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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

JOHAN KAUFMANN

BY

THOMAS G. WEISS

The Hague, 11 and 12 November 1999

This text was reviewed by Nico Schriyver in April 2000 with the permission of Mrs. Kaufmann, following the death of Johan Kaufmann in December 1999.

THOMAS G. WEISS: Thomas Weiss is interviewing Johan Kaufmann in The Hague on the 11th of November.

Let me just begin, Johan, by going back a bit in time. I was interested in your background in the introduction to your book about the experience in the inter-war years. I wonder if you might just expand a bit on that. In particular, what it was like during the war? And what did that have on your subsequent career?

JOHAN KAUFMANN: Well, thinking about the form of the economic and social sectors of the UN, it was already fairly early and because everything is related to everything, and that at the end of the Marshall Plan something else had to happen.

TGW: I guess I had in mind what it was like for you personally to have been in France and Spain, and part of the underground and what precisely, from those experiences, pushed you towards the career as an economist and as a diplomat and whether those experiences were important in the development of your own ideas?

JK: Well, at the end of the Marshall Plan, all problems are related that cannot be solved bilaterally, and that a multitude of multilateral challenges are available. And people started to think about this, including me. And so from that grew this insight that we'll have to make some progress in international decision-making processes.

TGW: It is unusual actually to be concerned with decision-making processes, negotiations, and the like. You and I actually are among some of the few people on earth who are fascinated by these things. What led you to focus on these, what I will say are important aspects, instead of pursuing your career as an economist or in economics?

JK: Well, I think I felt that there was a sort of vacuum there that was worthwhile to fill up. And that led to my concern with these things, I think. My feeling that one does something rather useful, and this might be more useful than something else.

TGW: You mentioned that your own parents and relatives and you yourself were in France and Spain and Switzerland. What happened to the rest of your family during the war?

JK: Well, my sister, like me, managed to escape the Germans and my father was arrested. And my mother also escaped. That is about it.

TGW: Did you all come back to Holland after the war?

JK: Yes and no. I was sent to Washington right away, you know, from Switzerland. By Paris to Washington, because they felt they needed me urgently there.

TGW: In any way did you feel that your own background, which had exposed you during the war as a Jew, pushed you in any particular way in your career, or is this just something that is irrelevant?

JK: No, I think that it didn't push me any particular way. Certain choices you have to make at certain moments and that is about what happened.

TGW: One of the events that comes out in some of our other interviews is the importance of the Depression in the 1930s as part of an intellectual heritage. Do you yourself have any strong memories of this? Did this have anything to do with the way you studied economics or pursued economics?

JK: I think the fact that I had been in the Depression causes one to believe that something has to be done and you cannot sit back and do nothing.

TGW: You mentioned during the war that some thinking was being done about the United Nations. Do you recall during your studies that the League of Nations experience, for example, was an important subject among students or in the curriculum?

JK: No, I don't recall it was any particular subject of special importance. I don't think so.

TGW: What about the sort of thoughts of John Maynard Keynes and others who were attempting to think about the postwar period, the shape of the postwar economy, the shape of postwar economic institutions? Was this a subject that was coming up among students or diplomats after you entered the foreign service?

JK: Well, I don't think it was a subject which came up especially. Of course, one felt that if something has to be done one has to know what has to be done and give some thought to that. But I can't say there was any pre-existing plan.

TGW: What was it like, actually, to be in Vichy France? I've done a lot of reading about this myself. But I just wonder if you have any recollections of those moments?

JK: Well, the strange thing is that in Vichy France, I wasn't arrested or anything. They permitted us to go ahead and do whatever it was we wanted to do. And there was no effort to push one in a particular direction.

TGW: So it was in some ways a liberating feeling after having escaped from Holland?

JK: Yes.

TGW: That is what many French authors also say.

JK: Yes.

TGW: Well, let's move now to your first assignment in Washington. What exactly was the atmosphere in Washington in 1945 or 1946? Was there an excitement about either

Washington-based institutions or the UN in New York? I've noticed among colleagues who lived through that period more fervor or more excitement about the notion of international organization. Do you have any recollections about the spirit, for example, that was present either in your own diplomatic service or in Washington or New York at that time?

JK: Well, there was a general feeling that we had to do something that would benefit the occasion, that the new period was starting. And, well, that something should be done. That was certainly the case.

TGW: And so you chose to—or actually the government asked you to—focus on economic affairs. And one of your first assignments was related to the Marshall Plan. What happened in terms of Dutch-American relations and the Marshall Plan?

JK: The Marshall Plan was, of course, an event of considerable importance, and it sort of influenced us all to be as positive as possible about developments and to do something.

TGW: I guess as someone who was born just before the beginning of the Marshall Plan, in retrospect it seems like such an important and enlightened view of self-interest. I just wondered whether you thought that something had changed in U.S. thinking over the years, or whether that was just such an unusual moment that the world war had pushed people to think in ways that they had not thought before?

JK: I was pushed into thinking into new directions.

