

"Now here was Garcia Robles' genius. He said that any country that wishes can waive these conditions for the purpose of the entry into force of this treaty. And the treaty would enter into force when 11 countries made this waiver. So 11 countries, starting with Mexico, did that and the treaty entered into force for them almost immediately. Brazil is a party to the treaty, but the treaty has not entered into force for Brazil because their leaders didn't waive the conditions. However, a Brazilian delegate said to me one time, 'We are going to wake up one day and find that all our conditions have been met.' It took a long time to get the Americans and Russians on board: the Americans did it first, and then the Russians.

"Argentina signed but never ratified the treaty. They promised to do so at the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978, but the colonels would not let them. I don't know whether President Alfonsin will. I think he has told people that, if there is a Comprehensive Test Ban treaty, he will ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco. And France hasn't yet ratified Protocol 1, to say that Martinique and Guadeloupe and French Guiana are covered by the treaty, but it has ratified Protocol 2 which commits it to honour the treaty.

"Then, on the question of transiting with ships and aircraft we had a hell of a problem and I stuck my neck out a mile. I didn't even check with U Thant. I said, 'There is no way you can see what is in an aircraft flying above you; there is no way you can see what is in a submarine going through your waters—and the treaty covers a huge area of the South Atlantic and South Pacific as well as the Caribbean. My guess is also that they will never tell you whether surface vessels have nuclear weapons on board; they won't let you go and look. If you insist that they cannot have the right of transit, the Americans will never sign because they have to have the right of transit through the Panama Canal.' Look, for example, what's going on [now] between the U.S. and New Zealand.

"So I was the one to tell them to drop insistence on banning the transit of nuclear weapons in the zone. I stuck my neck out a mile, but fortunately I was in tune with U Thant. And Garcia Robles in particular supported my view. And that became that. And then the Russians criticized the treaty from hell to breakfast because it didn't ban transit [of nuclear weapons] through the zone. They were the last to sign and ratify Protocol 2, and the fact that the Chinese did it before them put big pressure on them.

"So much for Tlatelolco. It has become a model now for treaties establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone. The recent South Pacific treaty followed it to a large extent. And it was essentially what got Garcia Robles the Nobel Peace Prize. He did a lot of other things and was also the most successful mover of ideas in UN resolutions, but the treaty was his main accomplishment.

"The official name of the treaty is the 'Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America,' which hardly anybody remembers. Everybody refers to it as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which everybody remembers but few can pronounce or spell. It is called that because it was negotiated and signed in the Mexican Foreign Office, which is located in this suburb of Mexico City.