law. And indeed, after it was published - my father got me the necessary money to make it a nice-looking book (laughter) so that it went to research libraries - as I assumed, it went to the League of Nations. And a couple of months, or three months, later, I was asked to join the League of Nations by Mr. Lester, the Deputy Secretary-General - an Irishman who had been High Commissioner Danzig at the time and who was in charge of the League of Nations during the War.

QUESTION: He was the last Secretary-General of the League, wasn't he? Or the last President of the League.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, yes, yes. The last Secretary-General. And my assignment consisted of spending a year in the Information Department and other departments in order to be trained to be the Correspondent in Venezuela, the Correspondent Member in Venezuela - in Caracas - of the League of Nations. I went there; I thought I was going to stay one year, but after a few months in the Department of Public Information there I asked to be put in the Department of Economics and Finance, and so I was. I did work while the year was still not lapsed, so that at the end they said, "Would you like to stay? Because there is a competition here for a post." And I entered that competition - there were Australians, Canadians and whatever, but since I was on the spot I had that advantage and I won it. So I was to become a permanent fonctionnaire, a permanent official of the League of Nations. I asked Mr. Lester whether that was all right. He said, "All right, of course: if you win the competition it proves that you should be here." So that was the case.
But the War came. I was preparing for my first conference, in Mexico City, with my friend Rasminsky, who was, of course, with me; we were together in that department, which was in the beginning of Financial Matters, and became economic and finance and transport, I think. Loveday was its Director - Alexander Loveday, a very interesting man was the Director - and he had asked the two of us to prepare for that conference. Now, Rasminsky was my senior. He was, as you know, then, when he came back to Canada at the end of his career he was for a few years the Governor of the Central Bank in Canada, the Bank of Canada. I continued to have - to be in touch with him and his wife; although she died, he is still alive.

And there we went together to that conference in Mexico City. And I had been asked already, before departing - Rasminsky was already on this side of the Atlantic - to make sure that I was not going to return to Geneva, because there was no League of Nations any longer by the time I would return. So I had already packed everything, as I was going to take it away with me, and from there I proceeded to Venezuela.

QUESTION: And that's when you became Secretary on the Commission for Importation Control?

PEREZ GUERRERO: That's it.

QUESTION: Was this an agency created because of World War Two?

PEREZ GUERRERO: That is it. Yes, we had to, to make sure that we were not going to import more than we could - more than we could pay for. Nowadays the usage is different; habits have become different. One can live above one's means, as in the case of the United States and, by the way, also Venezuela: we live beyond our means. But at that time one wanted to adjust oneself and make sure that one would not spend more than could earn with our exports. And since oil had been somehow diminished in exportation, we had to make sure that we were going to live within $70 million a year: that was all we had at the time. Of course, they were very good dollars with a lot of buying-power at the time - they are not any longer - but at that time it was still difficult for a country of 6 or 7 million inhabitants to be able to live on that.
QUESTION: Now, I've heard it said that initially Latin American countries were very enthusiastic about the League, but that by the 1930s several of them had withdrawn their membership. Is that the case? And, if so, why?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. A case which I would suggest to cite in my remembrance is the case of Brazil. Brazil was a member only for a few years, and since it claimed that it should be a member of the Council - a permanent member of the Council, the League of Nations Council - and it was not granted that privilege - it was a privilege: mainly for that reason Brazil decided to withdraw, and availing themselves of the withdrawal provision of the Charter, which is similar to that of the - no, it doesn't exist in the -

QUESTION: UN -

PEREZ GUERRERO: United Nations. Then, at the time, it was a question of saying it a year in advance or two years in advance: two years in advance. And then, by the end of the second year, it would cease to be a member. And that happened to Brazil. I don't think it happened to any other Latin American country that I know of. Except Venezuela: at the very end it was a sort of a whim of our Foreign Minister, who decided - it was very close to the War already - and for one reason or another he decided to apply for withdrawal. That was a few months after he had made a splendid speech saying how important the League was and how interested he was. He was a very interesting man - ______ Borges [??] - see word list, where first F.M. is cited as Parra Perez [??], the Foreign Minister, the first Minister at the time of democracy in Venezuela, when democracy was just starting after a very long dictatorship. He had been here in the Pan American Union. But he was already old at the time - as I am right now, so I should not blame him - (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Now tell me this: in 1943 I think it was that you left the service of your Government and joined the secretariat of the ILO. How did that come about?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. After a couple of years teaching and being Secretary of this Commission - and also a commission that prepared the income tax, which I was
one of those who started that move (Laughter): I should not recognize this too often, because not everyone is very happy with that. But still, after two years I accepted an invitation of the ILO to join the economic section there, and I did so with the permission of my Government: it was understood that it was worthwhile for me to go back. And I stayed there about two years. Except that after one and a half years or so or two years I was asked by the Minister - the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Parra Perez, who was a very good friend of mine - we had, of course, quite a spread of years, our ages - but still, I had great admiration for him and he seemed to like me. He had been very active in the League of Nations and was very much interested in the organization of the new international organization that might come up after the Second World War. So he reminded me that I was supposed to join him as soon as he would become Foreign Minister. I had forgotten it, I think. (Laughter.) But I was reminded of that, which was true, and I came back to Venezuela to work with him as the Secretary of another commission, but that was a post-War commission, a post-War affairs -

QUESTION: Post-War Problems?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Post-War Problems.

QUESTION: Now, was this primarily concerned with planning a post-War inter-governmental organization? Is that the idea?

PEREZ GUERRERO: The idea was of preparing oneself for the post-War period -- the countries themselves, the groups of countries to which they may have belonged -- and making a contribution towards the international organizations that might come up at the time of peace - when peace would break out, as they used to say. People were afraid of that: it was an adjustment to be made.

QUESTION: Tell me this: Looking back on it, how do you compare, say, working for the League of Nations and the ILO?

PEREZ GUERRERO: It was very much the same type of method and ideas that we had at the time, except that at the ILO, when I joined it, we had the War already on -
QUESTION: That's right.

PEREZ GUERRERO: It was ghastly, making a big shadow on all of us. I had a very good friend there - two very good friends, particularly Wilfred Jenks, who later became Director-General of the ILO. We used to meet very regularly at lunch-time in Geneva. He was at the ILO and I was at the League. And also John Richter, a New Zealander - the name escapes me right now; I think it was Richter. But he was the one that invited me and thought that I should join his section; he was the head of a section at the time.

QUESTION: In 1942 and 1943, Geneva must have been quite an isolated little spot in the heart of Europe, wasn't it?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. It was an interesting spot at the time. I liked it very much - and the League was the right size. (Laughter.) As was the ILO. Since then they have over-grown, I am afraid. Of course, their own functions are much wider, both in terms of functions as such, of scope, and in terms of geography, so that they have become much bigger.

QUESTION: Now, when the Big Four met in Washington in the summer and autumn of 1944 to formulate the so-called Dumbarton Oaks proposals, I have read that the Latin American States deeply resented being excluded from the consultations, and that their advice was not sought. Was this the case?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Not among ourselves. I mean, certainly probably (?)that prevails in some quarters, but Venezuela, as well as Mexico and Brazil, were consulted.

QUESTION: They were.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And the one who consulted our Ministers - Parra Perez in the case of Venezuela, E _____ Padilla in the case of Mexico, and Oswaldo (?)Ranha in the case of Brazil - was a man that was in a good position to consult and influence the course of affairs in this matter: that was Sumner Welles.
QUESTION: Oh! Sumner Welles! He did?

PEREZ GUERRERO: He was Deputy Secretary of State, and we got to know him well - although myself I did not have the same friendship with him that Parra Perez developed with him - my Minister. But he took me to Washington one time and then we went several times to Washington: I myself was several times in Washington. And from there -

I mean, from that time - let's talk about Dumbarton Oaks - he received, Parra Perez, the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. Of course we were not consulted at the time when they were being discussed by the three big Powers - that was the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain at the time; France was not involved in that either: she was critical about that, of course - de Gaulle was. But Parra Perez received the proposals and he was asked to comment on them, and I worked with Dr. Parra Perez to prepare the letter of reply to his letter, and we included a memorandum about some ideas and observations about the provisions, but not very profound, because we thought it was pretty well in the line in which we had thought it should be. There had been talks before then in several places, and that was the idea: to give more importance, particularly in our case, to the question of economy and social-economic affairs, and to colonies: Trusteeship is what it was called in the end - we used to call them Mandates in the League of Nations, as you know - or non-self-governing Territories, which was a euphemism for colonies which was adopted in the Charter.

So that this was pretty well covered, as was covered another very important part of it, which was the peace and security provisions of the Charter, which became part of the Charter.

QUESTION: Right. Now, you attended the Inter-American Conference on the problems of peace and war in Mexico City in March 1945. Under what circumstances were you chosen for that delegation?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was the head of the secretariat of this Post-War Commission, and I was very close to Parra Perez, the Minister. So that he took me there.

QUESTION: And what precisely were your functions at that conference?
Perez Guerrero: My function was rather following up on Dumbarton Oaks.

Question: Following up on Dumbarton Oaks.

Perez Guerrero: And that is where Parra Perez himself was called upon to perform an important function as Rapporteur of the commission that was in charge of that in Chapultepec. A friend of mine, who later became Minister of Foreign Affairs, (?), Gomez Riis (?), was also in Washington, and also had talks with Sumner Welles, and more particularly with a man that was very much involved in these matters: Pasvolsky.

Question: Oh yes: Leo Pasvolsky.

Perez Guerrero: Leo Pasvolsky, who already had become a good friend of ours, and I must say that I was very happy indeed to have had this contact — and a very pleasant man at the same time — and talk about things, because he gave me much information, asking me how things were in the League, and so on and so forth. But I was very much in touch with him, not, I would suggest, on a daily basis or anything of that type, but each time that we met, either in Washington or elsewhere, we had good conversations together. And he was, of course, very close to the representative of the United States in that commission, the commission on international organizations, on future international organizations.

And Parra Perez was asked to prepare a report, and Gomez Riis (?), a Venezuelan who had been in Washington, who was in Washington at the time and had been asked to join us at Chapultepec, and I myself, prepared that report for Parra Perez — of course, in touch with him, and he reviewed it and so on and so forth, but in the end it was published as a book at the conference itself. Mexico was, I would suggest, very businesslike in these matters; first of all, very well prepared. And Padilla Nervo — Padilla Nervo?

Question: Yes: of Mexico?

Perez Guerrero: Of Mexico — was the representative of Mexico at that commission, and he had as an assistant Alfonso Garcia Robles.
QUESTION: Garcia Robles! My goodness! These names are familiar, aren't they?

PEREZ GUERRERO: So that we worked all together.

QUESTION: Now, it was known at the time of the Inter-American Conference in Mexico City that the United States had already pledged its commitment to the great-Power proposals formulated at Dumbarton Oaks. How did the Latin American States feel about US participation in the Mexico City conference?

PEREZ GUERRERO: It was a good opportunity at that time for getting the last information about these matters from people that were directly involved. Sumner Welles was not in Mexico as I recall, but Stettinius (unintelligible) were there, and he told us directly from Yalta what had happened.

QUESTION: That's right; yes.

PEREZ GUERRERO: What he would say publicly -

QUESTION: Because Yalta was in, I think, January or February, and you met in March.

PEREZ GUERRERO: That was directly after that. He came directly from Yalta. He had still the sunshine of the Crimea (Laughter).

Of course, we could see that Stettinius as such was not quite up to the circumstances. He was an interesting man and so on and so forth, and very kind, but he was not like Sumner Welles, who had been involved in those matters for years - or Parra Perez or the people that were there.

QUESTION: He was very photogenic.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Very photogenic. (Laughter) With his grey hair - his silver hair. But he did not last long.
QUESTION: Well, tell me this: did the Inter-American Conference in Mexico City - do you think it facilitated communication among the Latin American States at the San Francisco Conference, that it sort of layed the groundwork for -?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, it did. It did so. It did so, and together with the United States we had very good conversations. The United States was not pressing us not to add anything or to do anything or nothing, because this was supposed to be discussed at San Francisco, and the Conference had already been convened. And we had been asked to enter the War or declare our state of belligerence in order to be able to participate at San Francisco, which many Latin American countries had not done. Others, like Brazil, had already declared war. We did not do that.

QUESTION: I was going to raise that question. I believe that at Mexico City the question of Argentina was one of the major concerns. Can you give us any background on that? I think it was Argentina that was one of the countries that hadn't made a declaration of war. Is that correct?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Argentina and Venezuela and others had not, but we all, including Argentina, declared a state of emergency - a state of belligerency. That was what we were asked for, I mean as a minimum. And we took the minimum because the War was ending at the time, and we had contributed economically to the war, Venezuela with its oil. The oil of Venezuela played a very important role in winning the war.

QUESTION: Sure.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And it was cheap oil at the time as well, which is not so much at the present time.

QUESTION: Now, resolution XXX of the Mexico conference expressed the views of the Latin American States on the future international organization. What was the reaction of Venezuela to the failure of the United States to commit itself to resolution XXX?
PEREZ GUERRERO: They had as a reason - possibly other people thought it was a pretext - that they were already committed for the Dumbarton Oaks proposals with the Soviet Union and Great Britain. But what we wanted was to get the point of view of Latin America, which was more important than just to get the United States with us, because it would not have been possible. But we did so, and with the United States we consulted very much on one part of it, which was the role that the regional organization of the American States had to play at that time.

The Pan-American Union was in existence, not the OAS as it became later on after the Conference of Bogota. But there it was the opinion of Parra Perez among other people - others as well, and in the end it was the opinion that prevailed - that that organization should be called upon to play a role in conflicts that would arise within the region, involving the whole hemisphere. I would suggest the United States not so much, because the United States, of course - unless it was a war with a Latin American country - the United States, which was not in sight in any stretch of the imagination one could apply.

But we could see that Latin American conflicts could be solved, preferably - and that was the word that we used - within the Organization of American States, as it came to be known. And the word 'preferably' was inserted there at the suggestion of Parra Perez, because he too was inclined that it could not be just the prerogative, the exclusive right of our regional organization, because since the War it was at stake at any time that any little war might break out - and that's still true, even more so today, and war has become much more, I would suggest, dangerous.

Now, since this was so, then he did not want to exclude the future international organizations from having a say -

QUESTION: A role, yes.

