

Yale-UN Oral History Interview

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Interviewer: Jean Krasno

Jean Krasno: For the record, Ambassador Baena Soares, would you please explain your role in the Organization of American States, the OAS, and the duration of your tenure there?

Amb. Baena Soares: I was the Secretary-General of the OAS for ten years, two mandates of five years, from 1984 to 1994, June to June. Actually it was from March to June. I was elected in March 1984, but I assumed my role in June. The tenure was from June 1984 to June 1994.

JK: Ten years, that's a long time. Would you also describe your history in Brazil's Foreign Service community?

BS: Now I just completed 45 years of diplomatic life. I went through the Instituto Rio Branco in Brazil. That is our diplomatic academy. Then during my diplomatic life, I have had posts abroad, in Paraguay, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, and the United Nations. In our headquarters, I was head of a division -- that is the unit of work in our structure. I was head of the Africa Division.

JK: When you say headquarters, what do you mean?

BS: I mean the Secretariat, as we call it the Secretaria de Estado, Itamaraty.

JK: Itamaraty, I am familiar with that term.

BS: Itamaraty is the name of the Ministry of External Relations, a literal translation is foreign relations. Itamaraty encompasses the Secretaria do Estado, headquarters now in Brasilia, and Rio, and the embassies and consulates, international organizations, the United Nations Mission, etc. I was head of the division; then I was head of the Department of International Organizations; then I was Special Advisor to the Foreign Minister; and then I was Secretary-General of Itamaraty. So, I went through all the steps. After being Secretary-General, immediately after leaving this post, I was elected to the OAS. That is my diplomatic history. I was at the UN. As the head of the division, I came each year for the General Assembly here [in New York] and also for the OAS. It is very curious, the first time I traveled abroad as a diplomat I was a third secretary, I came to the UN and to the OAS, for some temporary problems that they had. I was a young diplomat. And at the OAS, I had a special occasion to be received by Alberto Lleras Camargo, the then Secretary-General of the OAS and he spent almost two hours with a third secretary speaking about the UN. That was very curious.

JK: That is very interesting. Then eventually you became Secretary-General. So, he must have seen something.

BS: This was in 1954. I became Secretary-General 30 years later.

JK: Thirty years later, that's a good story. When did the OAS become involved in the Central American peace process? Did the OAS have any involvement in the Contadora process?

BS: If you consider the actions of the Permanent Council, it became involved in the case of Nicaragua during the last days of the Somoza dictatorship during the fight between the Contras and Somoza. It was very interesting because at that moment, the Permanent Council considered this situation in Nicaragua very closely. Some of the leaders of Nicaragua came to this meeting as members of the Panamanian delegation. This was a meeting of the Permanent Council. In my mind, this was the first approach to the OAS of the Central American question. Then in 1983, you have the Contadora meeting. But during this moment, the attitude of the OAS was very kind of detached. The OAS was not interested very much in approaching seriously the problem.

Now, in 1983, you have the Contadora process that marks a new phase of the Central American process. Then after that we had the joint initiative between the UN and myself to present a memorandum to the Contras in Central America and to the Contadora Group. And we were invited to go with the Contadora foreign ministers to all the Central American countries, to travel to all the Central American countries.

JK: Right, during that period, the Group of Eight, which were the four supporting countries and the Contadora Group and you as the Secretary-General of the OAS and Pérez de Cuéllar of the UN made a tour of the five Central American countries. So, how did you fit into that trip? Did you travel separately?

BS: We went jointly. The main reason that we wanted a meeting was that Pérez de Cuéllar was Latin American. And I thought this facilitated our cooperation. There is no doubt about it. But it was not easy for me because of the reactions of some especially from the ambassadors to the OAS. They did not like the idea of the Secretary-General going with the Contadora Group to Central America, participating in this process. This reaction provoked a litany of criticism. There were lots of reasons why, the mandate of the Secretary-General. They felt that the [OAS] Secretary-General has no mandate for this joint initiative with the UN Secretary-General and he has no mandate to accept the invitation of the Contadora Group to go to Central America. Then there was a special meeting of the Permanent Council and I had to explain. My reasons were first of all: the mandate is in the OAS Charter; as Secretary-General I knew my mandate as a political mandate. I'm not a manager. The big countries would like to have a manager. For that they could go to, how do you say, a "head hunter." They could go through the pages of advertisement in a newspaper. My view is that the Secretary-General of the OAS is elected. He is a political person. You don't elect a manager. That is the main reason. And as a political person, he has to interpret and act according to the Charter. You have a critical situation in the hemisphere and the Secretary-General is absent, has no participation, no references. That was the general explanation that I had. The specific explanation was the notes from of the Central American governments telling me to come, you are welcome. So, I was acting as Secretary-General in the service of those countries. There is nothing wrong with that. So, it was decided. The other countries said that this was very good and best wishes for your mission. You can imagine. This was in my tenure a very decisive moment.

