UNITED NATIONS INTELLECTUAL HISTORY PROJECT
The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

JULIA J. HENDERSON

BY

RICHARD JOLLY

Venice, Florida 21 June 2001

Transcribed by Ron Nerio

RICHARD JOLLY: This is Richard Jolly interviewing Julia J. Henderson in Venice, Florida, on June 21st, 2001.* Julia, you did many wonderful things in the UN. You were the most senior woman in the UN for a number of years. But you grew up in Du Quoin, Illinois.

JULIA HENDERSON: Yes.

RJ: So perhaps you would just tell me briefly about growing up, and how your early childhood and teen years in Du Quoin influenced you in the UN.

JJH: That's quite a challenge to talk about that. The town I grew up in was a town of about 7,000; it had 10,000 at its peak. Its economic base was coal mining. My father was a carpenter at the mines, and my grandparents were all involved working at the coal mines—some on top, as they say, and some down in the mines. The town at its peak was 10,000, but most of my childhood it had 7,000 to 8,000.

We always had a very good support for good schools. I don't know who was responsible for that in the beginning. But I learned after I went to the University of Illinois in Champagne that I had had a better education than a great number of the students there. I had some teachers who certainly made a lasting impact on the things that I did, particularly one of the teachers in the high school who was the speech coach and took us around all of southern Illinois and some neighboring states for debate activities. I think that stood me in good stead for the rest of my career. I think that it was a town big enough to have really good amenities.

RJ: What about teachers that influenced your way of looking at the world?

JJH: I would say that the teacher who influenced me the most was the one who was our debate coach. We traveled with him all over southern Illinois and sometimes to neighboring states.

* Virginia Householder was present during the interview.

RJ: Did he have any interest in international affairs?

JJH: I don't remember that as a major part of his concerns. I think I began to get my interest in international affairs mainly in college, rather than in high school.

RJ: What influenced you in your choice of going to the University of Illinois?

JJH: I suppose a major point was that it had a very good reputation. If you were a graduate of the University of Illinois, you were looked up to in the community. It was also one of the cheapest places to study. It was a public institution and it had a very good reputation. If you couldn't go to the University of Illinois, there were five different colleges really for training teachers. But if you went to Champagne, that was the heart of the university. That was considered to be the best thing that you could do.

RJ: You were in university during the main years of the Great Depression.

JJH: That's right.

RJ: Do you remember student debates, or do you remember teachers being preoccupied with the Depression and the nature of the challenge it presented to the rest of the country? [Franklin] Roosevelt had just come in.

JJH: Of course everybody was preoccupied by it. The unemployment rate, of course, was very, very high. So many times students had to drop out because even though the tuition at the university was very low, they just couldn't make it.

RJ: Was your continuing with university ever in question because of financial pressures on you or the family?

JJH: No. I was the first one to go to university, and that was so important in the family. I think they would have made any sacrifice to keep me there.

RJ: If I may say, even though you were a woman at a time when still many people thought women didn't need education, because after all, you had these boyfriends, you were going to get married, so do you really need education?

JJH: That was never a question in my family. They were proud that I was there, and they would have done anything to keep me there.

RJ: Both your mother and your father?

JJH: Yes.

RJ: Were there any differences between your mother and your father in the way they looked at you and your prospects?

JJH: I don't think so. They were proud of my academic record. I was very active in the debating society. We did quite a lot of traveling around southern Illinois and neighboring states.

RJ: Boys and girls?

JJH: Yes.

RJ: And how did the boys take to you debating better than them?

JJH: I don't know that I did debate better. But that was never a question. We were boys and girls on the team.

RJ: And you were part of the team, yes.

JJH: I think that was a very good part of my education too. We had very serious topics to discuss.

RJ: Do you remember any particular topic which grabbed you?

JJH: There were several of them that dealt with the economic state of the country, because everybody was preoccupied with the problems of employment and the problems of what their future was going to be.

RJ: Do you remember any of the cases you were arguing? Surely there must have been the pro-Roosevelt case, the New Deal. Then there must have been those who said, "Leave it to the private sector."

JJH: My community was certainly in that first group.

RJ: But in debate, if there was going to be debate on it, you must have taken different views.

JJH: Both sides, of course.

RJ: Do you remember what side you tended to take?

JJH: Of course, my father was a strong Democrat and my mother usually followed him. Of course, we were in favor of what the federal government was trying to do. And I would think my whole community was very much backing the New Deal.

RJ: Did you have any first-hand experiences of working, volunteering with unemployed people in soup kitchens, coping with the harsh end of poverty and of unemployment?