TGW: And what happened between the Marshall Plan and something that—by the time you had left Washington—had actually begun, namely, McCarthyism? The atmosphere must have been quite different at that point in time or the thinking must have been quite different.

JK: Yeah, well, McCarthyism was supposed to be a bad thing. It was merely a domestic problem within the United States with a few international implications.

TGW: Was this a subject that was debated within the embassy at that time? What kinds of instructions came from The Hague in trying to figure out what was going on in Washington? What kind of queries came from The Hague?

JK: Well, I don't recall that any specific instructions came. I don't think there was much of that as far as I remember.

TGW: Because, in fact, there were repercussions in New York, certainly within the United Nations in terms of the staff, in terms of the Secretary-General, et cetera. But this was not a problem in U.S.-Dutch bilateral relations?

JK: No, I don't think so.

TGW: Fine. Do you recall—or what do you recall of the initial debate about GATT (General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade)? You were at the first GATT round and the proposal of Keynes and others of course had been that there would be a third element in the Bretton Woods institutions, and the International Trade Organization never got off the ground. What do you recall from that time in relationship to the plusses and minuses of GATT and the plusses and minuses of what now is a World Trade Organization that was then supposed to have been an International Trade Organization?

JK: GATT was supposed to be very important and I think the effort was to pursue progress in GATT as much as possible, and—and, well to get something moving.

TGW: Because in the literature, of course, you may recall that I worked at UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development). And when I look back and look at GATT, of course one of the main concerns was to have a body that would look at global trade and finance,

and obviously GATT was considerably less than that. But you don't recall this being of importance?

JK: No.

TGW: One of the themes in our work in general is a tension or a rivalry; however, you might describe it, between the Washington-based financial institutions and the United Nations. Was there? Or what happened in the early years when you were in Washington observing these institutions from the Dutch embassy?

JK: Well, I've been in the front, of course, of their own life and the embassy had its own life. But you had a regular exchange of views. You have information meetings at the embassy where the Dutch representative came and that was, I think, of some importance to be sure you were very well informed.

TGW: But do you recall any discussion of the relative importance of the United Nations in New York versus the Bretton Woods institutions?

JK: Well, there were some limited discussions, but the feeling was that each was what it was. I'm not sure we tried to change it too much. It was practically not possible to make real modifications anyway. So we had to accept the way each outfit was.

TGW: I suppose the Cold War was already fairly evident at this point. How would you describe the impact of the onset of the Cold War on your own thinking or on the Dutch government's thinking on bilateral relations between the United States and the Netherlands?

JK: Well, I think the Cold War didn't make too much difference. Bilateral relations were, of course, important. But there wasn't too much explicit desire to change things, I think.

TGW: And in your own thinking, at this point in time did you think any more about

an academic career or were you now focused on the foreign office?

JK: Well, I was more focused on the foreign office.

TGW: Did you keep up with academic literature?

JK: To some extent a little bit. Not too much.

TGW: Subsequently when you began your first book on United Nations decision-making, when did you begin thinking about doing that, after you became involved in New York or were you at this point still thinking about writing some academic things?

JK: Well, the book originated fairly naturally. In fact, there is sort of a vacuum there which meant that such a book had to be written. So then I decided to write it.

TGW: Well, I suppose we'll get there after you arrive in New York later. But you weren't thinking about writing a book when you were in the embassy in Washington, in the late 1940s? You were just concentrating on bilateral relations and your job there?

JK: Yes. That is right.

TGW: Well, maybe we could move ahead to your next assignment in Mexico City. What was it like to be in Mexico in the early 1950s? I mean, this was a period of time in which the Netherlands, as I recall, didn't really have any important relations with Latin American countries. How were you assigned to Mexico and how did you feel that this was going to improve, or help, your career?

JK: Well, Mexico looked like an interesting change and I thought it would be helpful to my career. So I made the best of it I could including Mexico. We stayed there for two and a half years—autumn 1953 to spring 1956.

TGW: 1953 to 1956?

JK: Three years.

TGW: This was your first direct exposure, I take it, with a country that later became called part of the Third World. Did any of your own, or the Dutch government's ideas get formulated within these contexts? Do you recall your own attitudes about, say, development or foreign aid which would come up subsequently in New York? What happened in Mexico? Do you have any recollection of events or sensations or experiences there that had an impact on your own thinking?

JK: Mexico was an interesting experience. I met [Jan] Tinbergen there and that was very interesting and useful.

TGW: Well, actually in Hans Singer's note at the outset of your book on selected writings, he indicates that the encounter with Tinbergen, and helping out on this mission, somehow resulted in your next job in New York. And so I was just wondering the extent to which that was true, or how that happened?

JK: At this moment I don't remember that.

TGW: Actually, when did you meet Hans Singer?

JK: I think originally when he worked for the UN because he was working for the UN when I met him.

TGW: But this would have been in New York?

JK: Yes, in New York.

TGW: During the next phase of your career?

JK: Yes.

TGW: And you have remained friends all these years?

JK: Yes. I haven't had much contact lately.