JK: It was early in your tenure as Secretary-General.

BS: I think it was January 1987. The Contadora Group began in 1983 to act. Our joint memorandum, I think was November 1986. There was the meeting of the Secretaries-General at the beginning of 1987.

JK: It was also interesting to me that Brazil joined the support group in 1985, the support group of the Contadora Group. What was Brazil's reason for joining?

BS: I think it was all the same reasons as the origin of the Contadora Group. Brazil, at that moment remember that this was during the first elected government in years. Tancredo Neves was elected and then he died. And this was under Jose Sarney. The reason was that we could not have these Latin American countries having such problems without Brazil looking at the situation and having a voice in what happens. The idea of support was already there. The Contadora effort was reasonable and you should not create another channel and introduce complications for the Secretary-General. The more reasonable thing was to support the mechanism that was already created. And I think that was the reason. It was also the reason that Argentina and the others, Uruguay and Paraguay, who came together. And this was the origin of the Rio Group. The support group plus the Contadora Group was the Rio Group.

JK: I had interviewed Ambassador Manuel Tello of Mexico who had been foreign minister in Mexico as well as now Ambassador to the UN and I was asking him why was Mexico a member of

the Contadora process and what was it that they were trying to achieve. And he said it was, "What we wanted was a political solution to the conflict there, not a military solution." I was wondering if Brazil was also interested in that approach.

BS: Yes, in a sense, but the situation is different because Mexico was originally with the Contadora Group and the other was the support group. But this was the common worry. We were trying to give some political treatment to this situation. Even though things did not go so well. We had civil war and the tragedies that go long with that. The presence of the two Secretaries-General at that moment during the trouble making this Central American expedition gave Contadora adrenaline. At that moment Contadora was on the way down.

JK: Yes, right, it had lost its momentum. Now, I asked something about the Group of Eight because of Brazil as an important member and your being Brazilian. You are Brazilian, you are also Secretary-General of the OAS, which has a lot of members. So, you are playing various different political roles in this whole process. So, I am asking you questions from different views. What was the view of the Group of Eight towards the outside influences in Central America? For example, the U.S. was certainly a player in Central America, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and so forth.

BS: Not only those countries, you had the Scandinavians countries influencing things very much in situations. You had some members of the European Union who were also very active, i.e., Germany. I thought that if you left the solution to the Central Americans, they would define the solution. And that is what happened. The Arias plan and all those meetings among the presidents

and ministers in Central America. The Esquipulas process was the confirmation of what we had been saying in the OAS. They said that the best way to help Central America was to help the reconstruction of Central America, not the destruction of Central America.

JK: Right, that's key. What went wrong with the Contadora Process? And Esquipulas I was not successful.

BS: You know, first of all, U.S. opposition. This was very key. During the Reagan Administration it was very hard to solve any of the Central American problems. Because there was a mistaken view of the Contadora process. Some authorities in the United States and in the White House thought that the Contadora process was an effort against the United States, not in favor of the U.S. They thought that especially Mexico was working for the Cubans and the Soviet Union. This was a completely myopic view of the situation. They didn't understand that it was a Latin American effort to provide some ways for a solution to a Latin American problem. This was not the prevailing view in the State Department. This was my impression.

JK: I want to get back to that again in a minute, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the Oscar Arias plan. In 1987, President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica presented a plan for peace in the region. How was it different than previous agreements or plans and did the OAS support the Oscar Arias plan?

BS: Yes, I personally supported the plan. In my view, the plan had a few new ideas. The plan

was to organize in a practical way and efficiently what was in the minds and in the documents. And give him an authority as the president of a very respected country. This was the difference. I think that the way that the plan was placed into the chronological pattern of initiatives and the step-by-step manner created credibility and trust is also an important factor.

JK: The plan also called for establishing an international commission for verification and follow-up, which was CIVS. Was the OAS involved in the creation of the idea?

BS: In the implementation. Because I was involved personally since the Sapoá Agreements, the first the Contras and the Sandinistas met together to negotiate.

JK: When was that?

BS: Around 1987, I believe. I will look it up. This was the first time that you have the Sandinistas and the Contras negotiating. First of all, a cease-fire. From this, they went to the other steps. And Sapoá went to Esquipulas II. At that moment I was with the Cardinal Obondo Bravo. We were together as a witness to the negotiations. [He was looking up the date in some papers he had with him.] It was March of 1988.

JK: Where did you meet?