JJH: The whole community was in such bad shape. There were just a lot of people helping neighbors, in addition to what the community had to do, and the national programs that grew up in the New Deal. I must say that before the Great Depression, we had a lot of Republicans as well as Democrats. But as the Depression got worse and worse, we had more and more Democrats.

RJ: Let me just come back to your time in the university. You then went on to do a Master's at Minnesota in public administration. What influenced you in those choices?

JJH: The first was the best scholarship. My mother's family were from Sweden, so I thought it would be very good to go to Minnesota, which was full of Swedes. I found it a very congenial atmosphere, as well as a very good university.

RJ: Do you remember any fellow students from your time in either undergraduate or graduate studies?

JJH: Some I remember their first names, but not their last. I am not in touch with anybody that I was a freshman with. Of course, we had very large classes. You knew the people that you were in a rooming house with.

RJ: Do you think what you've learned in Minnesota or in Illinois influenced very directly the way you tackled any of your posts in the UN?

JJH: That would be hard for me to pinpoint.

RJ: Did either any of the courses, or any of the attitudes and commitments of teachers, or ways of looking at the world, or ways of not being deceived by first appearances later influence you in your work in the Bureau of Social Affairs?

JJH: I can't say that I can make that connection.

RJ: First you go briefly into the U.S. government as an intern, is that right?

JJH: That's right.

RJ: Your family must have been very proud at that time at what looked at entry into security. And, if they were Democrats, they wouldn't say entered into the "big, bad world of exploitative government."

JJH: No, they were very pleased that I took that line and had that opportunity.

RJ: Well, let's come then to when you went to the UN. What's your earliest recollection of the UN—being in London?

JJH: I remember I was working for the Social Security Board, and Eric Biddle, who was at the Budget Bureau, called me one day and said, "Julia, how would you like to help organize the United Nations?" Since I had a strong interest in international affairs, I was just thrilled with

that and said, "When do we start?" He said, "As soon as we can get you released from the Social Security Board, we'll go to London." So I was thrilled with that opportunity, and never got away.

RJ: And you went to London in late 1945. So this was Church House?

JJH: That's right.

RJ: I've been in Church House recently, and it still seems a holy place to visit because of those early UN links. Do you remember anything about the atmosphere of the small group of you who were working on the UN at the time?

JJH: I think we were all thrilled to have the opportunity and thought this was the beginning of a brave new world. That was a very, very good time. We were all enthusiastic with what we were doing. It wasn't just a job.

RJ: But the degrees of enthusiasm must have varied a lot.

JJH: Oh, I suppose. But certainly the preparatory group—I think all people were enthusiastic with what they were doing.

RJ: In addition to Eric Biddle, who do you remember?

JJH: Now that's a real test.

RJ: Gladwyn Jebb—does he stick in mind?

JJH: Yes, I knew him quite well.

RJ: I've just met him. I never knew him, and I met him when he was very, very old. But I tend to think of him—

JJH: He must be about 100 by now.

RJ: He looked about 100, to be honest. I met him five or six years ago, and he died soon after. But from what I knew, he was very much the austere Englishman and rather proper, rather academic.

JJH: I don't remember that.

RJ: Now David Owen, in contrast, was much younger and—

JJH: Easy to work with. We all admired him.

RJ: Why did you admire him?

JJH: He seemed to have a vision of what we were working for. He was a very easy person to work with and not an authoritarian in any way. So we felt part of a team. I think back to that period with great satisfaction.

RJ: Did you get the feeling that some of the people in the team were really giants for their intellect or their commitment or their leadership?

JJH: That's a hard question, because I can't think of one that I thought absolutely outstanding. You felt a part of a team that was doing something important and exciting. You were just trying to be a part of it.

RJ: Was young Brian Urquhart there at the time?

JJH: Yes. He was always a very active one. Is he still around?

RJ: He's still around. He's still writing a lot. Of course, he's long left the UN, but he's been writing about the UN and is brought in, every so often, on reform projects or otherwise. He's in great shape.

JJH: Please give him my regards, if you see him.

RJ: I will do so. What about Andrew Courdieu?

JJH: Oh, yes. He was a giant for us. Even though he wasn't the Secretary-General, he was the one who really ran things. And of course, he stayed there so long so he knew it from the beginning.

RJ: Was he in London?

JJH: Yes.

RJ: Did you ever sense important differences between the British and the American perspectives of the UN at that time?

JJH: No, I didn't have any problems of that kind.

RJ: Because there were certainly differences in attitude towards the colonies. Britain still, even though by then under a Labour government, was not saying the empire must go. It certainly must not go overnight. Perhaps in the next fifty to seventy years. And the Americans felt that colonialism was part of the past.

JJH: Well, that's true. But I don't remember that being a major problem. We knew that the British had a different attitude than the Americans on these matters.