PEREZ GUERRERO: - in these matters, and the word 'preferably' would take care of that. He did not say it with a sequence or anything of that type, because we did not question, to say it more explicitly, the right of the organization to look into our conflicts and to see what could be done. But if an organization of a region, in this case of the American States, of the Americas, were to be seized of that conflict, it will have to let it do it before coming in, if it were to. It did not work
entirely that way, because there has been a recognition of the competence of the Security Council, as we know, as from the beginning of the conflict, except that it can pause at one time or another if a regional organization is taking up the matter and seeing what solution to bring to this problem.

But at that time it was the first time it was discussed, and the man that was very much interested in that was Senator Vandenberg, and he raised it in San Francisco itself. But I'll let you know when we come to San Francisco.

QUESTION: Okay, we'll get onto that. Now, when you arrived in San Francisco - the representatives of the Latin American States - in April of 1945, had you, as a result of the meetings in Mexico City - had you as a group worked out a unified approach, a united front?

PEREZ GUERRERO: The Latin American countries?

QUESTION: Yes.

PEREZ GUERRERO: No. We had the report - Parra Perez' report - that was prepared at Chapultepec, and we had that resolution that was approved there.

END SIDE 1

There is a resolution in Chapultepec that we tried to get through - but we did not succeed and that was a resolution on commodity agreements. There is a document on that in the archives of the conference, and it is interesting to read again - I did so not too long ago, and I was very happy indeed that at that time we took that initiative, we the Venezuelans. I personally had quite a bit to do with that. I was not covering economic matters at the time - it was a Venezuelan called Hector Santailla (????) - but the two together we worked out that paper. And it was the first time that in an international organization a resolution of this kind came up. In the League of Nations, I think, there was no precedent of that.

And there was an agreement that had already been signed, there was an agreement on coffee, with an inter-American framework, and that was working (?) so and so, but we wanted that to be extended, and the United States did say no. It was a very plain no,
the type of no that great Powers can voice with some authority, so that it was
nothing doing, and it was not withdrawn, I would suggest, but it remained undisputed
practically, with a very - presentation from Venezuela and perhaps a couple of countries
that did observe something, but from there on it didn't go any further.

That was something that I remember. Well, because I had something to do with
that, and it is a matter which is still in our agenda today.

QUESTION: Oh yes. Very much so.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And we have the same difficulties we had before.

QUESTION: Like in UNCTAD today, right?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Like UNCTAD today; yes. Except that some agreements have
been signed, but we know that there are some countries, and particularly one that is
not very happy with that idea (Laughter). They believe in the market as being the
determining factor of everything else, including, of course, of prices. But still,
that's another matter.

QUESTION: Well, let's move on to 1945 and San Francisco. What was your
role in the Venezuelan delegation in San Francisco? Did you concentrate on particular
areas of the Charter, or what was your role?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was at the beginning wavering, because I was very much
interested in the economic side, and I was concerned in the ECOSOC. But in the end
Parra Perez thought I might be more useful in the political side. (Laughter) And he put
me in the First Commission, I think it was, or the commission that discussed the
security arrangements, the Security Council and everything else. Well the veto came
up - the veto question came up - and we were in favour of the veto, not because we
liked or were enthusiastic about it, but we could not see the Organization becoming
a practical institution if we did not recognize the prerogatives of the two great
Powers, the ones - and others - that had helped in a determining fashion in the winning
of the War. And, of course, we didn't think it was going to stay forever, but at least
for a number of years after the War it was thought - it was Parra Perez' thinking, that I share - that it was worthwhile having, and it was called the 'rule of unanimity' at the time: that the two major Powers have to be unanimous on something in order that the resolution should pass.

Of course, the veto power was somehow attenuated by the possibility of an abstention of one of the permanent members of the Council, the Security Council, without hindering the approval of a resolution.

QUESTION: Now tell me: we've lived with the veto for 37 years. From your perspective, both as an international civil servant and as a diplomat, has it been a help or a hindrance to the work of the UN: has the veto been abused?

PEREZ GUERRERO: The veto has been abused by both Powers. When I say both, I suggest these are the two major Powers. Others might have also done a number of things - in the case of the war of Malvinas I think there was a use of the veto power by the UK which was also, in our view, an abuse. But it was a use of the veto power that was provided for by the Charter. We can interpret it as not being called for in a matter of this type, except for maybe a short-sighted interest of one of the Powers, of the vetoing Power, but nothing else. But I don't see how it could have been otherwise. You could not help thinking that -

QUESTION: You would not have had a Charter unless you had the veto, I guess.

PEREZ GUERRERO: No. Or if you had had one it would have broken up very soon thereafter, or it would have been even less workable, because somehow the Security Council would not have met or something would have happened which would have paralyzed the institution rather than make it more workable. Yet I would suggest that the time has come - has been there for some time - when a reconsideration of this matter ought to take place. Not that it should be entirely removed, as such, but it should be said when it can be, let's say, used in a legitimate way and when not. But still: I mean, this is something that will take some time before it is settled.

We were in that position, but there were other Latin American countries that were in a different position, for instance, Colombia, which is a country very close to ours,
and it is immediate brothers of ours - I mean sisters - so that they were in the position that the veto should not have been conceived as an instrument for the Charter of the United Nations. And they made very good speeches - much better than ours (Laughter) in that respect because, of course, it lent itself to putting straight in argument, I would suggest, in the interest of the developing countries - they were not called that way at the time, but the smaller countries - and, of course, the medium-sized countries as well. Even some European countries had some doubts about it, but they could not do anything but let the veto go through.

And that's what happened there. It was a great majority in favour of it, and in the end, since we did not vote or anything at that time because we were writing a Charter; it was a constitution, because the predominant feeling was that it should be there - I mean, those that were against it had to give in, and most of them did it in a very elegant way, without being forced to do it, but just agreeing that indeed that was the only way at the time.

QUESTION: What were your expectations when you arrived in San Francisco? Did you think that we were going to get a Charter and we were going to get as good a Charter as we did? I mean, were you optimistic about it?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was optimistic because I had already had the background of it, not only the Dumbarton Oaks memorandum or proposals, but also we had the conversations with Sumner Welles or the correspondence between Sumner Welles and Parra Perez, the Minister with whom I worked. So that I could see that it was following a line which was not too different, not different in a substantial way, from the one that had been traced before, but more organically put in Dumbarton Oaks. And it made sense, as I said before, because it covered pretty well the economic matters and also the colonial matters: the need for the self-determination on the part of colonies. That was two things on which Venezuela was very insistent. Of course, in the case of Parra Perez, he was very much interested in peace as such. But he conceived, as we have conceived since then, that peace could not exist if justice, economic justice would not prevail in the world. And that's why the world is still not at peace: because not enough has been done on that score, on the score of economic matters, and in bringing about an equitable system with which we could all live.
QUESTION: Which is something you've been working on most of your life. (Laughter)

PEREZ GUERRERO: And I will be working until I pass away.

QUESTION: We have talked quite a little bit about the inter-American system, the Organization of American States, the Pan-American Union and so on. That was one of the major issues which Venezuela was interested in at San Francisco, wasn't it?

PEREZ GUERRERO: That is it; yes.

QUESTION: That was one of the key - that was my impression from the reading I've done. In fact, it was one of the key issues for the Latin American States. Am I correct?

PEREZ GUERRERO: That's right; yes. And Parra Perez was very much to do with that, because when, as I said before, when Senator Vandenberg raised that question of what are we going to do, because the United States could not sign it if we don't have some provision which would cover that situation, the situation of a regional conflict. And what would be the competence of the United Nations vis-à-vis the competence of another, a regional organization in that case the Pan-American Union at the time, the OAS as it has come to be known? So that this was pursued there, but I would suggest it was perhaps two weeks before the end of the San Francisco conference. It was during the - at least the final third. It was late that it came up.

And I think Senator Vandenberg and Parra Perez - but I would suggest Senator Vandenberg more so than Parra Perez, because he had more power - brought it up. We had another gentleman, whose name was Gustavo Herrera, who was Minister of Development in Venezuela, who was dealing with these questions, because he was very much interested in inter-American relations. And he was the one also who helped Parra Perez most in these matters. Not I myself, who was a junior at the time.

And I think it came out all right. We were a little bit afraid that it might become an obstacle to signing of the Charter itself, or to the completion of the work. At one time it was the only issue that really could have meant a stoppage of the whole thing.
QUESTION: My goodness!

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. And we were told that that was the case, and I still remember the anxiety that we had, all: it was the only time that we could see that the Charter might remain a wishful thinking. It did not, because people were flexible and were very much interested in having an organization, so that that thought that the competence should be given to the Organization of American States - the Pan-American Union at the time - had to give way to those that were thinking at that conference that the competence had to be global, in the case of the United Nations. So that a sort of a compromise was worked out, and that compromise is what we see in these Articles of the Charter - 53: I don't recall now what - that is very clear. There are a couple of Articles, that one says that the Security Council has got full competence from everything, and the other says in circumstances it may go to -

QUESTION: Regional arrangements.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Regional arrangements.

QUESTION: Now, I believe that at San Francisco there was a move to have one of the non-permanent seats on the Security Council reserved for the Latin American group. Was Venezuela part of that campaign? And how do you feel that the present rotational arrangements for the non-permanent seats on the Council worked out?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Venezuela was never very much involved in that idea of trying to get a permanent seat for Latin America.

QUESTION: You were not.

PEREZ GUERRERO: To begin with, because it would not be permanent: we were ourselves 20-odd countries, and we knew very well that we were not going to be represented just because any one of these countries would be a member there. A member has to act on its own. It cannot receive its instructions from 20 members of a group. So that we did not take that very seriously. There were some countries that thought that
if they may have had that seat they might have stayed there, because of their size, because of their importance. Venezuela was certainly not of any dimension that would have commanded that authority. So that we did not press that, not even testified our own interest in that matter.

Yet we were very much interested that Latin America would be well represented in the Security Council among the non-permanent members. And that, I think we succeeded in getting a sort of understanding of that. It was not done in a precise fashion, and since Latin America was the only important group of the third world at the time that was independent - except for India and Thailand and Ethiopia and a number of other countries - Egypt, that was not quite entirely independent, but still had independent status - I mean, we did not fear at the time any competition from other members of the third world. And what has worked out has been all right. I think it has worked all right, and it is a question more of quality than of number, that's what's important there. Of course, numbers are important - do have their own significance. Even for a resolution to be adopted there is a need for seven members at the time - I think it's nine now. So that numbers count. But this part of it has been working all right, so far as I know.

The only thing is that there are small States that would like to be members of the Council; and they have a right. They have a right, since we have got equality of States, equality of status for all States. I mean, there is nothing that we can say, and it is for the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council to choose.

QUESTION: Tell me: what was the atmosphere like at San Francisco? Was there hostility, suspicion, mistrust?

PEREZ GUERRERO: No.

QUESTION: Or a genuine spirit of co-operation.

PEREZ GUERRERO: There was a genuine spirit of co-operation, I suggest. Some of the countries, like Saudi Arabia, were very new. My first conversations on oil with Saudi Arabia date from that time, from the train taking us to San Francisco with some of the younger chaps of the Saudi Arabian delegation. And I told them that
a lot of oil existed in their country, which they didn't know about. They knew that some of it existed, but they didn't know that it was really very big. And we Venezuelans were much more informed on that.

QUESTION: You knew more about it than they did?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes indeed - at the time.

QUESTION: That's fascinating. A question about the working-method at the San Francisco conference: did the Latin American States maintain regular or continuous consultation? Did they often vote as a bloc? Did they consult with other third-world nations - you were mentioning, say, Saudi Arabia or the Philippines or Thailand? Now, what was the working method there?

PEREZ GUERRERO: At that time it was not a group method that was followed: the so-called OECD countries today meeting on their own, or the middle countries meeting on their own outside the great Powers, or anything of that type. What there were was very much in practice there, was the method of consultation - informal consultations. And Parra Perez would see many people that would come to see him, or he would ask to see other people. He had meetings, of course, with the Head of the delegation of the United States, as with the Head of the delegation of the Soviet Union at the time, or others of the other groups: France, of course, and others. But a Latin American group did not exist as such; it did not meet as such, and not everyone was of the same feeling at the time in Latin America: we had some difficulties, as you know. So that we were not necessarily all of the same opinion, as I told you, about the veto, the case of the veto.

But still, among certain countries there were, if not regular, at least frequent consultations. The conference lasted for over three years - for three months, so that there was ample time for consultations, and living together, because most of us lived in the Saint Francis Hotel, so that we were meeting all the time. And not only at the top level, but also at the medium and lower level, which was important too, to create that atmosphere of co-operation and of goodwill. People wanted to finish this War with international organizations that will work, and prevent another war from succeeding that one, which we have not yet made sure of.
QUESTION: Your reply immediately inspires two further questions. What was the relationship of the Latin American nations with the Soviet Union at San Francisco? Did you at that time sense the beginnings of the Cold-War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I would suggest from what I recall that it was not too much spoilt at the time by these tensions that followed, more particularly because of the Polish situation, and then later for the Iranian situation, already when the United Nations had already been accepted; the Charter had already been ratified or was under ratification.

There were problems, of course, which we could surmise. The interested Powers knew more about it than we did, and about the possibility of this evolving into some tensions that might have caused another war. But we were not aware of it. Nobody wanted to be aware at the time when we were discussing the peace as a major issue. It would have been an unwelcome issue to bring in this question.

And Molotov - that was a hard man throughout the war - had more smiles than I had suspected, and was very pleasant when he would meet a member of the Latin American delegations, and so on. And we, of course, talked about it among ourselves, about our impressions of this or that man. And there were some, I would suggest, rather definite, I would suggest, in Spanish we say simpatías - empathy - with the Russians for their contribution in winning the War. And that was very clear, since the battle of Stalingrad and the battle of Berlin: they were tremendous events that had wide-spread resonance.

QUESTION: Exactly.

PEREZ GUERRERO: But the younger people, probably, were more caught by these type of feelings than the older ones, that were somewhat more mistrustful about what might happen, no? In any case, I didn't even feel that among my American friends; I had very good relations with one of the Americans there at my category, and we never thought that we were going to have this very tense relationship that we had a few years later.
QUESTION: Now, this brings me to my second question, and that is about the United States: what was the influence of the US on the Latin American delegations, and specifically on Venezuela, during this San Francisco conference? Did you feel you were being pressured by Washington?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I don't think so. Let me reflect if I can find any trace in my remembrances about something of this type. I don't see anything. I suggest that the matter on which they were brought closer together is this question of the role that the OAS, the inter-American organization, would play within this peace-ensuring mechanism. But not, for instance, in the economic matters, which we discussed very fully, were they insistent that we should try to leave out something that might have not been very good. We enriched very much the clauses of what Dumbarton Oaks had on an economic organization, an economic competence of the United Nations. And it was welcomed by them.