BS: In Sapoá.

JK: What is Sapoá?

BS: Sapoá is a small town in the South of Nicaragua almost on the border with Costa Rica. But this was the first time they were together in negotiations. The head of the Sandinista delegation was Humberto Ortega. The Sandinistas had a rotation among its leaders. They had three main leaders who took the chair. This was the first initiative. Then we received the mandate of Sapoá to follow the decisions that were taken in the agreements. Then came Esquipulas and the participation of the Secretary-General and so on. But this process has some new facts. That was very important to the UN and to the OAS. First was my presence. I was invited by the two sides, it was not imposed by the General Assembly or my Council. I was invited by the two sides.

JK: To be an observer to the talks?

BS: In Sapoá, it was more than an observer; We were to be guarantors of the decisions, the Cardinal and myself.

JK: What was the Cardinal's name?

BS: Miguel Obando Bravo. This was an important first for the OAS. It was not the first, but it was the way we did the electoral observation in Nicaragua. The elections were the consequence of the steps taken in this peace process.

JK: And the steps are very important. They are very important to understand. That is one of the reasons why we want to do this kind of oral history because there is not very much written about what was going on, that your role that you played there was as a guarantor. It is very important to get this on the record.

BS: It has helped to organize my ideas so that next year I may write something.

JK: Good, the transcript of this tape will be very helpful. It is very useful, actually. Well, then the OAS participated in this commission, CIVS. The team came to Central America and produced a report in 1988. What was the purpose of this CIVS report?

BS: Well, CIVS was not successful. Its first concern was to avoid, to suppress, the circulation of arms. This was impossible. It was a mission impossible. You know that CIVS was later transformed into CIAV. And CIAV was more successful.

JK: Did you learn something, though, from the CIVS process, the reports, the verification that had gone on during that period?

BS: How to do things, the experience was more important. We were at the disposal, the Secretary-General of the UN and myself, of CIAV. I don't know if you should go into this now or later, but it is difficult to work together. It is difficult, not in the high level decisions. We

cooperated very closely.

JK: You are talking about the relationship between the United Nations and the OAS?

BS: Yes, the UN and the regional organization. It is very difficult because of the bureaucracies, not because of the high level relationship. Not only because Pérez de Cuéllar was a Latin American but we have been friends since before this. He is a diplomat and we have known each other since our experiences here at the UN. He was ambassador here. He was a secretary in Brazil under one of the ambassadors. This made the frame for the picture. The framework was our friendship, the Latin American coincidence of the two Secretaries-General. But when you go down to the level of the bureaucratic offices, it was almost catastrophic because the bureaucracy has the idea that the OAS is a department of the UN. I insisted, always insisted, that we work on equal terms. For instance, if you have a joint mission, like in the CIAV, you should have balance between the two organizations. The other problem that was not resolved was the difference in salaries and benefits. It was incredible. We did not pay the per diem that the UN paid for the CIAV mandate. This is not an undermining of the bureaucrats but an attitude, which adds to the general picture of behavior. The UN bureaucrats behaved like the masters of the OAS. I used to hear complaints from our people there. So, we did find a solution, which was to separate into two individual initiatives in a common, joint effort in the implementation of the action, in two joint efforts. Each one kept its own procedures, its own norms.

JK: So, what was the division of labor in CIAV?

BS: An example, the demobilization of the Contras. We had the responsibility of demobilization inside Nicaragua. And the UN had outside Nicaragua. We had the responsibility of demobilizing inside Nicaragua. So, in this way, we had a joint action but different responsibilities. And this worked very well. The problem was, I think, not in the high level. It was in the bureaucracies. Another aspect that came later in Guatemala and in El Salvador, I always react against competition, against marketing. I always told my people that we are not Pepsi Cola trying to conquer the Coca-Cola market.

I was invited by the Guatemala Commission to some discussions that they had in Mexico, some talks with the guerrillas from Guatemala. Then came word from the UN that "if the OAS is invited, we are out," as crude as that. I saw that there was some hesitation on the part of the Guatemalan government. We said, "No problem, if you wish to go ahead, then go ahead. I will support you if you wish some other occasion. As we did in general reconstruction. But it was as crude as that. "If they come, we will go." This was true in the Guatemalan crisis and in the Salvadoran crisis, because the OAS does not have the comprehensive competence of the UN. We are regional. Those problems will follow us. Countries want extra-regional powers. The OAS lacks extra-continental powers.

JK: Yes, because in the United Nations, you have the Soviet Union, now Russia, all the European powers and so forth. So, it does make a difference.