RJ: It was quite an important point in the world.

JJH: Yes. I don't know whether we all thought, "It will pass." I don't remember it being a difference that you discussed.

RJ: Reading your memoirs made me feel, in a way, that that has been a bit your philosophy—not to take a polarizing stand on an issue, but to work for what you see as important within the frame of the team. A rather optimistic view.

JJH: Optimism has carried me a long way.

RJ: At some point, you say that you jumped to the ceiling with joy when asked by Eric Biddle if you would join the team. One of the questions we wanted to ask you was, "Looking

back over your twenty-five years with the UN, did the joy really last?"

JJH: I think it did. I am by nature optimistic, so even when things are not just what you think they ought to be, then you think, "It's possible to change and improve on what we are doing." Sometimes people were appointed just because they came from an underdeveloped country, and didn't do a very good job. And some other people in high places you wondered how they got there. All those are usual things in a bureaucracy of any kind. But I was devoted to the cause, and I loved that job, or series of jobs in the UN.

RJ: Just sticking with your optimism for a moment, do you think you got that from your parents?

JJH: I don't know where I got it. It came naturally. So they must have had some. We lived through the bad depression and lots of problems like most other people. But both my mother and my father were pretty optimistic people.

RJ: It didn't particularly come from religion—their religion or your religion?

JJH: I don't think so. We were practicing Christians.

RJ: In your UN career, with the IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation), you must have met a number of people who weren't optimistic.

JJH: Oh, yes.

RJ: Did you have a conscious way, in your leadership role, of challenging this or suggesting, in some way or other, that they needed to see more possibilities in whatever situation they were dealing with?

JJH: Well, I can't remember working on the ones who were not so optimistic in a direct way. I know my own attitude was very much a can-do attitude. I think if the leadership is that way, that usually—

RJ: But my experience—I have been married to an American wife for a long while—is that, on average, there is a difference between Brits and Americans. And the Americans have a can-do attitude, perhaps seven or eight times out of ten; and the British have a can-do attitude perhaps two or three times out of ten.

JJH: Oh, really?

RJ: And there is a philosophical, more cynical attitude among the Brits more often.

JJH: But I found the Brits very good people to work with. They had a work ethic, for one thing. You didn't have to prod them to get the job done. So I was always very pleased.

RJ: What about any of the other nationalities in the early days—the French and any of the others? You mentioned some of the less-qualified developing country persons. Well, Gunnar Myrdal, Alva Mydral—you must had links with them. And with your Swedish mother, how do they stand out in your mind?

JJH: They were devoted to international causes, of course, much more, I think, than Americans are. Americans are—we think we have plenty of problems of our own and are not so internationally-minded as many of the people I worked with there.

RJ: And both of them were giants of intellect as well as of commitment.

JJH: That's right.

RJ: Do you think back of times when you were just amazed at the breadth of their perspective or the wildness of their ideas?

JJH: Since I am a very optimistic person myself, I liked the way they went about things—a can-do attitude. I thought it was very helpful. There are some people who are just the opposite—it can't be done. But they never stopped there.

RJ: Let me ask you about Philippe de Seynes. Do you have any memories of him?

JJH: I got along with him very well. He was a brilliant person. I admired his thinking capacity and got on with him very well. I think he depended on me as a can-do person.

RJ: And someone I know virtually nothing about—Fiorello La Guardia. Did he play much role within the UN?

JJH: No.

RJ: But he was mayor at the time, I think.

JJH: That's right. He was friendly, but I can't remember specific measures that he did to make life easier for the UN.

RJ: You have a strong background in administration. And there were, among this list, some very strong administrators, but there were also some academics—professor types, brilliant. Did you ever notice a difference between the professors wanting to talk and dream visions, and some of you and the other administrators saying, "Look, we need to concentrate on how to get this done?"

JJH: I can't divide my colleagues into those categories. I don't think it was extreme either way.

RJ: Let's come, if we may, to some of the issues when you started working professionally on social welfare in the UN and the world of the UN's first *Report on the World Social Situation*.

JJH: Good gracious. That's a long time ago.

RJ: I think it was 1951. The first report came out under your guidance and leadership.

JJH: Yes. I remember very little about it.

RJ: Do you remember any battles with the economists saying, "You are trying to make too much of the social side? What matters is the economic side."

JJH: I think they dealt with that just by ignoring us.

RJ: Really?

JJH: Yes, they lived in their world. There certainly wasn't much overlap.

RJ: Even though the economists were led by David Owen?

JJH: Well, David was the most understanding person, I would say.

RJ: But most of the other economists were—

JJH: Yes, they were doing their thing and we were doing ours. That wasn't entirely true. There were always some contacts. But we were separate departments.