Of course, there were discussions, and we had to admit that perhaps we had to give way in some things, but generally speaking it came out very much along the lines which we wanted. We cannot say that we missed putting something. Some of the things were perhaps not sufficiently developed there, but not excluded just because of pressure of the big ones.

QUESTION: Now, Nelson Rockefeller was at the conference. Did he make his presence felt with the Latin American delegations?

PEREZ GUERRERO: He used to keep in touch with Latin American delegations.

QUESTION: (Laughter) That's putting it very tactfully, I'm sure.

PEREZ GUERRERO: No, but he was a friend of ours, and he still was a friend of ours when we had a revolutionary Government — that was the same year, later on that year, in October, when Rómulo Betancourt came to the Government — and he kept good relations with Nelson Rockefeller, and also Rockefeller used to visit Venezuela from time to time. He had some property there.

QUESTION: Yes. He had property there; yes.
PEREZ GUERRERO: And I knew him well too. But, of course, we knew who he was, and whose interests he was serving, but there was not necessarily, I would suggest, an incompatibility among his interests in every matter. Except on oil, sometimes. (Laughter) We did not consult him to do a few things that we did.

QUESTION: Now, one of your proposals at San Francisco was for an international institute for educational, social and cultural co-operation. What was your role in formulating this proposal? This was a Venezuelan proposal as I understand it.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. Yes.

QUESTION: I presume that this could be described as a forerunner of UNESCO.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Of UNESCO; yes. We did that because we had felt that within even the inter-American States we had to have something of this type, and that that was not enough, to have it at the inter-regional, at the regional level, but it should be a world-wide network of knowledge and science. And that was, of course, as you say, a forerunner of UNESCO. But other countries of Latin America were very keen on that as well: Mexico and Colombia were very much interested in these matters at the time, and the southern part of it as well.

QUESTION: Tell me, Ambassador: has UNESCO become the agency you originally envisaged?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I can say that not even of myself, let alone of an organization that has grown so much as UNESCO. (Laughter) I did not envisage myself as I am today, and UNESCO is certainly different from what it was thought it might be. But I would suggest that it has developed perhaps too much, as has happened to many international organizations, in terms of bureaucracies, but not in terms of coverage, of scope. I think whatever they have covered had a reference, an important reference, to knowledge in the world, no? Including information, which is so much of a matter of contention right now. We never questioned the competence of UNESCO of taking up this matter and seeing what we could do with it. We are all for the free press and everything
else, but freedom up to a point, because - it's not a question of maybe censorship or anything, but having some discipline about things that would be in the general interest, and those that are merely on the promotion of specific interests which sometime are in a better position to pay their own way into the press, rather than others.

QUESTION: Yes. I know what you mean.

PEREZ GUERRERO: You know: you have been very close to these things, eh?

QUESTION: One of the provisions that were written into the Charter at San Francisco was a possibility of a Charter review conference after 10 years. Largely because of the reluctance of the Soviet Union and the United States, such a conference has never been held. How do you feel about this issue? Is it time for a full-scale Charter review conference, or do you think that would just open up a Pandora's box?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I generally think that one should not be afraid of opening up any boxes, whether Pandora's or anyone else's, (Laughter) because otherwise we may not have anything; we would not have discussed many things, or we would have needed another war to do something else. There was need for having a First War to have the League of Nations, and a Second World War to have the United Nations. And I think we ought to be able to discuss things among ourselves and trying to see reasonably what type of provisions could be changed, or what kind of modifications in certain provisions should be gotten, or else we would leave things as they stand and then perhaps they will become anachronic. So it's better to bring them to actuality, to the present-day world, rather than to leave things as they stood before.

I think, for instance, it's not very elegant to have nowadays in the Charter of the United Nations, those clauses on the 'enemy States'. There are clauses that have no meaning, of course, nowadays. Perhaps some think that they still have a sort of residual amount of meaning. I don't believe so, because it will be different altogether. And there will be need to remove them. And as I say that, there are others: on Trusteeship. Trusteeship was very important at the time. It has become less so.
The only thing that is important about Trusteeship right now is Namibia, which was a Mandate from the League of Nations and became a Trusteeship in the case of the United Nations.

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It was been treated as a dead letter by a country which fortunately is no longer attending the meetings of the United Nations. We don't see their absence. But we would like to have them back in the United Nations as a different type of country, one respecting the provisions of the Charter and international law generally.

QUESTION: You were mentioning Trusteeship and non-self-governing Territories. That leads me to my next question: I have read that at San Francisco the Latin America States took relatively little part in the discussions of those sections of the Charter dealing with Trust Territories and non-self-governing territories. Is that the case?

PEREZ GUERRERO: No, not that I remember. We were very much interested.

QUESTION: You were?

PEREZ GUERRERO: We were; we were very much interested. During the Conference that met in Bogota in 1948 - that was the time of Bogotazo, the terrible revolt, uprising - we approved a resolution stating that the European colonial territories in the Americas had to be abolished. We created a small committee on that was supposed to be finding solutions for that. We were all very much in favour of that, it was approved of course unanimously, and there was of course one country that did not like that very much and that arranged itself in such a way as not to have the Committee meet more than once. It petered out. But this disapproval a few years later - and that was then true -

QUESTION: What country was that?

PEREZ GUERRERO: The United States, I think.

QUESTION: I thought you were going to say that (laughter).

PEREZ GUERRERO: It was not because they did not share the concepts that were behind it, and they did not veto it - or anyway it was not supposed to be vetoed. They did not oppose it very violently as I recall, but it was a
question of the thought being faithful to their allies, the European allies. Their ex-allies, or still allies at the time. So that was perhaps what made them feel that it was untimely, anything of this type...

Yet the American Government during the war made us some proposals about what to do with colonies sometimes, that I will bring up on another occasion, because they could see that we didn't - we Americans didn't want to have European territories in our own midst, and we noticed what has happened with the Malvinas and those things, which is rather unheard of at the end of the twentieth century.

QUESTION: Now, at San Francisco the Latin American States aided in adopting a very important article of the Charter, that was Article 51, which encourages the establishment of regional security arrangements.

What was your opinion of this provision at the time of the San Francisco Conference and what is your present view of the impact of Article 51? Has it had an effect on the balance of world power in recent decades?

PEREZ GUERRERO: As I told you, that came from Chapultepec, and of course it did not come from there it was in the air. The - it was a question of making the point when it was necessary. It was necessary first in Capultepec and then in San Francisco. It came late, but it was planning there. People were trying to let it happen rather than to intervene. For instance we were considering the world as a whole and we didn't want to perturb that atmosphere. But the time came when it had to be done. I believe that, as I told you, this Article is a good compromise and another one that is sort of a development of that in the Security Council - they are a good compromise on the position of those who might have felt better to let the world competence, the universal competence of the United Nations in security matters, remain untouched and unperturbed. With the other side, which thought that the competence of the regional organizations should be given precedence in a formal way. So that there is a mixture. Of course it is not very clear how it would work, but what is clear are the two concepts: that there is a world Organization that has got universal competence. At no point will it be deprived of acting if it feels that it should for the sake of peace, of world peace. On the other hand, since there might be - we were anticipating that others might exist besides the inter-American one - other regional organizations that have competence in matters of solving and settling conflicts within the region, that that ought not to be disturbed, as such, because
it may be a very useful instrument for dealing effectively with such conflicts. So it was a combination of the two that came up there, and I suppose it has worked out in one way or another. The influence of the great Powers is sometimes felt in one direction or the other. There is one Power that would wish the inter-American State organizations to be made stronger and more effective in these matters, and another Power that would rather wish to have such matters dealt with at the United Nations level. But it's a question which you cannot settle in terms of one conflict or another - it has to be dealt with case by case. And we have one example right now, where the situation has been raised both in the United Nations itself, in the Security Council, and also in the Organization of American States (OAS). So that I would suggest that there is no real conflict between the two. I would suggest also that one could not forget one element or the other, and if we had to make sure that one should prevail, if one had to prevail rather than the other, rather than the two of them together, it should be the United Nations, because that is where the world ought to be very conscious of the dangers that exist - for wars - and more today than in the past at the time when the United Nations Charter was approved. But even then we were finishing a world war, and we thought - we hoped - it would be the end...and we still hope so.

QUESTION: You're quite right.

Now, at San Francisco the Latin American States favoured a proposal to make the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice compulsory. That was of course unsuccessful. In retrospect, has the voluntary jurisdiction system of the Court been effective, in your opinion?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I personally would have preferred a compulsory system. Because when one has got a situation in a world that is becoming, I would suggest, more conscious of its unity or its existence at least - not so much unity, because it is rather varied and at times has got different opinions - it should recognize that there is a tribunal which should be able to determine what the situation should be in case of conflict. That it should be able to...the only thing which is rather difficult in this is that if you do things in that way - institute a compulsory jurisdiction - it in certain cases the Powers, the interested Powers or one of them, might do everything it can in order to turn around. And then it will have been a violation of the Statutes of the Court, which would not have
been too good for the Court itself. Of course it might not have had any really effective effect, effective result.

QUESTION: Tell me; looking back at San Francisco what do you think was your country's greatest contribution to the Conference and, say, to the Charter?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I would not think we can single out one issue and say that we made such and such a contribution, that perhaps that provision would not have been in the Charter save for us. There I would suggest that the way in which we worked and the climate in which we worked were such that the ideas were very much in the minds of people, and that no one proposal would just appear in the void. No one said "I have thought of that." And then again we were faced with a - with the result of very important work that had been done with the three great Powers, those that prepared the Dumbarton Oaks memorandum which had been very widely circulated and which gave rise to discussions - such as for instance in Chapultapec. So that the ideas that we might have contributed were already part of the inter-American contribution. I remember that we made a number of suggestions in the case of the Court of Justice. Venezuela, for instance, prepared for San Francisco, and it was prepared in Chapultapec, a sort of outline of what the Court ought to be and what it should do. Two or three pages of memorandum. That was discussed at San Francisco - at Chapultapec, rather, and it was circulated in San Francisco. Those proposals were ours. But to say that anything of this type was going to be neglected if we had not done that is very difficult to assume.

For instance in the case of the Court: talking about the Court - as I say, Latin America was very much interested in that. We had always liked the idea of having a State of Law - and a State of Law cannot be conceived unless there is an International Court, one that is respected and resorted to each time it is necessary. But we were in favour of consulting the Court. We did influence the idea not only of asking the Court to pass judgement, to study to settle disputes and so on, but also to give its advice - its advisory opinion. And we did insist very much on that, and we thought that even the specialized agencies ought to be able to consult the Court in these questions and ask for an opinion. I think this has served a good purpose. I don't recall - I think perhaps the one that existed at the time of the League of Nations did have that provision as well - but
were much more organized, more organic so to speak, than they were in the previous Court. That was one of the places where perhaps more new ideas were introduced, because the Court was already something that we knew very well what it was going to do and so forth, and the tribunal has to have sufficient leeway to be able to defend itself without being told what it should do.

QUESTION: Now, a final question about San Francisco: as you look back over those weeks that you spent at the Conference who would you single out as some of the key figures of the Conference and how would you characterize them?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I would have to consult myself for a while, because I - of course the ones who were closer to me. Closest was Parra-Perez. He himself made quite a contribution, because he could be consulted on some things, and he would give an opinion which was his opinion, and I thought it was a wise opinion considered as such, because he was respected. He had the experience of the League of Nations; he was one of the survivors of the League of Nations - there were not so many people from the League of Nations, more than we see today, but even then in high positions there were not so many. Among the Latin Americans of course was Oswaldo Aranha, a very important person, also someone who had a lot of experience and good judgement. I think that the Mexican minister was not as experienced as the previous two - but he had already learnt quite a bit on these matters. He was more of a politician than the two others were. But he was a respected man. And he had next to him someone who was supposed to become a very important man, Padilla Nervo. Padillo Nervo sat, by the way, in the drafting group that revised the Spanish text vis-à-vis the English, and then another one was looking after the French. I must say he did a good job. It is important... it is not a creative job, but it's one that avoids a lot of misunderstanding if one neglects it.

But the other personnage there - we had among our own delegations in the economic side many good people there, but I think it would be idle for me to try to remember, and I might omit some of the important figures there. On the - a man that was there and who contributed, as you know, very much to the drafting of the preamble was General Smuts. He was there - I had what I considered then the pleasure of meeting him. I think he was a man who understood the problems of his country in a different way from what is being understood right now by his
successors.

QUESTION: He was reputed to be the author of the Preamble of the Charter, is that right?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. He was. That was why – at least that was what I was told.

(Technical pause)

QUESTION: We were just discussing General Smuts.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. He was indeed known as having contributed very much, if not drafted himself, the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, which is so well written and so inspiring. And he was a man of great stature too. One can agree on some things, and then of course as I said before we wish we had another General Smuts right now, because he would have been more pliable to circumstances than have proven to be the others.

QUESTION: Than his successors?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Than his successors, yes. Of course there were many important people. I don't – of course I – Mr. Atlee...it was Churchill still at the time. I saw Mr. Atlee at the first General Assembly in London.

QUESTION: That's right; I was there.

PEREZ GUERRERO: You were there. But – who was the delegate of Britain at the time?

QUESTION: Eden was there.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Eden was there, yes. Mackenzie was there from Canada.

QUESTION: And Stettinius was there.
PEREZ GUERRERO: Stettinius was there.

QUESTION: Truman flew out for the final speech, I believe.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, he was there for the final speech. Yes.

QUESTION: General Romulo was there as the head of the Philippines...

PEREZ GUERRERO: Romulo was there and he had his say. Of course he was young at the time. We all were.

There was an Indian on the economic side. Ramaswami Mudaliar...I don't know whether he was already there.

QUESTION: Yes. I remember him.

PEREZ GUERRERO: He was a very important gentleman.

QUESTION: And Herbert Evatt was there from New Zealand...Australia, I mean.

PEREZ GUERRERO: From New Zealand was Nash. He was a very good man. We had a good - good relations with him, more than with others there. He was a very forthcoming man and very, very alert. A good politician probably, he stayed long in power...