I wanted to go back a little bit into the history before moving forward, and we will get into the elections. But you had mentioned about the United States administration and the representative

of the U.S. in the OAS. In January of 1989, President George Bush took office. I was wondering what kind of effect did this have and what kind of changes took place in the OAS after that election.

BS: In my experience, it was a very important change, a change of attitude. During the Reagan Administration, the U.S. attitude was very negative. But we had some openings with the Bush Administration, especially with Eugene Einaudi as the U.S. to the OAS. Einaudi, as a man who understands Latin America was very helpful in dealing with U.S. policy. I give him a lot of credit for his work in the OAS. There was a difference, a very clear difference in favor of dialogue and trying to understand the Latin American position in this later administration.

JK: In another change in leadership, in February of 1989, President Carlos Andrés Pérez became president of Venezuela and took office at that time. I understand that he had a very big inauguration and I was wondering if you had gone to that inauguration and what took place there. Because I understand that all the presidents of Latin America were there.

BS: Not all, but many. I was there and it was a very important event, not only in the sense of a formal event, but an important event. Carlos Andrés gave much more attention to Central America as a member of the group of three: Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia.

This group gave to Central America some facilities, i.e., trade, oil, etc. And also Carlos Andrés was very active in the Caribbean. He was going to have an embassy in every small island in the Caribbean, not to mention Cuba, Jamaica, and Barbados. Not only did they have this network of diplomatic presence, they had centers to teach Spanish. These were important, not only

culturally, but politically. That is the reason that the inauguration of Carlos Andrés had the prestige of the presence of all those heads of state.

JK: I understand that he really made an important decision that it would be his initiative to try to get the process going again on Central America. During that time when so many heads of state were there he made a point of talking to them about this issue.

BS: But don't forget that at this moment the Contadora process was gaining another impetus after these visits to Central America.

JK: So, that was also happening. That [the inauguration] came after. What regional leaders do you think had the greatest influence on bringing about the peace process in Central America?

BS: Oscar Arias was the author of the plan. I would say all the Contadoran support and the Group of Eight to keep a special focus on the efforts. Carlos Andrés called me very frequently about the elections in Nicaragua. He was very interested, enthusiastic about this.

JK: Shortly after these changes in 1989, the leadership in the United States and Venezuela, the five presidents met again -- they had many meetings -- but they met again in Tesoro Beach in El Salvador and an agreement emerged in that meeting in which Ortega agreed to hold elections, in this case to hold elections in February in 1990, just one year later from the time they were meeting in Tesoro Beach, rather than waiting until November of 1990. How was that agreement reached

and was the OAS present in Tesoro Beach?

BS: Yes, it was there, but it didn't participate. We did not participate in the negotiations, directly. We had a presence but not in the negotiations. I always avoid this. They had to discuss and reach an agreement and if they reached an agreement, then they would have to ask the OAS to act. This is exactly what they did. They asked the OAS to observe the elections. This is a first for the OAS, not in the electoral observation. Since the beginning of the OAS, as a regional organization, in Bogota in 1948. (Let me recall that the first Inter-American conference, called the International Conference of American States, was held in Washington in 1889 to 1890, more than one hundred years ago. The main issue in the agenda was trade. The main proposal was to create a free trade zone from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.)

JK: They are still trying.

BS: (After this conference, we held almost every two years those Inter-American Conferences. That created the entire network of legal principles that were reflected in the Charter afterwards. There was a trade office, a statistical trade office, which would grow into the Secretariat of the organization.) Since 1948, the OAS had observed elections, but it was the day of the election. Three or four illustrious figures of the continent went there, but it was not a very professional observation. This was the first one in which the OAS was there before, during, and after the election. We had more than 400 people there. I was there personally one week before the election. During the election I stayed in the country and after. And we had our own counting. We did not

proclaim the election. This was not our function. We had our counting to check on the electoral authorities. We were able to know that Violeta Chamorro was elected. Those at the UN, in a parallel action, had their own.

JK: Yes, I wanted to ask you that specifically why the OAS wanted to have its own separate count.

BS: Because we did not want to be a department of the UN. We had our own and this was a first for this new model of electoral observation. There was also some criticism that this was intervention in the internal affairs. I always said that I don't agree. Why? Because the OAS is an organization created by the states and the states asked for the service of the OAS via their governments. So, in this view, there is no intervention. If I am part of an organization and I ask this organization to provide some service to me, that is not intervention. But we did that as a first for the OAS with this model. We created our own T-shirt, a blue T-shirt with the "OEA" [the Latin American for OAS] in white and this was everywhere. We created a visual credibility. That gave much importance to the observation in Nicaragua.

JK: The night of the election count when the results were coming in and it appeared that Chamorro was going to win, I understand that that was a very dramatic evening. Former President Carter and Elliot Richardson decided to go to see Daniel Ortega. Did you go with them?