RJ: Do you remember, apart from David Owen, who were the economists who showed more sympathy to the social dimensions?

JJH: I can't say that I remember.

RJ: The first *Report on the World Social Situation* identified poverty, illiteracy, and disease as the three big social problems of the world.

JJH: They still are.

RJ: There still are, certainly—poverty, illiteracy, and disease.

JJH: Maybe we've made more progress on the disease than the other two.

RJ: Do you think we've made more progress than you expected in 1951?

JJH: Probably not, since I'm an optimist. So I always think that what we are doing is going to make something better. That keeps you going, you know.

RJ: But if you take not strictly illiteracy, but take education, you now have a situation where something like 80 or 90 percent of children in the world at least have a few years of

primary schooling. And we've seen enormous progress towards girls getting almost equal enrollment with boys. We're not there yet. Do you think you expected that at the time? Perhaps you thought we would achieve it in 1970. I suppose 1980 was the first formal UN goal for universal schooling, for girls as well as boys.

JJH: Yes. That came out of UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Since by nature I am an optimist, I always expect things to happen before they do.

RJ: Coming back to the way the *Report on the World Social Situation* was produced by the Division of Social Welfare, and then the economists did their *World Economic Survey*. I'm not sure whether the World Bank was beginning to produce its own surveys, but certainly the IMF (International Monetary Fund) was producing its own economic reports. Do you think there might have been a different way? Do you think there could have been a way in which the social was more integrated with the economic?

JJH: I haven't thought about that. I'm sure you could have done better. But the way things were organized—you mean to have a joint report?

RJ: That could have been one way.

JJH: Probably the social affairs people would have accepted that better than the economists would have.

RJ: They would argue, presumably, that you would gain more, and they would then dilute their high thinking, their purity. Do you remember any efforts to try and establish closer links of that sort?

JJH: I can't say I remember them. I'm trying to remember—what was the name of the Swedish woman who was in social affairs? I was still in budget when she was there. A brilliant woman.

RJ: Not Alva Myrdal?

JJH: Yes.

RJ: I didn't realize that she was in social affairs in New York.

JJH: Yes, she was.

RJ: She was at UNESCO, I know, for a while.

JJH: She made quite an imprint. She was a brilliant woman. I hadn't thought about her in a long time. I wonder if she is still alive.

RJ: No. She died a few years ago. But I think there are two wonderful books about her. They are not without fairly deep criticisms of Gunnar Myrdal.

JJH: I can understand that.

RJ: Her daughter wrote one of them and analyzed the family situation.

JJH: Is she a professor?

RJ: She is a professor at Harvard, and at one point was married to the president of Harvard. Or rather she is married to the person who was for a while the president of Harvard.

JJH: That's interesting.

RJ: You made a comment last night, I think, that the history of the UN might be written in terms of who was sleeping with whom.

VIRGINIA HOUSEHOLDER: Maybe it was my comment.

RJ: Maybe it was your comment.

JJH: I didn't know you kept track of that.

VH: This was UNESCO, not the UN.

RJ: That was UNESCO.

VH: It was more blatant in UNESCO.

RJ: Do you think that influences—if I may ask you, now looking back over quite a number of years on different peoples' situation—do you think that influences the professional perspectives that people have of the work that people do?

JJH: Whether they're living together?

RJ: And to the extent that they're swapping partners.

JJH: Well, I hadn't thought about that problem. I don't have any answer to that. Do you Virginia?

VH: I would say that it does.

RJ: So then I'll ask you when we come to your interview, Virginia. I think these things are very interesting. There is a way that traditionally—by which I'm meaning until twenty or thirty years ago, at least in the twentieth century—in which the public and the private were kept separate. And academics and others tended not to press the distinction, or press the times people had crossed the distinction. But perhaps nowadays, people are more seeing the relevance of that. Dare I say that the biography of the great John Maynard Keynes tries to explore the extent to which his homosexuality affected his certain independence of mind in pursuing whole new theories of economic development relevant to the Depression.

JJH: That's interesting.

RJ: Let's turn back to the UN as it is written about. One of the questions we like asking in the interviews is what we call the "paths not taken." Any issues that the people we're interviewing had been fighting for, or realized at some point that there might have been a choice,

and the institution of events went one way—and if the paths not taken had been pursued, things might have been better. Do you look back in any of your work in the social division or on social welfare, and say to yourself, "If only I'd been able to persuade people in this line, or if only the UN or any of the governments had agreed with that, we might be in a better position today?"

JJH: Good gracious, it's so long ago. Nothing comes to my mind. Can you give me an example?

