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TEXT

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
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TRIBUNE DE GENEVE (INDEPENDENT, 63,000-CIRCULATION
AFTERNOON DAILY): INTERVIEW BY PIERRE RUETSCHI WITH FORMER
UN HUMAN RIGHTS DIVISION DIRECTOR THEO VAN BOVEN,
ENTITLED "YOU MUST REFUSE TO BE MUZZLED": (BEGIN TEXT)
TODAY IS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY. THERE WILL BE SPEECHES,
PERHAPS AN EXHIBITION, A COCKTAIL PARTY OR TWO, TO
CELEBRATE THE 38TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WITHOUT BANNERS OR
MARCHES, THE OCCASION WILL BE MARKED IN LOW KEY AT THE
GENEVA PALAIS DES NATIONS. AS USUAL, EVERYONE WILL
TREAD SOFTLY SO AS NOT TO OFFEND SOME GOVERNMENT OR OTHER.

"THIS DAY SHOULD BE THE OCCASION TO SHOW THE WORLD THE

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REAL SITUATION," SAID THEO VAN BOVEN. THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE UN DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEPLORES ANY COMPLAISANCE IN REGARD TO "TORTURER-STATES." A RUGGED PERSONALITY WHO REFUSED TO MELT INTO THE SOFT DIPLOMACY OF THE UNITED NATIONS, HE WAS RETIRED IN FEBRUARY 1982, DOUBTLESS FOR DARING TO DENOUNCE STATES GUILTY OF HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. HE EVEN EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THE UN'S IMPARTIALITY IN JUDGING THE SITUATION. THEO VAN BOVEN NOW TEACHES INTERNATIONAL LAW AT LIMBURG UNIVERSITY IN THE NETHERLANDS. HE IS STILL AS FRANK AND HONEST--AND

COURAGEOUS--AS EVER. HE SPOKE PLAINLY ON THE OCCASION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DAY WHICH, HE SAID, IS "ALWAYS A BIT ARTIFICIAL."

QUESTION: FIVE YEARS AFTERWARD, DO YOU STILL FEEL SORE ABOUT BEING FIRED?

ANSWER: IT WASN'T EASY TO ACCEPT. I NEEDED SOME TIME TO ADAPT TO THE NEW SITUATION AND REFLECT ON IT. BUT TODAY I LOOK BACK ON THAT PERIOD WITH SATISFACTION. I MANAGED TO HAVE SOME IMPACT ON HUMAN-RIGHTS POLICY, AND THIS WAS RECOGNIZED EVEN BY THE VICTIMS OF THE VIOLATIONS.

Q: ARE HUMAN RIGHTS RESPECTED BETTER OR WORSE COMPARED WITH TEN YEARS AGO?

A: GLOBALLY, I DON'T THINK THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED VERY MUCH. IF ONE CAN REJOICE OVER THE RETURN TO DEMOCRACY OF ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY, ONE MUST DEPLORE IN EUROPE A HARDENING OF THE ATTITUDE TOWARD REFUGEES. THERE IS ALWAYS A LOT OF DISCRIMINATION.

Q: DON'T YOU THINK QUIET DIPLOMACY IS SOMETIMES MORE EFFECTIVE THAN FRANK, DIRECT ACCUSATION--THE METHOD YOU PRACTICED?

A: CONTRARY TO THE POPULAR IMPRESSION, I TOO PRACTICED QUIET DIPLOMACY. IT IS NECESSARY WHEN YOU ARE DEFENDING AN INDIVIDUAL--FOR EXAMPLE, A DETAINEE BEING MISTREATED IN HIS HOMELAND--FOR GOVERNMENTS CAN THEN MAKE CONCESSIONS WITHOUT LOSING FACE. ON THE OTHER HAND, WHEN A CASE ARISES OF FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE UN MUST DENOUNCE IT PUBLICLY.

Q: IS THAT EFFECTIVE?

A: IT CAN HELP MAINTAIN THE VICTIMS' MORALE. SOME GOVERNMENTS ARE SENSITIVE TO THAT SORT OF PUBLICITY AND CHANGE THEIR POLICY; OTHERS, HOWEVER, JUST HARDEN THEIR HEARTS.

Q: NEXT MARCH, SWEDEN'S JAN MARTENSON WILL SUCCEED AUSTRIA'S KURT HERNDL AT THE HEAD OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER (FORMELY DIVISION). WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES NEEDED IN THE JOB?

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A: IT'S A VERY DIFFICULT JOB. YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS. YOU HAVE TO GAIN THE UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 GENEVA 11346

CONFIDENCE OF GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS. BUT ABOVE ALL YOU MUST REFLECT AND ACT IN COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE, OTHERWISE YOU CAN'T DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS IN A CREDIBLE FASHION. PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS TRIED TO REPRESENT THE GENERAL INTEREST.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ORGANIZATIONS LIKE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WHICH DON'T HESITATE TO PUT GOVERNMENTS ON THE SPOT?

A: THEY PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE; THEY TAKE ACTION WHERE THE UN IS INEFFECTIVE.

Q: SOME PEOPLE THINK AMNESTY HAS BEEN INFILTRATED BY LEFTIST GROUPS--

A: I DON'T THINK SO, BECAUSE AT THE SAME TIME IT IS ACCUSED OF BEING IN THE PAY OF WESTERN IMPERIALISM.

Q: YOU, TOO, HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH BEING LEFTIST--

A: FROM TIME TO TIME, THAT'S TRUE. I AGREE WITH THE LEFT ON SOME QUESTIONS, BUT I DON'T BELONG TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY. IN ANY CASE, YOU AREN'T NECESSARILY LEFTIST IF YOU TRY TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH THICK AND THIN.

Q: YOU WERE APPOINTED TO LEAD THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION BY **KURT WALDHEIM**. WERE YOU SURPRISED AT THE REVELATIONS ABOUT HIM?

Q: WE WERE NEVER REALLY IN THE PICTURE ABOUT ALL THAT. I WAS CERTAINLY SURPRISED, AND I WONDER HOW ANYONE WHO HAD DONE EVEN ONE FOURTH OF WHAT WALDHEIM IS ALLEGED TO HAVE DONE COULD EVER BECOME SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS. BEFORE YOU NOMINATE A SECRETARY-GENERAL, YOU LOOK INTO HIS BACKGROUND. I AM PRACTICALLY CERTAIN THAT SOME CIRCLES KNEW ABOUT HIS PAST. IN ANY CASE, IT HASN'T ADDED TO THE UN'S LUSTER.

Q: FOLLOWING CASES LIKE YOURS, AND NOW THAT OF **KURT WALDHEIM**, THE UN HAS LOST CREDIBILITY. IS IT STILL WORTH ITS SALT?

A: DESPITE EVERYTHING, IT IS STILL THE INDISPENSABLE INSTRUMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. WITHOUT IT, THE HUMAN-RIGHTS SITUATION WORLDWIDE WOULD BE WORSE. (END TEXT) A PICTURE OF VAN BOVEN WAS CAPTIONED: "FACED WITH HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, THEO VAN BOVEN ALWAYS CALLED A SPADE A SPADE. IT COST HIM DEAR: IN FEBRUARY 1982 HE LOST HIS POST AS DIRECTOR OF THE UN DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS." (12/10/86) JOHNSON

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ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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