BS: Yes, we had a meeting because we had observations of the OAS and the Carter movement.

I never saw so much participation in an election from outsiders.

JK: It was a party.

BS: That's right. So, we met and we had our own information. The question was "what are we going to do?" We had information that had to be communicated to the competitors. This decision was taken by the three of us. Then we went together to see Daniel.

JK: What was his reaction when you told him?

BS: Somehow, I expected a less cold reaction. He was very cold. In my estimation, he already knew. He had had his own mechanism to know what happened.

JK: How do you think he already knew?

BS: We had our own counting and the Sandinistas should have their own counting. It was possible for one computer to do that, not any fraud or anything. That was my personal impression. I don't know if it was the others'. The question was, what would happen. I think Daniel was very noble because he went to see Violeta.

JK: I'm not sure I understood that. Did he go to see Violeta himself?

BS: Yes, he did, separately, not with us. People don't understand this but everybody knows everybody. Violeta and Daniel were among the first Sandinistas. Violeta was a Sandinista.

JK: That's right, she had been.

BS: So, they knew each other. Their families knew each other. It was very (I hate this expression) civilized. I hate this expression but it was very noble.

JK: In your conversations with Daniel Ortega, did you at any time feel that he was not going to accept the results?

BS: I felt that he was sure that he would be elected.

JK: He had been sure that he was going to be elected.

BS: Absolutely. Afterwards, doing some analysis, finding the truth, I feel that he lost the election because he had not suspended mandatory military service. This was one of the main reasons that he lost the election. That was not just an impression of mine but of other people. But he was sure that he would be elected. And Violeta felt that she was going to be. The complaints that we received were small in the whole picture. What happened here also happens in Sweden or Brazil, some difficulties, some strong-arming trying to disturb some political meetings. But there was no pattern of fraud, absolutely none. So, I was very at ease when I produced my report to the

Council. First, always have a report for the national authorities in the country where I am observing and to the Permanent Council. And I was very comfortable with this report. There was no sign of fraud, some small incidents.

One incident that was very humorous was that the indelible ink after three or four hours was no longer indelible. But some people voting twice, in my view and according to others including the Carter group, is not fraud. It was the bad quality of the ink that was provided for the Nicaraguans from outside the country. It was bad quality ink, not fraud.

JK: Daniel Ortega must have understood that the elections had been free and fair, that he had actually lost. Did he make any requests of you because I understand that he asked if you would request of Chamorro that she not crow over her winning the elections?

BS: Yes, there was some fear of vindictive actions. But Violeta Chamorro was very able. She had a policy that she was the mother of the country. She always said that she was the mother of all Nicaraguans. She was there to consolidate democracy, reconstruct the country, to pacify the country, maintain the continuation of the process. And she was very able, not being a politician, but being a head of state. She left her associate to run the country.

JK: You said "mother." That is an interesting point. That's a very interesting concept. I wonder if that is a kind of Latin American concept. Elliot Richardson said in an interview that afterwards he had written a letter to Daniel Ortega, telling him how much he appreciated his response and his dignity. But he also said he never kept a copy of the letter. Did the OAS or did you write any

letters to Ortega?

BS: No, I have only my report. I did not see this letter that Richardson wrote.

JK: He said he hand wrote a letter but he never did keep a copy of it. Was it an OAS responsibility to work with the resistance and the Sandinista army to prepare them for the results of the election?

BS: Yes, I'm telling you we [CIAV] are still there.

JK: It's CIAV that is still there.

BS: We had to regroup the Contras in safe areas. We had to disarm the Contras. We did a ceremony with Violeta Chamorro, symbolically, Violeta and myself, to destroy the arms that we had received. But before I was with Daniel Ortega, and this was very interesting, the 2,000 Contras that received amnesty and were liberated from the prisons in Managua. I went there and I had people from the OAS and people from the Red Cross, together, identifying each one of them. Daniel and myself, we were there. Being Latin Americans, we had to make a speech. This was a very emotional occasion. This was the implementation of the agreement and the armistice.

The third area of our responsibility was the reintegration of the Contras into the national life. We had this authority. They had to receive land and implements at the beginning of reconstruction. You know that some of them went to the hills as a political movement or as bandits

(I don't like to use the word) but to attack people to get money.

JK: So, some kept their weapons?

BS: Yes. The interesting thing is that the presence of CIAV was a motivating force. People came in the small towns to the people from the OAS who were there to complain, to ask for information, "how do I do this or how do I do that?" This is a very interesting component of the situation. It creates credibility.

JK: The Contras in general had trust in the OAS.