RJ: The one I had thought of was indeed this question of seeing a closer link between the economic and the social side. I suppose in the 1950s, economic influence was beginning to shift to the World Bank and the UN was left with technical assistance even though the UN had been arguing for SUNFED (Special UN Fund for Economic Development), a bigger financial role for itself. Might that have made a difference, if economic support and leadership had come more from the UN and less from the Bretton Woods institutions?

JJH: That's a hard question to answer. I can't identify any big difference that would have made.

RJ: Let me ask you about Dag Hammarskjöld, another great, great Swede. Do you have personal memories of him?

JJH: I admired him very much. He did his best to make a more efficient organization and one that was really recognized as important for the world, to have a strong United Nations. I sat on a committee that he ran personally for months on ways to make the UN more effective. And I admired his intellectual capacities and his leadership role. I think he was the best one that I worked under.

RJ: What particular points on this enormous and ever-perennial subject of UN reform was he pressing for?

JJH: You're stretching my memory.

RJ: That's the purpose of this exercise.

JJH: Ask your question again.

RJ: Well, in terms of any particular points that you recall Dag Hammarskjöld pressing for in terms of UN reform.

JJH: I should remember. I sat on the committee to reform the UN, but I don't remember what we did to reform it.

RJ: Do you remember him as being particularly insightful?

JJH: Yes.

RJ: Very sensitive to others?

JJH: Yes, that too.

RJ: Do you ever remember seeing him angry?

JJH: Never.

RJ: Do you ever remember a case when he was particularly sensitive to someone who was being criticized, at least indirectly, because of something, and the way he minimized the human sense of criticism or hurt?

JJH: No, I can't say that I have a specific memory of that. I admired him very much. He, I think, was the best of the ones I—

RJ: Do you remember any people who didn't admire him, who would say to people like you, "He's a woolly idealist, or he's a strange mystic. He's not practical. He's not down-to-earth enough. He gives too much attention to developing countries."

JJH: No, I must say that of the people I worked with, I can't think of an exception. We admired him.

RJ: Did the U.S. government ever say to you, though, "of course we admire him, but he's pressing for some things that aren't reasonable?"

JJH: Well, that wouldn't have moved me an inch. I've disagreed with the U.S. government much more than I did with his leadership.

RJ: Do you remember the U.S. ever putting you under any pressures?

JJH: They tried sometimes, which was quite alright. Other groups did too. They try to influence the secretariat, and we tried to keep an independence.

RJ: Do you remember any particular issues?

JJH: No, too long ago.

RJ: And during the McCarthy era? Because that wasn't quite the U.S. government, thank God.

JJH: Yes, it was tough. Some people had real troubles over that, for something that was way in their past. It was a bad, bad patch.

RJ: Hans Singer says that Trygve Lie, the first Secretary-General, had to be faulted for not standing up to McCarthy, as he could have.

JJH: I would agree with that.

RJ: That would be your position too.

JJH: I would agree. How is Hans?

RJ: Hans is personally in remarkably good form.

JJH: Good. If you see him again—

RJ: I will probably see him next week.

JJH: —give him my warm greetings. He's a very nice man.

RJ: Yes, very good. When you were appointed as director of the Bureau of Social Affairs in 1955, that was a meteoric rise, if I may say so again, for a woman. A number of times one has seen, from Joan Anstee, for example, people saying, "Yes, you'd be very good. We know you could do the job. But we really ought to have a man." In those days, they would say that rather clearly. Were you ever conscious of having to fight, or at least just maintain your dignity, in situations when you were being discriminated against as a highly talented woman?

JJH: I wasn't conscious of being discriminated against. I really wasn't. Of course, if they give a woman a job as a senior administrator, they always do that and put her in charge of something social.

RJ: Of course.

JJH: So that was a certain amount of discrimination. They think we're better suited for that. That's alright; it's an important part of the work.

RJ: And an important part of the social work, the concerns of the social division, did indeed relate to women—what would now be called "gender issues"—and the advancement of women and so forth. Do you remember those issues in any particular way being—particularly at that time, in the 1950s? I can imagine people would say, "Yes, but these countries—India has had long traditions of looking at women in a very different way from the way we do in America or in the industrial countries. Julia, you shouldn't press this. You need to give more attention to the cultural traditions of these countries." Do you remember that sort of argument?

JJH: No. It might have taken place, but I don't remember it.

RJ: How do you look upon the women's movement over your lifetime in the United States? We'll leave the UN just for a moment. It's not for me to say, I'm interviewing you. But

you've seen, surely, phenomenal transformations in attitudes to women, attitudes of women, expectations. Just tell me a little bit how you look upon that.