From China of course there was a Chang Kai-Chek delegation...at the time. And from Saudi Arabia there was King - the Prince Abdul Aziz.. Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz, who was later Prime Minister and later still King. And I had the pleasure of meeting him there, and I became quite well acquainted with him. I think he knew less of me myself than I knew of him, of course, and that was very natural, but I had started seeing him from the time he was there for the first...from the beginning of the Hots Springs Conference.

QUESTION: I want to come to that in a minute when we talk about Hot Springs... What I was going to say was, then, after San Francisco you represented Venezuela at the Preparatory Commission in the autumn of 1945 in London. What was precisely the reason for having such a Preparatory Commission?
Perez Guerrero: I think it was felt that the Charter of the United Nations was not sufficiently precise as to permit a Secretary-General to build up an organization, as we had conceived it would have to be. So that Leo Pasvolsky was the one that was behind that. Since I was interested in following up this matter, I volunteered, very disinterestedly within inverted commas, because I was interested indeed, to be the Venezuelan representative there and stay another day in San Francisco. So that we met under the chairmanship of Leo Pasvolsky, and we decided that indeed we would meet in London but that it would be convened through normal channels — we knew what they were. There were already United Nations channels, which existed even before the United Nations Organization existed — it was the Grand Alliance against Fascism and Nazism that had taken the name of United Nations. So that's why the United States had sort of given that name to the new Organization. It came from there and we thought it was a good idea, although we were not part of that Alliance since we were neutral at the time. And we became a non-belligerent State at the San Francisco Conference, to go to the San Francisco Conference.

So that that Conference of — that Commission played a very important role. I was — I had forgotten that I was a member of it. We had had a change in the Venezuelan Government, a revolutionary Government, and with a young military and Accion Democratico Roman Betancourt was the head of the Junta — and all of sudden in Europe I was visiting one embassy... You see, we had been trying to trace you somewhere because we need you. The Government is going to send you as representative to this Commission. You see, in spite of the change of Government Venezuela was still wishing me to go there, and I was a member of the ILO at the time, because I had not ceased to be a member of the ILO — I had had a leave of absence when I went to Venezuela on the post-war commission, and I had rejoined it in order to go to Paris and be there for the beginning of the ILO and thinking that I was going to continue. But I happened, it happened that I could not continue. At that time I was asked to go to London, so I asked for another permission, I got it, and I preferred Venezuela, and then at the end I met David Owen there who asked me to rejoin him in the Secretariat.

Question: And you were vice-chairman of Committee I of the Preparatory Commission, and that dealt with General Assembly matters?

Perez Guerrero: Yes.
QUESTION: What were some of the range of subjects that you covered in that Committee?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I must say that we had a very good Swedish gentleman that presided over it. I don't recall his name... But we used to have meetings, the two of us together, to see how things, the matters of the Commission are to proceed, what were the things being discussed, what summaries should be made and so on and so forth... But I hardly presided - it was just a vice-chairman that was available to consult on matters of procedure, and also sometimes matters which needed some push from the president or chairman.

QUESTION: I was at Church House at the time, and as I recall one of the most important things we had to do was to draft the provisional agenda of the Assembly itself.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. The first Assembly. It was divided into two...

QUESTION: And the composition of the steering committee...
The languages of the General Assembly - there were several things that came up, I remember, in Committee I at the time.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, we had a very good - and the financial provisions that came up there too, they were important. I was all by myself when I was appointed there, but I succeeded in getting Tayobre, Jose Antonio Tayobre, who became later on a successor of Prebisch at Cepal, to be appointed to the Commission to help me. He was having his post-graduate studies at the London University - and we worked very well together. I think we got a contribution in terms of the provisions of the Charter. I don't know whether the provisions of the Charter or the rules and regulations - I had my League experience which I brought to bear on that with several others - I think was already there, I don't recall very well, but we were several coming from the League. One thing which I did influence is something I do not regret, although it has become very expensive.

QUESTION: What's that?
PEREZ GUERRERO: The two-year home leave. Instead of the three years we had at the League. And it was Senator Vandenberg that presided over the small Committee where I sat and we met sometimes at the American Embassy, sometimes elsewhere, in order to proceed with our work. And he was very, I would suggest, forthcoming in terms of the suggestions which were made, and so we thought "Why not two years, every two years?" because we thought it was very important for the officials of the United Nations not to lose touch with their own countries, to be there and to feel that they were members of that community, and somehow did represent—although on a Secretariat basis—that the cultures and everything else of those countries, and not try to become New Yorkers, any more than they would have become Genevans if they had not had the same provisions —

QUESTION: And the League—it was every three years, was it?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, three years. I was impressed at that time because the two years, the three years—especially for people that had to take boats and so on—was rather short. Was rather a long wait, three years. So that we thought to shorten it. But still, I think it has become very costly. Very costly. And yet I still don't regret it. I have never taken advantage myself to a great extent—I think I've had one such home leave in the League of Nations and perhaps—and one I think in the while I was in the United Nations, one or two. When I was in exile I was not allowed to go to Mexico where my mother and my sister were—it was very very tough at the time. I had to pay my whole trip to see them at the time myself. I don't regret it because what I remember well is that I was there. I saw my mother and I saw my sister.

QUESTION: Now, I believe that also in the Preparatory Commission, I read that Venezuela was active in the debate in Committee 8 on whether the permanent Headquarters of the United Nations should be in the eastern or western part of the United States, and whether it should be located in or near a large city. Do you recall the Venezuelan position on any of those points?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I recall it very well. And the only place where we can say that we influenced this matter was there. I was representing Venezuela at that Committee, and I was sitting next to Stevenson.
QUESTION: Yes, he was the United States delegate.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, the United States Delegate. He was very quiet on that issue, he was not talking too much. But he made a splendid speech when we came to choose the United States. And Venezuela had a contribution to make there. In rather choosing the United States than Geneva.

Because it was a matter of Geneva or the United States. We had heard that the French Government would offer Paris as headquarters. It never came. So that the whole thing was between these two possibilities. And I thought that the United Nations was going to become too big for Geneva. Geneva would have been drowned with this rush of officials, it would have been unlivable for them and for us, at the time, because we would have changed the nature of the city entirely. Even without that, it has had quite an important influence, as you know.

But the Venezuelan vote as any other vote was decisive on that, because I think we won that issue by one vote. Colombia voted for Geneva, for instance, again, a neighbouring country having differing points of views which I think one cannot... Of course, Zuleta was an important man in the Commission, he was another vice-chairman - I don't know what he was exactly -

QUESTION: He was Chairman of the Preparatory Commission...

PEREZ GUERRERO: He was Chairman. Because it was Noel Baker, but he only perhaps launched the Commission.

QUESTION: That's right. He was Minister of State in the Labour Government.

PEREZ GUERRERO: He was a very interesting man, a very good man; I liked him very much. And his son as well. But that was later. I did influence that, because we thought it was very important for us that it should be in a country like the United States because we still could not forget the fact that Wilson was the major architect of the League of Nations and was unable to get his country to ratify the Covenant of the League of Nations, and we thought we should not expose ourselves to that. So the best way was to be in the United States and part of it, and here no one was going to expel us because for many
reasons, which I need not recount right now, and then when it
came to deciding whether it should be San Francisco or New York or Boston or
Philadelphia and we were in favour of New York one hundred percent. It was
New York for us. And I campaigned for it. It is the only thing which is not
a question of bragging about - the issue is not that big after all - but it has
this importance, and I feel - Jenks (?) did blame me very much for having
turned my back, as he put it, to Geneva at a time when I could have brought the United
Nations to Geneva. But I was very happy indeed, and I could work...I convinced
a number of countries, particularly the Latin American countries, because people
say that San Francisco is far from everywhere. That what one of its advantages...
far from everywhere, why shouldn't it be? I mean, if we can have ... it's
New York, or the northern part of Latin America it would be within reach already,
and Europe would not be too far, it was very important, rather than have to make
the trip to San Francisco. I could see San Francisco had many other attractions
which New York did not have, but we might have become too much of an international
organization zone there. Here we are, an important landmark in New York,
almost the first place for tourists to visit, but we are not as overwhelming as
we would have been in Geneva.

QUESTION: And I've always felt that the Swiss have been very ambivalent
about international organizations any way. They resent them but then they love
the money that they bring in.

PEREZ GUERRERO: That's it, and the fact that Switzerland has not been
able to join, in spite of some of their own Ministers of Foreign Affairs being
quite favourable to it, because they don't dare resort to plebiscite or referendum
as they call it, because they are afraid that it might be rejected.

QUESTION: Now, you were a member of the Venezuelan delegation to the
first session in London beginning in January 1946. Looking back over a
perspective of now thirty-six years, how would you characterize that first session?
Did it live up to your expectations? Do you remember that that was the one
that Atlee opened - we were speaking of Prime Minister Atlee.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Just across the street, no?

QUESTION: Yes, in Central Hall, Westminster.
PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, it was a very good meeting. For us it was new and exciting, very exciting. The one thing in which we intervened also, where Latin America perhaps made its first important intervention in a matter that was of some amount (substance), some concern: the United States wanted to have Trygve Lie appointed as Chairman, as President of the General Assembly. And they consulted us and we said we didn't know Trygve Lie, but we thought that Spaak would be a better Chairman, a better President. To begin with, he spoke French, and many of our people spoke more French than English at the time. That was an important matter. And then, he had been very friendly to us; we knew him well; he was one of the important personnages there, and in the end we - our point of view prevailed, and Spaak was elected as first President of the General Assembly. And Trygve Lie was given the Secretary-Generalship.

QUESTION: That was in my very next question. One of the most important decisions taken by that London Conference, Assembly, was the appointment of the first Secretary-General. To your knowledge, were the Latin American nations consulted or even informed - say by the United States - about the choice of Mr. Lie, or was this a matter which the Permanent Members of the Security Council kept very much to themselves?

PEREZ GUERRERO: No, we were consulted.

QUESTION: You were?

PEREZ GUERRERO: We were at least told about it.

QUESTION: You were told about it in advance?

PEREZ GUERRERO: In advance - and in a way it was a question of whether we thought he was a good man. But since we had opposed his election as President, we thought that he should be let go and tried out as Secretary-General, and we thought that he had - coming from a small country, Norway - very I think progressive in its own ways of thinking, and having a very good war record and -

QUESTION: And he had been, I believe, the Chairman of the Norwegian delegation to the San Francisco Conference, so some people had gotten to know him that way?
PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. We knew him. We knew him, our people knew him better than I knew him. But I knew well of him and why he was recommended as a man for this. I don't think he was so knowledgeable about international matters as such, except about the war and everything else connected with it, but not about international organizations as such. Not like Spaak, who was a knowledgeable man in that respect. But he was recommended by the Secretary-General (?) they said that he was our candidate, and as the Russians were inclined to believe that he might do - at the time it came to us it was really to say "all right". We were not consulted as a group. We did not meet. But certain delegations were told about it from our American friends. I am very happy that indeed, even for Trygve Lie, that we did not let him become the first President of the General Assembly, because the other was a more important job to do. As Secretary-General of the United Nations.

QUESTION: Now I'm going to ask you a very indiscreet question. Since we've raised the question of Trygve Lie- you have known all five Secretaries-General ... Trygve Lie, Dag Hammarskjöld, U Thant, Kurt Waldheim and the present incumbent, Perez de Cuellar. How would you characterize each of them and would you care to say which you consider the best?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. It is not so much the indiscretion on your part as the difficulty with which you face me in answering you. But I have not had any difficulty in saying what I think of them, and I believe that the five of them - this is not a diplomatic answer - have had qualities to be candidates and to be thought of as having good possibilities of making a good Secretary-General. Some fulfilled those promises and those ideals very well; others did have some difficulties. But I think that Trygve Lie made a good start. It was difficult because he was the first Secretary-General, he was not able to look at what his predecessor had done. The idea of continuity was not there - it was a question of making sure there was a good start and that he would lay down the basis for the United Nations to grow on the basis of its Charter provisions. He was a - he had a good heart and a good grasp of politics.

QUESTION: Oh yes.
PEREZ GUERRERO: You think so? - because you have known them as well as I did, as I have - and I enjoyed very much having conversations with him on these matters. He of course was unable to steer the boat in a balanced way, and that was his great mistake. It was at the time of great tensions and one cannot but see explanations for that. But we resist to believe that a good Secretary-General had to take that stand. And to make the Soviet Union feel that he was entirely with the United Nations, on the United States part...which he was to same extent, to a very large extent...he would say a few things which would prove that he was not that partial, but for all those that saw his performance it was clear that he had chosen that stand. It was a mistake of judgement on his part, as I see it, because it did not do him any good. And in the end - whatever we young people would tell him - he would say "All right, but the world is like that, we have this cold war and arms war" and he would think more as a Norwegian at that time than as an international official. As a European - let's put it that way, a Western European. It is very difficult for a Secretary-General to forget about his country and his background and so forth, and he should not, in a way. But what should prevail is the feeling that one has an international task to accomplish, and one would be judged by the way one had performed that task. But that was a very grave mistake and he paid for it; he had to leave, as you recall - the Russians would call him Mr. Lie at the end, they would not recognize in him a Secretary-General, which was not good either from the Russians, because after all he was there. In the end he had to leave the place for another to come - it was difficult, as you recall those days, we could feel - we international officials - that we didn't have an effective Secretary-General. He had ceased to be effective. He was effective up to a couple of years earlier, but no...I think that one term of office would have been excellent, but then it deteriorated.

That's why Hammarskjold came as a welcome messenger of peace and order for the Secretariat, for ourselves, as you recall. And he was a very pleasant - although he was not the most cordial man in his own personal ways, his efforts were such that one could see that he would visit all of us - as you recall - one mission, one section, one department after the other, and he would stay with us and so on and we would talk to him. So that we got to learn about him, and we didn't know much about him before, so that it was quite a surprise to see such a man there. He was also very much of a European of course, a northern European, and very disciplined man. Unfortunately in the end, in spite of having had a -
probably what should be the qualities of a good Secretary-General and having acted accordingly, I mean he at the end, in this turmoil in which we have lived, he took some—he let himself be involved more with one side than with the other, and then again he had this problem of the Congo, which was very very difficult indeed. That's why—I mean that's how he got closer and closer to his death, although we didn't know that. Everything—because he felt, as you recall, that before the General Assembly he had to have some answer to this problem of the Congo. He wanted to present the General Assembly with a solution of the Katanga problem. He was right there, in wishing to have a united Congo—I think that he took it very firmly and he defended it, but I'm afraid that he might not have had to risk himself so much if he had known that his life was at stake he would not have done it himself. So it happened. I believe that he has been one of the best that we have had. He had a very good understanding for the economic problems, for the administrative problems, which a Secretary-General has to have. Otherwise he would not be a complete man, the head of the Secretariat.