BS: Not in the beginning. It is very interesting because in the beginning, the Sandinistas didn't trust the UN. Then it changed and the Contras didn't trust the UN. The final conclusion is that the OAS was doing exactly the right thing that we had to do. We had the neutral position to try to do our job in an absolutely neutral way. So, in the final chapter, both them trusted the OAS.

JK: We did some interviews in Nicaragua with the Contras and they were very complimentary and appreciative of the OAS and of CIAV, in general. A few of them said that they thought that the OAS had favored the Contras more than the Sandinista army. Did you hear that at all?

BS: No. I heard from some parts that the OAS was an instrument of the State Department. It was not the case. But this is very interesting, the evolution of the reaction. To tell you, I was

invited by both sides. This was the evolution of the perception of the OAS and what the OAS could do to support the peace process.

JK: Under your leadership, you were particularly interested in the OAS maintaining its impartiality.

BS: Absolutely.

JK: Because the other comment that was made was that after you left, it became more partial to the Contras.

BS: I tried to be absolutely impartial.

JK: What do think motivated the Sandinista government to hold elections in the beginning?

BS: As always, internal motivations are mind boggling to understand. Some say from pressure from the outside. Outsiders wanted the government to be legitimate. But the Sandinistas were legitimated by a revolution against a dictator. But this was in the past. They had to renew this mandate. And that simply was the main reason. The economic situation was very bad. And you had a civil war that could not be good. And the social situation, the young people had gone to war and this was a negative factor in the social situation. I think the main reason was internal, not external. But of course, there are some aspects of external agreements, the situation in El Salvador,

all that. If the Sandinistas had had the internal situation under control, I don't think they would have called the whole international community to exercise some kind of pressure. The main reason was internal.

JK: What effect did holding these elections in Nicaragua have on the Central American peace process as a whole?

BS: The effect was first to consolidate democracy. "If the Nicaraguans can do that then we can also do that which the Nicaraguans have done."

JK: When I was in El Salvador interviewing members of the FMLN this summer, we talked about that issue. They said that one of the effects that was had on them was that they feared that the El Salvadoran government would think that they were no longer a force to be reckoned with. The FMLN then would be weaker. That was part of the reason they launched their offensive in November 1989. That they had to somehow prove that they were still a powerful force.

BS: Then there was the question of the smuggling of the weapons from Nicaragua. But you know after so many years of civil war, you have to try to transform yourself in the political arena.

You know that I was there in the midst of the offensive in November. They took the hotel and I was there for twelve hours under fire.

JK: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that. The offensive was taking place in San Salvador and

there was basically a civil war going on and you were stuck in the hotel. And then the FMLN took the hotel.

BS: Well, no, they took part of the hotel. They took one part and I was in the other part.

JK: I didn't know that.

BS: Yes, then the special force of the Salvadoran army came. Have you seen the movie *Apocalypse Now*, this picture with the helicopter and the missiles and all that? There weren't so many as the picture, but three are enough. I was caught in this for twelve hours.

JK: So, the FMLN never took your side of the hotel?

BS: No.

JK: How did you get out of the hotel?

BS: With this special force coming to rescue us under fire. We left the hotel under fire.

JK: Did you leave in a helicopter?

BS: No, by armored car. But I never thought that they were looking for me. They had no malice

toward the Secretary-General. The international press was there. They told the press corps to go to the Secretary-General and say that "we are going to protect him. The Salvadoran government is not capable of protecting and assuring the integrity of the Secretary-General." This was public relations and a political operation. I never felt any danger from them except from the fighting.

JK: Something could happen by accident.

BS: I did not feel that they were going to keep me hostage.

JK: They told me they didn't know you were there.

BS: They knew, yes, because we got this report. They went into the hotel and asked for the Secretary-General. "Where is the Secretary-General?" And the next weekend, two of them came to my home in Washington and said, "we are now here to say that we have nothing against you and we want to explain our operation to you." They knew. I was there to talk with them. I had talked with them in Mexico and I was going to talk with them at this time. So, they knew that I was coming there. But they wanted to demoralize the government. "He is not a hostage. We invite him to be with us."

JK: The other thing that they discovered in the Sheraton was something like 13 U.S. military personnel in the building. And they had quite an ordeal negotiating the release of these officers.

BS: Yes, well the hotel is now called El Presidente. It was the Sheraton. They have a VIP building and the old building. They thought that I was in the VIP, but in fact, I was in the old building. And the military troops were in the VIP.

JK: What was the military doing there?

BS: They were giving some assistance to the army.

JK: To the El Salvadoran army.