JJH: Well, of course, I'm delighted to see it. And I think a great deal of progress has been made over the last thirty years. I'm not conscious of it so much as a completely separate—I can't find a way to express myself well on this. Can you?

VH: It's not a completely separate phenomenon.

JJH: No. I think that's my problem.

VH: But it certainly covers a whole lot of fronts. My own view, for what it's worth, is that some of the feminists have gone kind of overboard. But basically, I think the feminist movement has produced an awful lot of good.

JJH: Yes. I never considered myself an active—

VH: Feminist?

JJH: Feminist.

VH: I agree. I never did either.

JJH: I think women should have their due and be able to have jobs they can do, not be excluded because they are women. But I really hadn't given too much thought to the problem.

VH: Well, I think we wouldn't be nearly where we are now if it hadn't been for organizations like NOW (National Organization for Women) and some feminist foundations. But, as we say, they sometimes go too far. But basically, I think a woman is better off because of them, rather than where we would have been without them.

RJ: If I might just summarize that, because what you maintain, Virginia, won't come over in the tape, at least not until I interview you. What I was hearing you say was that, though in some respects some feminists may have gone too far, surely the broad movement and the role

of feminists in it has meant that women are much better off than they would have otherwise been.

VH: That's a good summary.

RJ: I'm glad you say that's a good summary. The point I think I'd ask you, Julia, is, you may not have been a conscious feminist, but you were a pioneering woman. It may be that, though that was of the time, that you pioneered partly through who you were, what you did, what you achieved, in spite of a society, and even a UN system, which in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, even in the 1970s, had relatively few women in senior positions.

JJH: That's true.

RJ: And you should feel, presumably, rather pleased that you had a part in that.

JJH: Well, yes, if I proved that a woman can do a good job in a senior post. I think it is true that you have to have some examples, that she's not going to let her sex down.

RJ: You were actually the most senior woman in the UN?

JJH: For quite a long time.

RJ: Do you remember who then was appointed that was equal in formal seniority and rank to you? Was that in the 1960s? Because you were made an assistant secretary-general in 1955.

JJH: You know; I don't know.

RJ: We've done a little bit of homework. I think when you became director of the Bureau of Social Affairs.

JJH: Of course it was typical that it was social affairs. What year did that happen? Nineteen fifty-five, you say?

RJ: I think so.

JJH: And what was your question?

RJ: When another woman was appointed at the ASG (assistant secretary-general) level.

JJH: And when was that?

RJ: I don't know. We haven't done the homework to see that. Are you conscious of any detractors?

JJH: No, I'm not. Certainly I had a very loyal staff. And my colleagues who were at the same level certainly didn't treat me any differently than their male colleagues. I was, very often, the only woman in the senior staff. But I didn't let that go to my head. I tried to do my job. And, of course, when you put a woman in a senior position, you put her in something like social affairs.

RJ: What about some of the other women who aren't as senior, some of whom I have been privileged to know? Aida Gindy, for instance.

JJH: Oh, yes. She was a very good person and staff member. Have you seen her?

RJ: I have seen her, because I was in Egypt, actually last September, but I didn't see her then. I think I saw her a year and a half ago.

JJH: But she's well?

RJ: She's well and she's active. And she has a certain intellectual salon in Cairo.

JJH: Very good.

RJ: And she has been interviewed by some American professor who has been putting together a book of pioneers in social work. And he had a piece on Aida that I read.

JJH: Very good. I'm glad to hear about her.

RJ: What about Carmen **[Mayo?]**

JJH: Oh my goodness, I've lost track of Carmen.

RJ: Yes, so have I. But you refer in your memoirs to her being a strong and capable woman.

JJH: Yes, indeed.

RJ: I never knew her. Do you remember anything more about her?

JJH: No. What am I talking about at that point in the memoirs?

RJ: You said that Carmen, who felt very much at home in Mexico, later headed a population organization in that country and that she was the first director of, I suppose, the population division within the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA).

JJH: Yes, yes. She was. She was a very able woman. I haven't heard about her for several decades.

RJ: This was in a section where you referred to going to Latin America for your first trip in 1954 and 1955, when you visited Chile and the Economic Commission for Latin America. Do you have any memories or a sense of color on that?

JJH: I did a lot of traveling in that job.

RJ: Do you remember going to India for the first time?

JJH: No. I can't remember. What year was it that I went?

RJ: I don't know. Our research hasn't gone that far. Of course, a bit later in Latin America, came Fidel [Castro] and the Cuban Revolution, the *Alianza para Progreso* [Alliance for Progress]. Did those issues of the Cold War present great problems to you?

JJH: I don't remember that they did.

RJ: But the U.S. government position must have been rather annoyed with the UN if you didn't think they presented problems.