U Thant of course for me is a very good friend, because I got to know him well, and he appointed me to UNCTAD, and at the same time he had a great confidence in me and he showed it by saying "All right, you go ahead, you have got an organization, you have got your own governing bodies, you are under the aegis of the United Nations, I have the responsibility there, but it's your responsibility and you have to do this and that." And he had of course a very good understanding of the third world which is not something that for us—the third-world people—to be happy about. I think that it is important for the world, for anyone, to have a good idea of what the third world is like. Here he was a good man and one that has not been well appreciated. Perhaps because he was of the third world, he was not a member of the community of the north, so that they don't have the feel to get to know him well. Here many things have been said which you must have had your opinion on, about him—which I think is a misrepresentation of what happened. In the case of the war, and his situation when—his decision to withdraw the UNEF I force. And I was in Cairo at the time, so that I know more than many people do about it.

QUESTION: That's right—you were the resident representative there.

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was resident representative, I was close to Hammarskjold at the time. I remember once he told me...It was our friend George Ivan (?)
that called me on the phone - I was in pyjamas on a Sunday in my apartment in Cairo - and he said, "By the way, you should come around because Hammarskjöld has been saying 'Where is P.G.?"' and so on." And he didn't meet much - he didn't meet to see - in the beginning, to see what was around him and who was there in the Government of Egypt that he might be interested in, and I introduced him to several people, but otherwise he had to talk to Fawzi (?) whom he knew very well, and Gamal Abdul Nasser, so that he did not need my help in that. But so I dressed up and went there, and then he came out of one of the rooms and said "Ah, P.G. I want now to be with P.G. and not to talk any more about E.G." - B.G. was Ben Gurion. "That's enough of B.G., now let's go...P.G."

And so I said all right. He told me "Now I accept your offer to lunch that you have given me a few days ago. All right, I am at your disposal, let's go." So we went together with an Indian friend that was there at the time - I've forgot his name right now - and we went to near the Pyramids to the hotel there, and we had a meal and he told me a number of things, some of which I had known already - some of it, but not from him so directly. And at that time he said he had time to think it over because Nasser has asked for a few hours in order to give him an answer, on the idea of placing the UNEF troops in the Sinai. And Gaza. And I didn't ask him what about this, what about that - I knew that these are things that he had to keep for himself and share it with the people that he was working with. But he volunteered and told me a few things, and one of the things he said: "I have promised Gamal Abdul Nasser that it would not be a permanent troop, which might happen sometimes with troops coming from other countries. These are United Nations troops that will be there, a United Nations force only to see to it that the agreements that we are reaching on other matters will take place and in due course we will move out." And indeed, he told me, we will - I have committed myself that we will move out the troops from the Sinai immediately if at the time when we will get a request from the Egyptian Government to that effect. And that is very important, because what is important is that they see how we are going to perform our job and they will get convinced that we are impartial, that we are going to do a job and that's all. And try to help Egypt is helping the world community. These were his words to that effect, not exactly these words, but close to them. So that was engraved in my mind. I was very close to Egypt, Egypt was a country very close to my heart since I had worked there already for three and a half years or so. I stayed there a year longer. So that here, when U Thant got the request from the Egyptian Government to withdraw
the troops, he made a trip to Cairo, as you recall - he went all the way there and tried to convince Gamal Abdul Nasser that he should keep them there for longer and so forth, but it was impossible for him...and you know as much as I do on this...that it was not a question of his being in a position to keep the forces there because he was unable to. The contingent from Yugoslavia and from India had already received instructions to go home. No? And he was going to leave a small corps there exposed to great dangers there. And I for one thought that he had been very prudent in withdrawing the troops at the time.

QUESTION: Right. And the Israelis wouldn't have them on their side of the line anyway.

PÉREZ GUERRERO: No, they would not. They would not have them on their side. So it was impossible, because that was what they were fighting for, the Egyptians said "Put them also on the other side," and he said "All right, you put only on your side, but you can withdraw them any time you feel that - and I hope that it will not come to that, but if you think very strongly about it, let me know and this is a commitment on my part." Of course it is a commitment on his part and it was a commitment on the part of his successor. He could not just overlook this commitment that was made by his predecessor. So that that was the answer - I feel that many things have been said that are sad, because they do not respond to the truth, and to a real knowledge of the situation. But I think his reputation - I believe it was been preserved as a good reputation for a Secretary-General, because he was really very much devoted to his job. He told me that he meditated every day, on things, and he kept quiet...and indeed he was very very calm. And that in itself was quite an asset for a Secretary-General to have. Not to get excited about things - excited in terms of the motivation - motivated but not excited. That is the difference between the two.

And Waldheim - I had high regards for him during the first years of his tenure, and I thought he did well and we were happy in UNCTAD to have him there. He came in at the time when we were having our third UNCTAD, which was my responsibility to organize and to prepare together with our friends in Geneva, and he did very well and he made a trip - although he had very many others things in his hands at the time. And he too gave me a very broad margin of my judgement to decide, so that I believe that he did pretty well. He perhaps was a bit ambivalent on certain things, but that was in the nature of a Secretary-General -
he had to make sure that he doesn't opt for one rather than the other, but when it came to defining a position on principle, whether on a war somewhere or on a matter of social justice, he would say so. And on third world matters he was very good. There were a number of things which he didn't like so much...when he came with the idea of the Institute for (?) and things like that - because we knew that it was the repetition of something he had heard somewhere else and he had probably promised...and he was right in promising things at times because in order to balance what he would say on some other matters he would need this type of balancing factors. But we were very frank with him and would say No, that we would not have. And he would wonder why this and why that, but he would never quarrel about this type of thing, and of course a Secretary-General cannot quarrel too much with a representative of a Government. But he had known himself hunger during the war...he knew what it was. And he knew what misery was, and he knew what this type of dictatorship that they had - positions of influences by Hitler on neighbouring countries, on a small country, was. All those were problems that he knew, and he knew that it was important for better understanding to exist between East and West and West and East. That for us was important. And on that he made it a point - I think he did well. He made a mistake - I suppose one always makes mistakes at the end, that's why always I'd rather leave soon the jobs that I have than continue to make mistakes, because I am sure that I have not been spared the privilege of making mistakes and rectifying them. 

QUESTION: You're thinking of his standing for a third term....

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, the third term: that was very bad. And the way it came about put him in a very awkward position, and I told him that.
I talked to him, and I think that his appoint ment over the UNDP also was not too good, this Peterson, and he let him work more in California than here, and I told him that too. And many people told him that was a disgrace, and this gentleman left UNDP in very bad financial shape.

QUESTION: In a mess.

PEREZ GUERRERO: In a mess. In a mess. You are right, yes. That was another dark spot in his performance. It was generally good, I would suggest. But more particularly the last part of it, as you say, this - the way he insisted
on continuing - after having been reelected once... I think... I think two periods are the maximum one can aspire to. Unless there are conditions of stress, like the United States was going through at the time of Roosevelt, I do not think that one should appoint a man for over 10 years.
Perez de Cuellar is still new. He is a Latin American, and we are very proud to have him there. I know him well. He has been a very good Ambassador, not only in important capitals, such as Moscow -

QUESTION: You probably knew him as Under-Secretary-General as well.

PEREZ GUERRERO: He was also Ambassador in Venezuela.

QUESTION: I didn't know that.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Only for a year, because then the Secretary-General asked him to come back to the position here. I am very happy, and I think he is doing things well - discreetly. He does not want to be too much in the news as a speaker making statements too frequently, but when he has to do it he has courage and he does it. I know that he was very sad about what happened during the Malvinas episode. I will not say anything about that. He is still there and he can very well say what he has to say.

QUESTION: Do you think he was wise to announce immediately that he was not going to seek a second term? I think that that probably strengthened his hand, don't you?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, I think so. He is not looking for re-election, which is always, I suppose, an evil of the democratic systems. I think we have seen that in national politics as well as in international politics. I have a high regard for him, and he should be able to do very well. We are coming close to a solution in Afghanistan. There is hope that the United Nations itself might have that, with our good friend Diego Cordovez.

QUESTION: I want to come back to the General Assembly for a moment. It has been said that in the late 1940s and in the 1950s the General Assembly was almost an instrument of United States foreign policy, because the United States
could do just about what it liked in the General Assembly. It could count on the votes of its Western European allies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the 20 Latin American States. Is this true, or is it just one of those enduring myths?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I suggest that there is always some truth in it. It is very difficult to have something that is 100 per cent wrong. It is very difficult to have something that is 100 per cent right. I would suggest that this is a 50-50 proposition. I believe that in political matters - rather, in matters of great policy in the international scene - when it came to countering what they thought were the ambitions of the Soviet Union at that time, then generally speaking Latin America would support the United States. When it was a matter of the colonies, it was another clear matter where we were not in the same boat. We always said to the United States "But you were also a colony. How is it that you are not any longer as faithful to this tenet as you were at the beginning of your independent life?" Generally they would try not to oppose entirely these types of things, but they were not so keen on promoting self-determination of the people as they had been before. There Latin America has always been very clear. We remember much more our colonial times, because we have not ceased to have some neo-colonialism to live with during our independent life, so that we know what that means. And we know that it is an economic domination that exists. That is why we have always been at odds with the United States in trying to shake that domination and see how we can do better. That is why we ourselves have always heard much more the opinion of those that feel like us, in the Group of 77, for instance, than what we hear from the United States.

The United States is very much involved in great conflicts, like the Middle East, with their position pro-Israel, which is not so much characterized right now as it was before. But it is for them to explain; it is not for us to question whether they are right or wrong. The fact is that it involves them in positions all of which we cannot sustain or maintain. So there we are. There are divergencies and we have always accepted them.
Goldberg here was trying to ask me "How is it that you are doing these things? For us it is a matter of security." But for us, too, for Venezuela, the question of oil is a matter of security, and our Arab friends are real friends for us, and we cannot just turn our backs on them - not that we would say that Israel should not exist. We believe in the creation of Israel. We thought it was a good thing. In any case, it is there, and it is there to stay, and we think that we have to defend it. But we know that we do not want aggressive action on the part of anyone or anyone trying to enlarge their own territories at the expense of others. That is still our position; it is our clear position, because it corresponds with ... So it is we that introduced the idea that occupation by force does not carry any rights. We ourselves put up a resolution for Latin America on the Israel question, as you will recall, and it is from there that many things were taken to prepare what was known as being the Goldberg and Lord Caradon resolution.

Generally speaking, we have been pretty much on our own there. Of course, we hear the complaints at times or the advice of the United States, and we listen to it, because the United States are too important for us to ignore those things. But we have never had pressures that we could not resist.

QUESTION: That was a point that I was going to make. For example, in London you had a relatively small delegation. I was looking at the first handbook, published in January 1946, the other day, and you had quite a small delegation. Did you feel pressure from the U.S. votes than?

PEREZ GUERRERO: No.

QUESTION: You didn't?

PEREZ GUERRERO: However, sometimes without being pressured there is a pressure that you feel, that exists, a pressure that you might think even it is in your interests to go along with, if it is not something that is of too great
importance for you - of life or death importance. So we had a margin. We Latin Americans - and Venezuelans are among them - have always been very independent on certain things.

QUESTION: Like (inaudible)

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. And we think that the Americans are very good in that they understand that there is a point beyond which they cannot press. Rather than press it and go nowhere, they prefer sometimes just to watch and see what happens. They have friendly conversations with us and say "That's our opinion. We do this", to see whether we can be influenced, and sometimes we are. We don't want to be, generally speaking, at odds with the United States, because we think that if we can have them with us it will be much better. But, for instance, in the question of global negotiations right now they have a standoffish attitude and they stand all by themselves practically, except with some people that are very close to them from the point of view of political problems that they have together and they are prepared to support them. But otherwise the United States I think is the imperial Power that has been perhaps more prepared to listen to others and not to go for domination by sheer force. I think the times have created that. Perhaps it is not only the United States. But it is a new country which does not feel like it, and when it does it, you know very well how people here react - their own public opinion. That by itself is something in which we can rejoice.

QUESTION: We have got up to the first session of the General Assembly, and I have so many more questions - about Hot Springs, Bretton Woods, the whole question of UNCTAD, your visit to Washington in 1944 with your President, the ILO Conference in Philadelphia. I have probably two hours' more questions, and I don't think we shall be able to get through them today. We are both getting a little tired.
QUESTION: Yesterday, when we were finishing our conversation, we talked considerably about San Francisco, but even before 1945 you were involved in conferences dealing with post-war international organizations. I am thinking in the first instance of the Hot Springs Conference, in Virginia, in 1943, the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture, which I believe was the first step in organizing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Can you tell us something about that Conference and your personal involvement in it?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes. I was aware of preparations for it, because in ILO - I was in Montreal, where I was working for the ILO - we had some contacts through Wilfred Jenks that I talked to you about with a MacDougall. MacDougall was the British Australian, a very good friend of ours - he became so later on - but that was, I think, the man that got the ear of President Roosevelt to tell him about this possibility of having such a Conference, and very much recommending that we should. It looks as if President Roosevelt opened his mind to this and was motivated by what we had heard and was prepared to sponsor such a Conference in the United States, and Hot Springs was chosen. I got an invitation from my Government to join the delegation; I was an international official at the time, working for the ILO, but I got leave of absence for a couple of months, and I went there. And it was a very interesting Conference indeed, It was the first international meeting of a universal character - universal at that time; many countries that are now Members of the United Nations were not there of course. But a number of them, like Saudi Arabia, were there for the first time and attending that Conference as sovereign Powers. A number of other countries were; I do not know if one of them was Ethiopia. Ethiopia probably had already been a member of the League of Nations; yes, it was, before the Italians got hold of it. But Ethiopia was coming back to the United Nations for the first time, to the world Organization for the first time. And I thought it was very, very timely that before the war was over one should be thinking in terms of the food and agricultural problems, which are so important. The world was increasing, especially the third world; the colonies were to become countries later on. And there was Latin America as well. So we were very much exercised and excited by the idea of having such a Conference, and
it worked very well. It did not finish by approving any organization, any document or constitution of the Organization, but it appointed an interim committee that met in Washington for several months and was the one that prepared the Constitution of the FAC which was later, I think, ratified in Montreal if I am not mistaken.

QUESTION: But there was, even in 1943, a recognition that there was going to be a very serious world food problem at the end of the war and in the 1940s and 1950s.