BS: But it is incredible the sensation that you cannot go out. You have to stay there. But we had telephone lines. And I called the Brazilian embassy and talked to the ambassador to tell him what is happening and to tell him that the Secretary-General is asking for a meeting of the Permanent Council. And the Council was in permanent session during all this crisis, a small crisis. But it was very curious for me. All the reaction in the U.S. from the Farabundo, who had some representatives in Washington. They came to see me, as I told you. "No hard feelings."

JK: So, when you got out of the hotel in the car, then did they take you right to the airport?

BS: No, we went to the vicinity of the Estado Mayor [government headquarters]. President Cristiani was there and from there we went to the airport.

JK: Then you came back to Washington.

BS: I had nothing more to do there.

JK: On the elections in Nicaragua, just one more question on that, I understand that Pérez de Cuéllar hesitated to have the UN monitor the elections in Nicaragua. Why was that and did the OAS have any hesitation?

BS: I did not have any hesitation. My interpretation was that, as I told to you, I was responding to a demand of our member states. But the UN and Pérez de Cuéllar's experience with this had to do with the de-colonization process, not with the democratization process.

JK: Under the Trusteeship.

BS: He hated it, but it was necessary to have an international presence and it was in agreement with the five Central American presidents, including Daniel Ortega. But this was not my reason. The legal base for my action was the charter, to respond to the demands of the states. You know that the opposition parties, especially in Mexico and Paraguay came to me to ask to observe their elections. I cannot do that on the part of the opposition only on the request of the government. So I said, "I thank you for your trust. But the government must ask for observation from the OAS."

JK: To have the proper consent. We had talked about the demobilization of the resistance and

the Sandinista army. What is your evaluation of that, both the problems and failures and the successes?

BS: It is not the act of demobilizing, the problem is getting work for those people. You cannot demobilize in the abstract. You have to give them something to do. The majority came from agriculture, from rural areas. You have to provide implements and markets. But Nicaragua was a destroyed country. You can't baby sit these people. You have to give them some money to support themselves. The problem was not a transition but to find work. That was the failure of the process. The success of the process was that they were demobilized. And it was not only the Contras, but the army was reduced to 20,000 from 80,000 or 90,000. What do you do with 60,000 persons? On the whole I think it was successful. The failures were not the failures of the process but were the failures of the situation, the circumstances that the process had to face.

JK: When each of these soldiers were demobilized they were given an identification paper and were they given clothes?

BS: In some cases, yes.

JK: And they were given money?

BS: Yes.

JK: And they turned in their weapons?

BS: Yes, absolutely. In some cases, they were given clothes and food. The Contras were given food.

JK: Was there land distribution at all?

BS: Yes, we worked this out not only with the government but with the Red Cross. You had to see the health conditions. It was very difficult. We were there and CIAV is still there.

JK: If the UN gets involved in demobilization again, which it may, and has since then, what kinds of recommendations would you give the UN to make sure that it was successful?

BS: I would not like to make recommendations but to point to some difficulties. First of all is to find work for these people work to do. If I find myself without my weapon, without my house, and without work, what am I going to do? I would be attracted by the criminal life. That is what happened to some degree in Nicaragua. That is the first thing. The second is to build the reintegration of these people into national life. To show documents, some papers, is not reintegration. They have to consider themselves participants. It is not easy, to identify with the environment and send them back to their families and villages. Sometimes they don't want to go to their villages. They want to go to the capital, to stay in Managua. They need to be reintegrated but they were taken from those villages and they should go back to their villages. But this was

international financial operation. And what happened in Nicaragua is classic. Everybody promises everything and then nothing comes. It must encompass this, no?

JK: Yes, and they don't follow through. CIAV and the OAS had the responsibility to get the Contras to accept the peace, initially. Was there a particular way of going about conveying an understanding of the peace agreement to them?

BS: We had to work with the leaders to explain all the aspects. They were not considered defeated in coming back to Nicaragua. We did this especially talking to the leaders but not only to the leaders. We had many experiences of going to the Contras' camps and talking to all the people there to explain the terms of the agreement.

JK: Were the Contras still afraid of the army?

BS: They were afraid of the army and the army was afraid of the Contras. We had to mediate but it wasn't high-level mediation. It was day-to-day to deal with small things. The Contras would come the OAS, to CIAV, to complain about the hostility of army. And the army said how they may come back and try to provoke us. It was a kind of local priesthood.

JK: So, on a day-to-day basis you had to conduct conflict resolution and building a kind of confidence.

BS: They didn't know it was conflict resolution but they had to solve the conflict.

JK: Once the election results came back to the Sandinista army and that Ortega had lost, how did they accept that?