JJH: I think I did my part on displacing the U.S. I made a point of not giving them any advantage because we were of a certain nationality.

RJ: I worked as a young student at Yale in the fiscal and financial branch on African budgets. I remember, in 1960 and 1961, just during summer vacations, very strongly that if you were invited to any cocktail parties—of course that didn't happen much to me, it must have happened enormously to you.

JJH: Every night. It was awful.

RJ: But that you almost didn't go to your national cocktail party, lest it be seen as showing undue favoritism to your own nationals. Do you remember that?

JJH: No.

RJ: That was a rumor I heard as a young man. I don't think I was invited to any cocktail party in that time.

JJH: It really became a burden during the fall season, because there were parties every night. I lived out on Long Island when we were working in the city. It was overdone. There was a party almost every evening.

RJ: Did you find the parties useful for networking?

JJH: Yes, you did get something done. Otherwise, it was a real waste of time.

RJ: Yes, clearly you weren't a big drinker. I wanted just to ask about community development. You mention it, I think, in your memoir. But I know from my own experience that community development in the early and mid-1950s was promoted enormously by the Indian experience. Tell me a little bit about what you remember about community development.

JJH: I think it rather changed our emphasis in our technical assistance work. We became more conscious of what could be done from the community level, not to have all of our concern

about what the national governments were doing, and to encourage training people for that kind of work. The closer you were to the community, the better results that you could get. I know I was very enthusiastic about it at the time.

RJ: Perhaps it was participation, or the way the concerns of participation of communities in their own decisions, the direction of their own development, got expressed. But there was a philosophy. There was almost a religion of community development.

JJH: Yes. It took a pretty high place in what we were promoting.

RJ: And the economists probably didn't understand it at all.

JJH: That's right. They didn't know what in the world we were doing, what our concerns were. I thought it was very important for us to promote that kind of activity.

RJ: Yes. I haven't asked you about when you moved as the associate commissioner for technical cooperation operations.

JJH: I can hardly remember what I did in the capacity.

RJ: Would that have been with David Owen?

JJH: David was head of the economics department, of course.

RJ: But later technical cooperation. Perhaps I'm getting confused.

JJH: I'm very fuzzy about that.

RJ: Let's not worry too much about that one. I think, if you've got still some energy for a few more questions, why don't you tell me a little bit about moving from the UN into IPPF in the early 1970s, moving from, I suppose analysis and some leadership and action via technical assistance, to a much more focused and active role in IPPF, which surely at the time was somewhat controversial.

JJH: I'm pretty vague about what difference it made. Of course, my job as an administrator was not so much changed. But it was quite a different kind of organization. I had to get used to living in London and working in London. I look back at that era as a very pleasant part of my career. But it all seems a very long time ago, as indeed it is.

RJ: To me, the change in perspective on family planning issues is very remarkable and over my life, over the century, from times in which Mary Stokes and people like this who have been true social pioneers, and batted down, and criticized, and accused of immorality to a point now where, I think, in the mid-1990s at the International Conference on Population and Development, the issue was moved away from all the specifics of condoms and diaphragms and the mechanics of family planning, to issues of the status of women, choice, gender sensitivity, respect for partners in all forms of partnership. Does a lot of that resonate with your own experience?

JJH: Yes, I think that's so. I hadn't given it any thought. Have you sensed a change?

RJ: I think there has been. It's not just my sense. I think, if one asked Nafis Sadik—I'm not sure how much you had to do with Nafis.

JJH: We were good friends.

RJ: I think she would certainly say that there has been this amazing and proper shift from both the mechanics of contraception to human relations, gender sensitivity, more moves toward gender equality as being the essence of the issues.

JJH: That's progress.

RJ: That is progress. Do you have any sense of what, when you look back at your time in the IPPF, what you are particularly pleased that you achieved?

JJH: I haven't given it any thought. I really don't think I have any—

RJ: And earlier on, to go back to the UN, in the early 1950s, the UN, with its population commission, was very pioneering.

JJH: Yes it was.

RJ: And John Durand—you must remember him.

JJH: Yes I do. I don't know what's happened, and whether he's still alive.

RJ: I don't know. But are there particular memories you have of the contribution of the Population Division and the importance of its work?

JJH: I think it was important. I don't remember how early the UN established that division. I think fairly early on.

RJ: I think 1952/1953. So that's six or seven years after the UN was founded.

JJH: It certainly brought a great deal more attention to those problems. I've forgotten—who was the first director for that?

RJ: Was that John Durand?

JJH: Yes, I think it was.

RJ: And Ansley Cole. Did Ansley Cole, at Princeton, have much role?