Perez Guerrero: Yes, indeed. There was such a problem. And, of course, that was also the reason why another organization was created immediately during the war and started functioning even before the end of the war, and later on at the end. It was the UNRRA of that time: the United Nations Rehabilitation and Relief Administration, the head of which was Governor Leeman, whom I met at a function in Washington. I had the great honour and pleasure of meeting him, and I thought that I was meeting one of the most interesting men in the world at that time, and I think ever, in this century at least. He was a very grand gentleman, as was La Guardia, who succeeded him, no?

QUESTION: Yes, Fiorello La Guardia was the last Governor-General of UNRRA, I think.

Perez Guerrero: That is it. Yes, he was.

QUESTION: I think he sort of wound it up.

Perez Guerrero: And we saw him here in the United Nations, at Lake Success, in that capacity.

QUESTION: I heard a marvellous story one time from Brian Urquhart. It was about 1946. Fiorello La Guardia and Trygve Lie were both in Geneva at the same time, and they both tried to crowd into one of the antiquated League elevators together and you know they were both very portly gentlemen. The elevator quietly sank to the basement, and they had to jack it
up and try to get them out. It took them about an hour to get them out.

Perez Guerrero: Heavyweights in more than one respect.

Question: Now, the year 1944, according to the record, seems to have been an especially busy one for you. You accompanied President Medina to Washington for a meeting with President Roosevelt. How did that meeting come about?

Perez Guerrero: It was a very interesting meeting. I was not playing a very important role there. I was a secretary to the President, so I had to arrange for his appointments and everything else and make sure that the cables that he wanted to send back to Venezuela, more particularly those, were taken care of because a President that travels is always very keen to know that he has not been forgotten at home. It was interesting. For me it was a very interesting function because I had never been in such a position. And of course getting in touch with President Roosevelt - the White House - I remember interpreting a few things while the two Presidents were talking; our President spoke very little English -

Question: You acted as the interpreter?

Perez Guerrero: On a couple of occasions. Sometimes it was President Roosevelt's own interpreter that would take over. But I translated my President's own words. The President was always very happy; he was a very great man. Undoubtedly, there you were not mistaken when you felt that indeed he was one of the great characters of the century. I believe that has been recognized even by people that did not like him before, as happens sometimes with the passing of time. And for me it was very interesting because of course it was the union of two countries, my own country and another country for which I had very great respect and was very fond of, because I had been here before for a few months, but not a lot of time. The two countries had always tried to be friendly and were friendly during the war. And we recognized, and there was general recognition, that our oil served a decisive function during that war, because of course the United States own oil was not enough
at the time, particularly for the navy and other matters. It was important for them to be sure of our oil.

At that time also I remember that there were some problems in Bolivia.

QUESTION: Aren't there always problems in Bolivia?

PEREZ GUERRERO: There were problems in Bolivia at that time, and they were all very widely discussed at that time -

QUESTION: Did you have an opportunity when you were talking to President Roosevelt to discuss our possible post-war international organization, the UN, or did that not come up?

PEREZ GUERRERO: No, it did not come up.

QUESTION: It was more bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, at that time. And all the more so since Para Perez was Foreign Minister and did not come. He was not there. He was in charge of holding the fort for President Medina in Venezuela. In the Venezuelan delegation itself there was not great interest in that matter. Many other topics were indeed very important for our relations with the United States, particularly during the war, and also in visualizing the post-war future as well. But not in terms of an international organization.

QUESTION: Now, also in 1944, I have read that you attended an ILO Conference in Philadelphia. Did you attend that as a member of the ILO Secretariat, or were you representing Venezuela there?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Again I was representing Venezuela. I was a member of the ILO staff, but my Government had asked the ILO to relieve me -

QUESTION: You seem to have been moving back and forth quite frequently at that time.
Perez Guerrero: I was, I was. And have been since then also. But at that time I was interested. I didn't expect to be appointed Chairman of the Venezuelan delegation there, and when somebody else arrived, I thought he was the Chairman, not myself. But in the end he told me, "No, no. You are the one who is supposed to take care of it".

The idea was that Venezuela and President Medina at that time had problems with the trade unions in Venezuela, and somehow they thought that having a member of the Venezuelan delegation, or all the more so the Chairman of the Venezuelan delegation, a man that was a member of the ILO who was already known as an international official - I don't think it made any difference, but still that was, I believe, the reason why I was selected to become a member of the delegation and to preside over it. It was a very important matter because it was the first time the ILO had had a conference since the war. It had one in New York, I think, at one time. But Philadelphia was just before the end of the war. A charter was approved there - the Philadelphia Declaration, I think it was - that was a very interesting and very well thought out Declaration which intended to and had the aim of making sure that the ILO had confidence in the economic field, that you could not think in terms of labour laws and labour problems without putting it into the economic context, and that besides labour laws as such there were many other things in terms of the welfare of the people of the third-world countries and other countries, the colonies and so on and so forth and non-self-governing territories that the ILO was interested in. So it was brought into that Philadelphia Charter, and indeed I remember that my own declaration was on that topic, on making sure that the ILO would have something to do in the post-war in terms of economic policies as well as labour policies.

QUESTION: I believe that either President Roosevelt came to Philadelphia to address the group or the delegates went to Washington. I think I read somewhere that he was involved somehow in an ILO conference. Is that correct?
Perez Guerrero: Indeed. We were asked to go to Washington, and were invited by President Roosevelt to see him with the heads of delegations. Miss Perkins was the Secretary of Labour at that time, a lady that was also very, very interesting and whom I had met several times before because she used to come to the ILO, and there we lined up to give our own salutations to the President. I had a few things that I was supposed to say, and I had already thought it over. When I arrived at the front of the line, Miss Perkins introduced me as a Venezuelan and so forth, and President Roosevelt opened his eyes and said, "Oh, I know him. He was here with his President." I did not think that he was going to recognize me. Of course, it was a few months earlier that I had been there, and I didn't open my mouth; I said, "Mr. President ..."; I don't recall if I said anything anyway.

Question: You missed the opportunity to ask your questions. I have also read that in 1941 you were a member of an UNRRA mission to Latin America.

Perez Guerrero: Yes.

Question: This puzzles me a little since the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was operating in the war-devastated areas of Europe and Asia. What was the purpose of an UNRRA mission to Latin America, Ambassador?

Perez Guerrero: It was an opportunity which I didn't want to miss. It was accompanying Dr. Eduardo Santos, who had been President of Colombia, he was a former President, and a very well respected man not only in his country but in Latin America. He invited me to accompany him, and so I did. The reason for the mission was that Latin America was asked to contribute with people rather than with money, and some food as well, but especially with people - doctors, professionals - particularly doctors, but engineers also, and so forth - that wanted, and were able and willing, to go to Europe for that task. And that was interesting, because we could see the interest that that mission aroused there, and we got quite a number of Latin Americans that went there and to Europe as a result of that mission, and we visited practically all of the countries of Latin America. That was the first time
I had visited Central America and many other countries of South America, and I thought I was going to mix up my geography when I visited one or the other and not remember which one I was visiting. But after visiting each one of these countries I noted its individuality - very, very precise individuality that one cannot forget. Once one has been in one of them, one knows that that one is like that, and not the others. They have common features, of course, and so on and so forth, but they also have their characteristic features that define their personality.

QUESTION: That is very good. Now, finally, in that busy year of 1944, you were at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire for the meetings which led to creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Tell us about those meetings, Ambassador: the atmosphere, the hopes, the tensions, and, more particularly, why in your view, after nearly 40 years, the international inter-governmental financial system appears to be on the verge of collapse. Now, there's a big question for you.

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was appointed as a secretary to the mission, which was presided over by our Minister of Finance, of course. But before then I had been in Washington, and I had been invited the Treasury officials to join them and other people they had invited to discuss the matters that were going to the object of the Bretton Woods Conference. And Felipé Pazos, a Cuban friend of mine who was down in Venezuela, and I myself were the only Latin Americans that were invited to these meetings, whereas Minsky, whom I have already mentioned, Luis Rasinsky, who was representative of Canada later on at the International Monetary Fund, and had already been proved a very good economist and was already working in Canada - and then he attended all of these meetings together with other people that I don't recall. There was a Britisher - not Keynes - who attended Bretton Woods itself. The White House was there, and Bernstein. They were both of them the most effective people responsible for the Conference. The Conference would not have been held if it had not been because of the two of them. Of course, you might always think that somebody else would have been found, but for us they were the Conference; they were the ones that had to do it. And, talking about Keynes, Keynes got to know that as well: that he could
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not be there as he had hoped at one time, and rightly so, because it was an American Conference prepared and oriented to purposes which were very clear to the Americans: to defend their interests and the interests of the world as they saw it at that time. I think it was a successful Conference from that point of view. I think it was necessary that something had to be done. And one can conceive, knowing something of history, that the least that the great victor would do, and perhaps the most one could expect of it as well, was to prepare such a Conference where they would of course play the fiddle or the flute, whichever, because they were the ones having the money behind them. That was all the more clear at the end of the war; it was not so clear at the very beginning of it. That was a great change that was effected during the five years of war. The Americans had power that no one could equal at the time.

QUESTION: Quite unique.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Qui e unique. They may think that they still are the most powerful nation, but it has shown so many weaknesses that it is a weak big Power. And there is another big Power somewhere else that is rivalling, with other methods, the leadership of the world. The two great rivals that we now call the super-Powers.

But, coming back to Bretton Woods, one of the important things that happened there is that it was not only the question of monetary questions that was settled in the way they thought it could be settled - with some changes; of course it was not just a rubber stamping Conference, but the deadlines that had already been laid down at the preparatory meetings withstood any pressure to change to a very large extent, except for transitional arrangements that had to be taken care of.

Besides that, I was saying that the idea of the World Bank had already come up before the Conference and was developed there. And it was there that Keynes and others played a very important part. Of course, the developing countries of the time - that is, Latin America, Egypt, India and a few others, though not very many more - Thailand was also there, and Saudi Arabia, as I say, though Saudi Arabia was just starting its career in the world of politics.

We were satisfied that they had made an effort there with the World Bank. The World Bank was, of course, not supposed to be just for development; it was,
I would say, in sequence more important for reconstruction, so that it played an important role in the reconstruction of Europe, and then of course it served development. We were already anticipating that reconstruction tasks would not last for more than a few years and that it would then become a development bank, which it did.

I think that of course one was not entirely satisfied with the whole thing, even with the Bank there, because one could see that it was giving what they considered to be exhorbitant power to the dollar - not only to United States currency that was printed and became international currency, instead of the gold itself. It was impractical for the gold itself to serve as a means of transactions except for balance-of-payments payments. But the fact is that we all anticipated that this institution would have to undergo some changes, and we were satisfied that - there we were unable to say it because we didn't know exactly where we were going to stand a few years hence. In fact it showed its inconveniences very soon, and of course it was managed by the big Powers of the time - Western Europe and the United States; Japan was not there at the beginning but it later joined it, like Germany and others - but the fact is that we had only a second-fiddle role to play, and our tunes were hardly heard at times. They were very much convinced that they could take us for granted practically. And the staff of the Fund was built up from the developed countries - experts -

QUESTION: Economists -

PEREZ GUERRERO: Economists and all those people that had so much of a say, so it was just a matter of time when it had to be changed. And of course it has become obvious since the United States disconnected the dollar from gold. From then on it was too much of a gamble and a temptation for the Government that had control of international currency to abuse it. And some abuses have followed; that is the trouble. I would suggest that anyone who had been put in that situation would have in such abuses. It was in the nature of things, as one says. And unfortunately that happened with the Viet Nam war, the sending of a man to the moon, and so on and so forth. We all paid for it. The international community was tied to the dollar, and we wanted to have a reserve currency that was strong enough. The United States
started importing a lot of things from outside and incurred some negative balances and some deficits in the balance of payments and so forth, and in the end that weakened the dollar. And the idea of fluctuation, which was the only one it was possible to consider as an alternative to the relationship to gold, did not work. I never thought it was going to work. I was in UNCTAD at that time, and since then we have anticipated that the monetary system had ceased to exist, because one of the main provisions was that one—the connection between the dollar and gold had disappeared. From there on it has been bouncing and going back and forth. As a result the dollar has been very weak at times. Now it is rather strong. That causes trouble not only for the developing countries that are not prepared to take advantage of the spread that exists there, varying from one time to another, but also for the developed countries themselves, the industrialized countries of Europe and Japan. That was something that was, I would suggest, a basis not solid enough to sustain a monetary system that would deserve that qualification. It was not any longer a monetary system. We didn't have a system. That's what we can say right now.

QUESTION: Do you think it's time to have a new Bretton Woods?

PEREZ GUERRERO: A new Bretton Woods? I think at least it is time to see what are the changes that this system should undergo in order to be able to resist impacts and not just to accommodate itself to any type of situation, which it doesn't. It is a non-system, as we have just said in Buenos Aires at the UNCTAD VI Conference that we had there in preparation for UNCTAD VI. In UNCTAD VI something will be said about it, I assume. A new conference has been suggested, called the Conference on Monetary and Financial Questions for Development, because developing countries were not only not taken care of in the Bretton Woods optique but in fact in the end, as it worked, they were set aside and their interests were hurt in many respects. So that was not good; it was not good for our own countries and it was not good for the international community to have a group of countries that were already important in the international system to be treated that way. So a full review of the present situation is necessary in order to find out what ought to be done in order to have a working monetary system.
QUESTION: But there are no easy answers.

PEREZ GUERRERO: There are no easy answers, but there are answers, and I think that in UNCTAD we motivated, to a large extent, the setting up of this committee of twenty, the IMF, the Ministerial Committee for the Reform of the Monetary System. The report that was prepared at the time was a very good report, and it was also the link, the idea of the link, that was something that the developing countries wanted to have in order to be tied to the system and to become part and parcel of it, and not just be spectators that had very little to say about it.

...as has been the case. Perhaps I am exaggerating, but it was not much more than that, anyway.

QUESTION: Now, several times during our conversation, Ambassador, we have been referring to oil, and Venezuela has for decades been an oil-producing country. We have not referred to OPEC, we have not referred to the world oil crisis of 1974 and its effect on the dollar, on the world economy. Do you think the creation of OPEC had a positive or a negative effect on the world economy, and what do you think is the future of OPEC?