BS: They accepted quietly because of Humberto Ortega. That is my opinion. Violeta Chamorro was highly criticized because she preserved Humberto as chief of the army. But she was absolutely correct. If she had dismissed Ortega, she would have had more to fear from him and the army. The only person who could reduce the army from 80,000 to 20,000 was Humberto Ortega. This was one of the wisest decisions of Violeta Chamorro.

JK: What was your assessment of UNHCR and their role in Nicaragua?

BS: We worked more with the Red Cross. We did work with the High Commissioner but not as closely as we did with the Red Cross. We did a better job in El Salvador because there was a bigger problem in El Salvador, more intensive. We had the Contras and their families, but they were not refugees. They did not accept the qualification of being a refugee. They were combatants. They rejected being considered refugees. So, the High Commissioner did not act on that. It was contrary to what happened in El Salvador. The Contras accepted the Red Cross.

JK: Did the OAS have much contact with UNDP?

BS: Yes, but we could give some support to UNDP programs. But we don't have a kind of UNDP in the OAS.

JK: What was your evaluation of UNDP? Did it play an important role?

BS: All of us supported these efforts. What I could say is that they could do more with less bureaucracy. I am the enemy of bureaucracy. They could cut the fat. What they did, they did very well, very efficiently.

JK: I have come to the end of the questions that I had prepared, but is there something specifically that you would like to say about Central America or the OAS role?

BS: We covered that it was something new for the OAS and the relationship with the UN. We didn't cover Haiti but that is not a Central American problem. The other problem that we didn't cover was the coup in Guatemala. You know that the UN Charter says nothing about democracy. The word democracy is not found in the UN Charter. On the contrary, in the OAS there is as the basis and goal of the organization. More than that, we have a mechanism to promote and protect the democratic process. It has been adopted into our treaty because the Secretary-General has to begin this process.

The consolidation of democracy in Central America includes Guatemala. Also it was the first experience working with organized civil society. We went there and had discussions with the civil society, the unions, the universities, the indigenous people, the private sector, the military, and

all the segments. And it was because of this work with the civil society that we found a solution. The constitution forbids this coup. And also the presence of the OAS has allowed civil society to speak, to talk, because there is still censorship. They are able to organize and to speak. That is an aspect that I think complements what we have been discussing. The presence of the OAS facilitates the interaction of civil society against a coup.

JK: As long as we are continuing a little bit further, I wanted to ask you, on Central America, the UN Secretary-General instituted a phenomenon called the "Group of Friends of the Secretary-General." Did you meet with the Group of Friends or were you aware of their existence?

BS: I was aware of it, but they didn't have the same format with the OAS. I worked with all the countries but mainly with the Contadora Support Group. But you that in the OAS, we have more observers than we have member states. We have 34 states, if you include Cuba, 35. But we have 38 observers. And this was very good for me because we had the French ambassador, the Italian ambassador, the German ambassador. The Soviet ambassador was an observer then. In Washington, there is a delegation of Cuban interests. They came to the OAS. The Cubans were present, not now but then, were present at all the meetings of the Permanent Council. And they came to see me and we discussed the situation. And so I was able to reach countries beyond the membership of the OAS. But I didn't have a group of four or five countries specially.

JK: I understand that the OAS had not been as involved in El Salvador as you had been in Nicaragua. Why was that?

BS: The first reason was the attack on the Sheraton Hotel because I was there. It was exactly that. I had other meetings with the Farabundo in Mexico but we didn't have the same impetus. It was very difficult for me to bring the matter to the Permanent Council after that. But you have to understand that many people were against my presence there. If I brought the question to the Permanent Council, they would ask, "why should you interfere in this process? You were shot at there." We were involved in Nicaragua and Guatemala because of the coup. In El Salvador, it was more subtle. Also, in the UN bureaucracy, there was behavior against the OAS. They didn't like us.

JK: You know in Latin America, there is still conflict in Colombia and there is still conflict in Peru. What do you think might be the role of the UN or the OAS in trying to resolve these conflicts?

BS: I think that in Peru, there is no possibility for action because Fujimori is very cautious in having the OAS neutralizing the rebels, the Shining Path. In Colombia, it is a very complicated affair because you not only have the guerrillas but you have the drug traffickers. This is a situation that will continue and does not permit the entrance of the Secretary-General. In my view of things, if the government were to come to me and ask for help, I would be very careful. There is another dimension. It is not a question of only a civil war, a political/civil war; you have a drug war. That makes a difference. And in Peru, you don't have a situation of a civil war; you have a terrorist group. I wouldn't say that Shining Path is sufficiently strong to be considered part of a civil war. I wouldn't say that. I would not recommend an OAS presence if I had that responsibility.

JK: So, it isn't parallel to the situation in Central America. Well, I think this is all I have to ask you. I thank you very much.

BS: Not at all.