JJH: He was in on it in the very beginning. But I can't remember him staying as a member of the Secretariat. I think he was on the committee—

RJ: Yes, that would be my expectation. We haven't actually looked up to see this, but I think he was always the academic serving as part-time advisor and consultant on occasion.

JJH: I'm sure he wasn't part of the senior staff.

RJ: Incidentally, I think his deputy, or his successor in Princeton, was rather annoyed at the Cairo conference in 1995, which Nafis Sadik had run, precisely on grounds that it had moved away from the importance of emphasizing family planning and pills and all of this. He told me

he felt it had been captured by the feminists arguing women's equality and gender respect and all these things, at the cost of failing to follow through on the family planning importance. I personally think he is totally wrong, even though he knows much more about it than I ever do, in part because we have seen the most dramatic declines in fertility rates in the last few years, faster than the skeptics ever projected in 1970. Fertility has been falling very, very rapidly.

JJH: They found out how to do it.

RJ: I think it's by not spending all your time imagining it's condoms and pills. It's motivation of people and motivating the men as well as the women. Nafis Sadik had an interview, an audience I think it's called, with his holiness the pope, shortly before that conference in 1994. And of course it didn't start from the easiest perspectives, given the Catholic Church's position. But he actually said to her, according to Nafis, "You, the women, are the problem because you are the temptresses." And she launched into him, and she said his holiness the pope was not used to anyone talking back to him, let alone a woman. I haven't let into you, Julia.

JJH: That will be fun.

RJ: Let me come to your—because I think the tape is beginning to run out—if you look back on your whole involvement with the UN, all the things you did, are there any particular events that stand out and make you particularly proud?

JJH: Good gracious. These are all things long ago. I can't identify any particular thing. I might wake up in the night and think of it, but I can't right now.

RJ: Someone put down here, "Having visited over 100 countries, do you believe the UN embodies the global spirit?" I don't know what they meant by that question.

JJH: Why don't we just say, "yes."

RJ: That's your debating skills emerging in the last minute.

JJH: How was it posed, the question?

RJ: Let's forget it. Someone also said I had to ask you, "Do you foresee a woman secretary-general in the near future?"

JJH: Heavens. No, I don't. I don't think the men have gotten that far along.

RJ: Very good.

JJH: I wish I could say yes. Would you be optimistic about a woman in that job?

VH: Not for a while. Not until we get a female in the presidency of the United States.

RJ: Yes. That would be the first move—a woman president in the United States.

VH: If we get that, then we can think about a woman for the UN.

JJH: Have the British ever had a woman prime minister?

VH: Yes, Margaret Thatcher.

JJH: Oh, yes.

RJ: Well some would say, "No." I'm not impugning her sex, but she did not have many female attributes or womanly attributes.

JJH: Tough, was she?

RJ: I don't mind her being tough. I think she was tough and wrong. Mrs. Thatcher presented many great difficulties for the women's movement, the feminist movement in Britain. She didn't stand for any of the women's issues. That made it easier for them to—

JJH: Disavow her.

RJ: Disavow her, yes. But I'm interested, just to end the interview, that Julia and Virginia, who is also in the room, that both of you, denying that you are feminists, eagerly look forward to the time when there might be a woman president in the United States.

JJH: I didn't make a proclamation on that. I don't think I've really thought about how important that is.

VH: The problem, as I see it, is that I haven't seen a woman that would make a good president.

JJH: You haven't? Not even among the mayors of the cities? They're in pretty short supply.

RJ: Does Alva Myrdal stick in mind as perhaps—no, surely Eleanor Roosevelt sticks in mind as the greatest woman of your personal experience? Perhaps not.

JJH: She's certainly high up on the ladder. They're both high up on the ladder. You mean in terms of what they did at the international level?

RJ: I was really thinking more as women leaders in a number of senses. Mrs. [Indira] Gandhi?

JJH: Oh yes. She's certainly a woman to be admired.

RJ: But I was really thinking in the category of who might make a great woman president for the United States. So if you're thinking of women leaders who were in the category, none available to be president of the United States at the moment—

VH: There have been great women in the past.

RJ: Indeed.

JJH: Who are you thinking about?

VH: I'm thinking about Eleanor Roosevelt. But whether she would have made a good president or not—

RJ: Is a separate issue. Well, I think we should say Julia, thank you very, very much from the bottom of my heart for that interview. And for all the things you've done, and for your

lovely memoir which gives a lot more detail on many of the issues we were talking about. So that was Julia Henderson being interviewed by Richard Jolly in Venice on June 21, 2001.

VH: You should add that it's Venice, Florida.

JJH: Yes. Venice, Florida, lest anyone think we had been taking a quick holiday on the side to Italy. So Julia, thank you very much indeed.

JJH: I've enjoyed it.

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