PEREZ GUERRERO: OPEC was needed, by us anyway, by the oil-exporting countries, and that we sensed quite some time before OPEC was created. If it had not been because of our dictator Perez Jimenez taking over the Government from us, from Betancourt and his associates and our military colleagues in 1948, we would have had OPEC in the early 1950s. But Perez Jimenez did not do anything; the only thing he did was to make some contacts with oil-exporting countries of the Middle East. Because we had already - Perez Alfonzo and myself - prepared the ground for these contacts. They took place, but nothing much resulted from these conversations. And yet they were useful to the extent that we were acquainted with what we were doing and we acquainted them with what we were trying to do. But we were not talking about organizations at that time, so that as soon we came back to the Government with Betancourt, and Perez Alfonzo was then Minister
of Oil - I personally was head of the planning of organization, which was a ministerial position - we thought we had to act to continue our work where we had interrupted it, during nine years, only nine years, which is quite a bit. So we took advantage, and that was, more than anyone else's, Perez Alfonzo's idea, my good friend and colleague, who invited me to go to the Cairo Petroleum Congress. That was the first time this Congress had met. It met every year or every second year - I don't recall - and it has been meeting since then.

The fact is that we attended that with a purpose. We were trying to see what we could do to defend our oil prices, because already there had been some attempts - some fruitful attempts at times, and some successful ones - at trying to lower the prices of oil. There was some rivalries among the companies themselves, the big companies, but in the end, when it came to prices and so forth, they sometimes, and more often than not, reached an agreement on what had to be done. So there the cartel worked much more as the cartel of the big transnational corporations in charge of oil than in terms of the countries that were responsible for producing the oil. I should make a long story short, because it is quite a long story. But we took advantage of this Congress to meet outside the Congress itself, in a club outside Cairo. Nobody knew that we were meeting. And there we set forth in a memorandum our own policy to counteract the decline of oil prices and to ask to be consulted. That's what we were asking for: to be consulted by the companies before anything could be done and not just to be surprised by what they did through the press or whatever. And we said that at one time or another, if we envisaged the need for an organization to be created to defend oil prices. We did not talk about expropriation or anything of that type; that was not within our sight at that moment. So we did do that, and nobody knew at the time that we had already drawn up that memorandum. Everyone took just one copy of it. We were five countries there: Saudi Arabia, whose Minister was very active in this; it was Tariki, there was somebody from Kuwait, somebody from Iran, somebody from Iraq; there was the man in charge of the League Department on Oil, Sulieman, and of course our hosts, the Egyptians. Naṣim, a very nice gentleman who was killed later on in an automobile crash, prepared the places where we could meet and so forth. In the end they did not become a member because they were not exporting oil at the time. So that a year later
Perez Alfonzo was asked to go to Baghdad by Minister Suleiman, who had become Iraq's Minister of Oil, and the Conference took place there. And of course he played a very important role; so did Perez Alfonzo, who was there from Venezuela, and so did Pariki of Saudi Arabia. Others also played a part, and the five countries established that organization. Since then it has functioned on a sort of a low-key basis. It did not do much. We were trying to get the question of royalties put on a different level, more particularly those of the Middle Eastern countries, which were not in the same position as Venezuela was. In the end, that did not work very well. We established a mechanism for prices at a meeting in Jakarta, and so forth, but we were involved in what was the major goal of that organization, which was defence of oil prices. So we were given the opportunity, because oil was being tapped excessively, 7 to 8 per cent a year in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so that by 1973 it had become an impossible situation. They kept the prices down. The transnational corporations received instructions from their host Governments, that of the United States in particular, and Great Britain, to keep their prices down somehow in order to permit them to use cheap oil and to build their economies on the basis of cheap oil, which was a mistake. That was a mistake but at the time they did not realize it. Nobody realized anything at the time. But we, the developing countries that were living only oil, could see that United States had restrictions and was paying much better for oil at home than it was paying on the international market. So there was a subsidy; I call it a subsidy now. We were to see whether the developed countries, the industrialized countries, could live without this subsidy as well as they tried to do before. They were living beyond their means at the time, and not only because of oil: they were also, as you know, taking advantage of rather low raw-materials prices.

In the end it worked too suddenly, since the prices had been put down, as I told Kissinger at one time, by a boot that was on top of the prices and pushing them down. And then it burst like a champagne cork -

QUESTION: And it went from $2 a barrel right on up.
PEREZ GUERRERO: From $3 to $12, practically - four times. And
Kissinger asked me, "Who is the one with his foot in the boot?" I said, "I need
not tell you; your guess is right". But the boot slipped because the pressure
was too great for the price to rise.

But when one says oil has been increasing so much, it is true. But at
that time it should have been there already, but it should have grown progressively
to that level. Unfortunately, because of that situation, it was not given the
chance to do that. And the 10 per cent that took place later on, and so on and
so forth, did not take care of the inflation that prevailed at the time, so that
the people who say that oil prices have increased eight times, or whatever they
say, since 1973 or 1974 are completely crazy and they know that very well because
they are intelligent people. You have to deflate by the index of inflation.
And perhaps you might say that since 1974 oil has increased by about 50 per cent
in real terms.

QUESTION: We are doing this interview at the very end of April 1983,
and there have been very strains on OPEC in recent weeks and months, with an oil
glut and a tendency to cut prices. Do you see a future for OPEC?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Of course. I see a future; it is difficult to say
for how long. But I don't see why in the foreseeable future -

QUESTION: But I mean it's a viable cartel?

PEREZ GUERRERO: It's not a cartel as such. People have seen that it
doesn't work like a cartel. It is a place where one co-ordinates one's own
interest and where one makes sure one can function effectively in stabilizing
the prices. "Stabilizing" doesn't mean keeping them where they are, but
at least following inflation and perhaps also following the fact that it is
a wasting asset, as they used to say, and an exhaustive raw material that
becomes more valuable if there is a function for oil as it is depleted.

QUESTION: And probably in one way it is more valuable in the ground
than expended tomorrow.
Perez Guerrero: That's it. That is quite clear. And I believe that every nation has to profit from it, because no one wants to have the oil prices going up and down. The Economist is the only serious magazine - I do not know whether it is that serious after all - that is against OPEC. They think it is a ghost. The British are very kind to ghosts, but they are not very kind to that ghost. They wanted it to disappear. I don't know whether by incantations or other things of the kind - that is what they have been using so far - but it does not work, because if there is a function to be performed - I mean, even Britain can see that for itself. They had to adjust to the oil prices that were fixed by OPEC because it is in their interests, and nobody else could do it. It is all because the oil of OPEC is now somewhat less than 50 per cent so that it hasn't a role to play. The 50 per cent is working in a sort of co-ordinated way. Of course it has not been able to do good work, because of the situation and difficulties and so forth. I do not need to say this country or that country because every country has got its own interests and tries to defend them. But of course there is a time when one says, "It is important for all of us to keep OPEC". And for all developing countries that export oil it is a major issue. We cannot think in terms of OPEC disappearing. So this in itself is an incentive for us to agree in the end. It took some time in London for the last agreement to take place, but it did. Why? Because of that, because if there is an obsession on our part - and not only The Economist has an obsession - that of keeping OPEC and not permitting it to disappear. It runs counter to those that want to destroy it.

Question: I'm afraid we got off the immediate subject of the United Nations, but I do want to come back now to talk just a little bit about your experience. I think when I first met you you were the Executive Secretary of the Technical Assistance Board, and I think you were working for David Owen, and then later on you had the experience in the field; you were the Resident Representative of TAB in Egypt, in Tunis, in Morocco and in Algeria. As you look back on that experience - and you have obviously followed the United Nations Development Programme - how effective do you think the United Nations has been in the whole development process? Do you think that the United Nations Development Programme has been cost effective? If you had it to do over again as a national representative, do you think this is a field that the United Nations should be in?
PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, I do, very much so. As you know, very early in ECOSOC we had already adopted some resolutions, one of them on expert advice, as it was called at the time, and I, as Minister of Finance, later on — I had just left there — I used that and got — we paid for it, of course — some experts, some from the United Nations and some from outside, from Sweden I remember, and that served quite a purpose. I am convinced that that can work. It has proven that it can. But it was more than that. It was necessary. And, following Truman's point-4 message —

QUESTION: That was 1949.

PEREZ GUERRERO: 1949.

QUESTION: He was elected in 1948, and his inaugural address was given on 20 January 1949.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Just at the start of 1949, yes indeed. I arrived at the United Nations just in time to be given that assignment by Trygve Lie. A few months later I had to take that over, and I was very happy indeed because it was a very important thing. It was a new thing in co-operation among international agencies, not only the United Nations proper but the other organizations - FAO, WHO, ILO and others that followed, but of course at that time ILO and the Bank and Fund as well, which were not in the same position as the others but attended the meetings as well. So that was a very interesting exercise in making sure that the United Nations system would have something to do. It was the first time that it had had something to do as such, a co-operative undertaking. And it worked pretty well. I think we did a pretty good job of Resident Representatives. There was a friend of ours, Weintraub — I don't know whether you met him —

QUESTION: Oh yes, I knew him very well — Vernon Weintraub.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And together the idea of Resident Representative was created, and the first one went to Haiti. But that was outside the TAB.
And from there on we took it over, and we sent a number of other Resident Representatives to other countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. So there was an idea that has, I think, proven that it is a good mechanism and an effective one. Whether that is all we should do is different. Undoubtedly the UNDP as such improved upon what we had done in a TAB in that it covered the field of pre-investment, which is an important one. We had done so, but in a sort of a casual way. Here it was done in a more systematic way. Of course this was not what we wanted. What we, the developing countries, wanted was what you call SUNFED —

QUESTION: The Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development.

PÉREZ GUERRERO: That is it — another financial organization that would not only finance the pre-investment phase of it but the project itself, or the programme. That was not possible at the time, public opinion in the North was not ripe for that; it is not ripe yet — we still have to wait. But we can say that the experience has been very good, and the developing countries do value the UNDP very much. Sometimes, of course, they say that the money doesn't go where it should go, that it is lost in between, which is one easy way of saying we don't need any more. The other part of it — for our side, and that is where we exaggerate, because we too can exaggerate, we say most of the profit stays with the developed countries, with those countries that pledge the money and give it, because in the end they give jobs to their experts, to their consulting firms, they send out equipment, services and so on and so forth, and their influence, which has no tag price but which is valuable too. So that in a way both of them have had a profit, and I would not suggest it is something on which we should spend much time saying whether it goes where it should go or who keeps the lion's share. No. I think it has played a very important role. And that is why we would wish the United Nations system again to work well with the local negotiations. That's another thing that you would like to ask some questions on, I am sure.

QUESTION: I will, definitely. But before we get on to global negotiations, I do recall that in 1967, just shortly after you became the Permanent Representative of your country here, you were made Chairman of
the United Nations Special Mission on Aden. I recall your going to the area and being harassed by newsmen at every airport when you put down. Indeed I remember going out to Kennedy Airport to rescue you from some of the worst of the bunch – the New York reporters. But the details of the special mission on Aden have faded from my memory. Can you refresh me on what the problem was, how your mission came about, what you did and what the ultimate results were?

Perez Guerrero: It is perhaps too early for us to pass judgement on that, but I can tell you about the episodes that I went through with my two colleagues, one from Mali and one from Afghanistan, and why the three of us went there, because in the end Britain had been convinced that it should ask for a mission to go there. It was not easy. They resisted that idea but in the end they admitted that it was a Non-Self-Governing Territory and one should think in terms of letting them determine what their future ought to be, the people on the spot. So we were asked by U Thant to go there, the three of us, and indeed after some preparation here with our friends from the Secretariat – I had been before the Director of the Non-Self-Governing Territories Division here, succeeding a very important and very good British friend, Wilfred Benson. It was thought that I might help in that respect. We tried to do it. It was not easy. The mission itself was not very tied together, but in the end it did become tied because of the difficulties that we confronted, more particularly on the spot over there when we went there. But before going there we visited Cairo, we visited Saudi Arabia, we had very good conversations in Cairo and Saudi Arabia, in Jeddah. We met the King there, and it was very interesting indeed. When we arrived there we were too much protected by the British, so much so that we had hardly any contact, and when we were trying to prepare something, at least to say something on the radio, they censored it and said "You cannot pronounce that", and that was the end of it. We could not even mention the idea that there were colonial Powers and they were get independent, and so on and so forth. We did not say anything very offensive, but at least if we were sent there it was because the time had come for this country to become independent, so it was quite right that we ought to get in touch with the people and let them know, because if we were going to visit
part of the country at least they should know that a mission of the United Nations was going to make a visit, a grand tour, to several parts of the country and not only to the colony that they wanted to be independent as such but also to some of the other colonies that were annexed to it that were so big that they had to be visited as well. And they resisted that. Of course perhaps they thought that we might expose our own lives for that. We visited a prison there. That was very interesting. We were taken back by helicopter and shot at, but of course they missed. We arrived all right. The pilot was very good: he flew very close to the ground, outside the reach of these people that were trying to shoot at us. But in the end it did not work so well. The mission had the effect of stirring up the idea there that something had to be done.

QUESTION: Who did you report back to? Was it to the Secretary-General, to the Security Council, or what?

PEREZ GUERRERO: We reported to the United Nations, to the General Assembly, and the report is one of the documents here. But the fact is that we were not well treated by the then Governor of the colony. He probably had a very good record. He had been Governor in Tanganyika, in Dar es Salaam. But the fact is that his career was cut short, because of course we reported what had happened, that he did not want us to act unless we were to act under his authority. He was the Governor there, an old British Governor. That is the way he thought matters ought to work. He tried to convince us about his plan and so on and so forth. It was not the type of plan that the United Nations, let alone ourselves who were in charge of that mission, would support.

QUESTION: You weren't there to take his instructions!

PEREZ GUERRERO: We were not supposed to. So he was rather disappointed, and indeed he made life so impossible that we had to leave, so that after a few days we were out of there. We saw U Thant in Rome. We told him everything that had happened, and he supported us entirely. And from
there we came here again. We started again, because Trevelyan, who had been a member of the United Nations staff - you remember Lord Trevelyan?

QUESTION: I think so, yes.

PEREZ GUERRERO: He had been one of the Under-Secretaries at the time of Hammarskjold. He treated us very well in London, and here in New York - he came to New York to see us - and in the end we agreed to go back there. We went as far as Egypt that time because we were unable to arrive at solutions with one of the parties that were involved in the insurrection against the British, in particular the National Independence Movement, whatever the name was. It was more to the left than the other. But the fact is that they didn't want us to meet with them. They were afraid, perhaps, of any repercussions it might have among their own people back in Aden. So in the end we said that we were prepared to go back to Aden itself, but they did not welcome that, so it was not followed up on. So we came back to Geneva, and there we had some meetings with the heads of the provinces there, whatever the division was called, and old people that were very, very interesting and had never gone out of their country came all the way to Geneva with their carpets and their things, their own way of clothing themselves. It was an interesting conference, but it did not work so well, except that by that time the internal revolution against the British authorities was such that it overwhelmed the whole thing and they were able to take over practically, so the British had to leave.

Trevelyan was at that time Governor there; he succeeded the other one, who was asked to leave in a very gentle way, the way the British do it - very, very nice indeed - but there could be no mistake that he had been asked not to stay there because he had misbehaved, as we would say today, and not in the United Nations way, which he didn't know about. He was entirely alien to that, as they would say. So Trevelyan had to facilitate the entry into government of this party, which was the one that had shown the greatest force in the country. And they say that we facilitated their task because these people came to us because we had invited these people that had authority and were leaning on the British to preserve their authority. I suppose they were
Islamic authorities that were the sheikhs of each one of the regions.
They were in Geneva at the time when their own parts of the country had been overrun by the militants of this party, so that the whole country was preserved in its unity. That was one of the purposes that we sought. The British wanted only part of it to become independent.

QUESTION: That's right.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And in the end we made the resolution of the General Assembly, which was in favour of preserving the unity, and called for its preservation, except for a little island that didn't matter so much.

QUESTION: That's right.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Not Socotra. Socotra is part of Southern Yemen, as they call it today, or as we used to call it. Now its full name is Democratic Yemen.

QUESTION: Now, also in 1967 you were elected President of the Economic and Social Council. What were some of the principal issues before the Council at that time? Do you recall if there were any key ones, or was it a fairly routine year?
The key one of that time was the one referring to the environment. The Swedish delegation here in the General Assembly had already presented the case that we had to have a conference or whatever and that this was very important and the environment was so badly dealt with that something had to be done internationally about it, so that there was already a very convincing case that had been presented at the General Assembly and then next to the ECOSOC, which had been in charge of following up on this. The Conference was adopted and Stockholm was selected as the seat of the Conference, at the invitation of the Swedish Government.

QUESTION: An enormous success.

PEREZ GUERRERO: An enormous success.

QUESTION: Tell me this: a number of people have commented over the years that ECOSOC has never lived up to its original promise; it is overwhelmed - people have said - by a flood of reports, documents and it largely duplicates the work of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. Do you agree with that? Do you think that criticism is valid?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, I think it is partly valid, because people who are not so much interested in pursuing matters in ECOSOC itself. ECOSOC was a more restricted body; it is a principle organ of the United Nations, but at the beginning it has only 18 members, as I recall well, which was not very much, especially after the third world expanded to maybe one hundred countries or so, or close to that number at the time. So there was an idea that perhaps ECOSOC was not well tooled up to perform its task and its most important task is one which it never did pursue very well - the co-ordination of economic and social matters within the United Nations system. It did not do that well. It was not equipped for handling this matter. We set up, at the very beginning, a co-ordination committee, where Trygve Lee, and Chisolm, the ILO Director-General, UNESCO - it was our British friend, the great man, Julian Huxley - they attended that meeting and he was the Secretary of that Committee, but it did not last for a long time because we set it up as an administrative committee, but we called it the Co-ordination Committee of the Council. So indeed, perhaps we did not use the right expression. So this was amended, as you know the Co-ordination Committee became the Administrative and Co-ordination Committee, the ACC, and it has worked since then like that. It has been effective in many respects, more in administration than in policies, but still...
it has done a number of things and I think it has been called upon to do a number of other things. But the Council itself could not deal with this matter alone. Then the General Assembly created this programme committee - what is it called? - the committee that approves and oversees the programmes of the international organizations on economic and social matters, which was a good thing and I think it has been working pretty well, but little little ECOSOC was divested of its own task and functions, because it did not work. This became all the more so when UNCTAD was set up to take over the matter of trade and related matters, matters related to development. So that from there on - I mean, I would suggest that the Council started losing its own glamour and indeed perhaps its very centre of functions justifying its existence. Some attempts have been thought of to reinforce it and I think every President that passed through the Council has tried to do something about it and that is one of the problems, and we think that it is our turn to do it and since then not much has happened. So this is proof that it is more than just seeing what ought to be done; it is a question of the will of the Governments; it is a question of the other organs that exist that are doing it and since they are more universal - the General Assembly and UNCTAD - than ECOSOC itself, ECOSOC has been a loser, it has lost the game.

QUESTION: Now I want to talk to you a little bit about UNCTAD. After all, you had five very important years there. How did it come about that you were appointed the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in 1969?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I was as surprised as anyone. The first surprise was that I was approached to be the Secretary-General by Prebisch himself - that was in Bucharest. We were attending a meeting, Ceausescu was very new at the time, and after we had had a meeting - Ceausescu was not I think present at the time - and others were celebrating the fact that an important meeting of ECOSOC was taking place there - then Prebisch approached me and said "You know that since that evening I have been thinking of you as my possible successor?" I turned him down flatly at the time; do not think of me because I am not prepared; after I finish my own position in Venezuela I will go back and try to start writing some books and so on. That did not happen. Because he said "Alright, let's try to see whether we can find someone. You help me in that." Alright, I tried to help him and in the end it was very difficult to find someone. However, Prebisch presented the idea to U Thant and he liked it and said "Alright, however present me another two candidates so that I can choose from them." He presented two other candidates, Mr. (?) Stasanovnic and (?) Ghamani Correa, to the Secretary-General.
U Thant had it seen by some of the members of his staff and so on and in the end I was asked to see him and I was still President of ECOSOC and he asked me when I was chairing ECOSOC, I asked the Vice-President to take over; I went to see the Secretary-General and he told me "I have thoughts of you for that." I was then prepared to accept it. I has been somehow softened in my resistance by Prebisch's words and eloquence and in the end I accepted it. And I did not regret it; I knew that it was a very difficult job and succeeding a man like Prebisch made it...

QUESTION: Who was a living legend.

PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, a living legend - it was very difficult to replace a man like him. But in the end it worked out allright. Prebisch briefed me very well to begin with. We had met together, by the way, in one conference which preceded UNCTAD and which was promoting UNCTAD - of the non-aligned countries, in Cairo at that time - and we were there together, because we were very enthusiastic about the idea of having a conference, the idea was having a conference on trade, but the conference was a good forum to look for an institutionalization of this idea and UNCTAD came from it. I enjoyed it, because there was something to be done. Many things consisted of completing some of the things that had been started in Prebisch's time. like, for instance, the GSP, the General System of Preferences.

QUESTION: What would you say in the five years of your service as Secretary-General of UNCTAD what was the principal achievement that the organization arrived at during those five years?

PEREZ GUERRERO: It is very difficult for me to say so. I am not over-modest, but I do not like to credit myself for things that had to be carried out either by my predecessor, Prebisch, who started the whole things with others, and the things that were done by the Secretariat, of which I was the appointed Head at the time and also by the Governments that were there - everyone has to receive credit for it - but during the time I was there, I might say that the things that still stay in my memory as being important landmarks for UNCTAD are completing and negotiating the General System of Preferences - that was one important thing - it is still there and it has been somehow eroded through the concessions of reductions among the industrialized countries, but it is still there - and that idea is a very powerful one, that the developing countries are not strong enough to be able to compete on equality of terms, they have to be given some advantages and that it the first time it was done. We had a Cocoa Agreement, which was important. The
United States never wanted to join, but was involved in the negotiations — it stayed out. Trade convinced it that it should not come in and at that time trade had a great say, as is always the case in any Government, but some Governments can counteract that, others cannot. Then there was the idea of making technology part of UNCTAD's functions and that became clear and there was a resolution recognizing UNCTAD's competence in that and we set up a division on it, so now it has perhaps grown, but at that time it was a division, we had good people there, as we had in many other divisions — I do not need to tell you about them, because I do not want to miss talking about one of them or the other. Then there was the idea of the least-developed countries. That started with us. We thought, although we wanted to have the unity of the third world kept intact, that there were some countries that were really very marginal countries with hardly any means for individual life or development and that we had to attend to in a special way. We set up a list — we had some people talking against that — but in the end this idea took its positive course, the Development Planning Committee took it up and then it was backed by UNCTAD with the support of the Planning Committee, so that it was more difficult to set it aside, but we were responsible for it to a very large extent. Before leaving, of course, I seeded the idea of the Comprehensive Programme of Commodities, which we talked about with my successor, who had not yet been in office, he was the head of the Development Planning Committee, and he came there and we discussed that together and the idea came from there, and I presented that at the sixth special session of the General Assembly here, it was there in the Programme of Action — a little bit diluted, so as not to impress too much — but it was there; we put it there as an idea that has also had a positive course, although some of the things that...

QUESTION: It must have been a very busy five years for you?

Perez Guerrero: Very busy, very interesting, very busy; but I thought that five years was enough; that it was better to leave after five years rather than to over-stay, especially at my age.

QUESTION: One thing we were talking about earlier, Ambassador, and I do know that you are rushed for time, but I would like to ask you about the present state and your hopes for global negotiations?
PEREZ GUERRERO: Yes, I can very briefly, because you know the situation, there is nothing that I can really inform you about that you do not already know, but I believe that it is a great pity that this idea, which was a very important idea, did not make headway. It has been stalled and that largely because of the United States resistance. When I say that I blame them in a way for having put up the resistance but I do not deny them the right of exercising their own influence in order to stop what they do not like, but what we had hoped was that they would like it for reasons that were obvious, that it was in their interest as well - that this situation, as we see it now, was anticipated by us three years ago and even earlier on, since I was in UNCTAD, and many people can say the same thing on their own, because it was not just one or two people thinking in the same way; there were quite a number of them. In the end what we said would happen has happened; the world is falling apart and nobody is going to be able to bring it together now; it takes more than one country, however powerful that country may be, it is unable to do that task by itself. And even if it could do that we could not let it do it because we could not let one country decide what the future of humanity ought to be, in the economic matters that interest so many of the developing countries and not only the developed countries. So when you say that they are going to meet in Williamsburg I do not think they can decide about it in Williamsburg. Of course, they cannot forget that we exist and even if there are those that think they can only talk about the problems concerning each other - I mean - we will be present there in the back of their minds and if they do not bring it to the forefront, they will regret it later themselves, because we will be doing some things on our own then and we are trying to. Of course, we are not as powerful as they are, but we are not powerless entirely. So that the unity of the 77 is going to be reinforced by this denial of negotiating with us on what the world economy ought to be and whatever the international economic system ought to be. We know very well that the one that has existed from Bretton Woods up to recently has ceased to exist to a very large extent. There are parcels that are still floating around, without any connection and with great difficulties and everyone is trying to get a bit of it - as high as possible. I think there is a great danger in the world and that has peace implications as well, implications for world peace, because if the world economy gets perturbed, as it is being and continues to be so inclined - I mean at one point or another anything can be expected, any gesture that was not supposed to bring about this and that, but yet might bring about things with very great and far-reaching consequences. So that I still hope - hoping against hope - that we will be able to launch something along these lines and we had - the non-aligned countries, a very good conversation...
QUESTION: Do you think there is going to be a fresh start, either at the UNCTAD meeting in Belgrade or at the Assembly this autumn, or do you think we are premature, do you think we are going to have to wait until a new Administration in Washington?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I hope that this Administration is not going to let the thing remain where it is before it leaves the White House. To begin with we do not know when it is going to leave the White House; it is not for us to decide it, no one knows, not even the American people. Anyway, I do not think we that we ought to depend too much on who is next in the White House. We ought to act now, because now is the time. It was yesterday rather than now, or the day before yesterday, but we cannot wait too much, it may be too late later on - too little and too late, as they say always - that is what is happening, and I believe that this question of the debt, the point it has reached, in Latin America and elsewhere, can destroy the system in whatever way it remains to be destroyed.

QUESTION: In both the developed and developing countries?

PEREZ GUERRERO: In the developed and in every one. The thing that is impossible for us to understand is how is it that countries as important as the United States, Great Britain and others do not realize that if the developing countries are not helped in earning their own livings, not in just getting from them, through their trade - getting better prices for their raw materials, possibilities of exporting to markets which have become more and more closed to their own exports and so on - they will not be able to prosper. They will not. These markets are essential for them right now. I will say that it is more essential than Japan's are for the United States or than the........ but at least it is very important for the three major trading partners and that is what sometimes becomes very baffling and a great pity, that we are still there and that we cannot sit around a table and create this mutual confidence - you cannot expect it to come if you do not favour it through consultations, negotiations and so on - and try to see that a system is set up which is sufficiently satisfying for everyone so that everyone will try to make it persist and continue and persevere. That is a job. But I am hopeful that sometime they will see it, because I cannot believe that they can be blind to that point.

QUESTION: You are a good disciple. I hope that your message gets across. I've got two final questions for you. During your long and varied career you have
served, as we remarked, in the League of Nations, in the ILO and in the United Nations. You have been the Permanent Representative of your country, the Executive Secretary of the Technical Assistance Board, the United Nations Resident Representative in several countries, Venezuela's representative at San Francisco at Hot Springs, at Bretton Woods and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. Of all these jobs, which gave you the most personal satisfaction?

PEREZ GUERRERO: The one I was at at the time.

QUESTION: In other words, you enjoyed them all?

PEREZ GUERRERO: That is it, and all of them are in the same long course in which I am not the only one, fortunately, because I have always learnt to work as a member of a team, not more than that.

QUESTION: Now the final question: what would you like to do next?

PEREZ GUERRERO: Continue.

QUESTION: Continue?

PEREZ GUERRERO: With the same course, for as long as God gives me some further...

QUESTION: And probably you want... repeatedly you have said during the course of these interviews "I was going back to write a book ". Maybe that is what you want to do next. Is that right?

PEREZ GUERRERO: I will try to do that in the next few years, but without stopping to do other things as well. But I will disappear and things will continue the same way.

QUESTION: Well, I do hope you write down some of these things that we have been discussing, because we have only just scratched the surface and you have a remarkable memory and a remarkable story to tell, Ambassador. Thank you so much for being with us. I appreciated it a great deal.

PEREZ GUERRERO: I appreciated it very much and this is for the United Nations.
QUESTION: Absolutely.

PEREZ GUERRERO: And we stand behind that.

QUESTION: Absolutely.

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(End of Set A)