TGW: He's still well. And he was interviewed by Richard Jolly for this project. And of course his own ideas were quite essential. What do you think of people like Tinbergen and Singer? How do you feel that their ideas worked their way through the United Nations? I mean what is the role of individuals with big ideas in the United Nations?

JK: It is really important that individuals have big ideas like that, they get some attention. That is what happened at the UN too. And so these ideas ripened and it became generally accepted thinking. That was certainly the case.

TGW: Well, was it the power of the ideas? The power of the personalities?

JK: Yes, both. Yes, the power of the ideas and the personalities.

TGW: So this interlude in Mexico City was in some ways quite different from what went on earlier in your career and what went on later in your career, in the sense that once you moved to New York, you began focusing for the next twenty years of your life and most of your writing on multilateral diplomacy. How would you characterize the differences between being a diplomat who focuses on bilateral diplomacy versus one who focuses on multilateral diplomacy?

JK: Well, there are a lot of other aspects that have a much lighter reason and that changes the whole situation.

TGW: In what specific ways? The kinds of things you are reading or thinking about or what you do in your day-to-day tasks?

JK: Both, I think. Both thinking and what one does.

TGW: During this time in Mexico—well, actually just when you were in Washington, the Korean War began, and when you were in Mexico, the Korean War ended. This was a seminal event for the United Nations. How did the Korean War influence the Dutch

government's approach to either the United Nations, or if you recall, if it had any incidence on your work in Mexico City?

JK: The Korean War was, of course, an important element which one had to give a lot of significance to, and in that way there was a general influence, perhaps not too much of a specific influence.

TGW: But you don't recall this leading to any particular kinds of instructions from The Hague?

JK: No, I don't think so. The Hague wasn't that much interested.

TGW: Mexico subsequently became one of the champions of the Third World. This was not yet a period when decolonization or independence struggles really occurred, which began a little later. But do you recall this being a subject of bilateral diplomacy at the time?

JK: Yes, I think it was a general subject of interest of everybody concerned.

TGW: But Mexico was not trying to push this subject in particular?

JK: No, I don't think so.

TGW: Oh, I see. Well, when you get back to New York in 1956, this is really the beginning of a long both physical and intellectual association with multilateral diplomacy. Almost upon your arrival the Cold War is obviously in full swing. And Suez arrives on the scene. What happened or what do you recall about events in and around the United Nations at that time?

JK: I think the situation was a considerable influence in general thinking. The whole Suez situation was a considerable influence in general thinking. Apart from that I don't recall anything specific.

TGW: Well, Suez and Hungary were almost simultaneous. The United Nations was obviously at that point at the center of international relations and international headlines.

JK: Right.

TGW: Was it an exciting time to be in New York?

JK: It certainly was, yes. The whole Suez situation was important and the Hungary situation was important.

TGW: But the Soviet invasion of Hungary—did this crystallize in your own thinking or other diplomats' thinking in New York, the nature of East-West tensions?

JK: Yes, it became more clear that the Soviets were pursuing their own particular egotistical objectives. In that sense it just is a clarifying factor.

TGW: So, had it been unclear before? Did people give the Soviets the benefit of the doubt or something?

JK: Well, often, yes, they were still feeling the Soviets had good intentions, it became more clear after these events.

TGW: Almost simultaneously in Bandung a conference (Asian-African Conference) was held, which later became known as a Non-Aligned Movement. What was the perception of the importance of this event? It would subsequently change the way international relations were organized. But at the time do you recall much publicity given to this or that this was a subject of discussion in a coffee bar in New York?

JK: Well, the Non-Aligned Movement was not too much of a subject for discussion, I think. It was something that happened more or less naturally, but not something of the greatest importance.

TGW: It was merely a natural progression. Decolonization and independence were moving in this direction?

JK: I think so, yes.

TGW: Of course, the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union over membership in the United Nations and the Bandung conference was a major subject subsequently in academic literature. What do you recall of the discussions about who enters and who does not enter the United Nations? And what was the Dutch government's position toward new members?

JK: Well, I think actually the Dutch government thought as many as possible should become members as soon as possible as a general principle.

TGW: So you were not asked to, say, lobby the United States to ease up on its bilateral confrontation with the Soviets over not letting new countries into the United Nations?

JK: No, I don't think so, as far as I recall.

TGW: One of the general subjects that I was interested in is your own ability to continue thinking as an academic, or writing. You were at Columbia part-time at this juncture, a visiting scholar. And you wrote a 1959 article on interdisciplinary approaches, which is a subject that became popular much later. How did you maintain an interest? I find very few diplomats or UN officials who manage to balance the academy and a professional career as a practitioner.

JK: Right, I continued to have this interest and that is, with experience, what happens.

TGW: What was it like to be at Columbia at this point? How was the subject of the United Nations treated by the faculty and by students? Was this a subject that interested them?

JK: Yes, generally it had some interest but not an overwhelming interest. There wasn't too much activity deriving from that, as I recall.

TGW: Were you beginning to think about your subsequent book, or not at this point? You said this grew rather naturally from your experiences in New York and in Geneva.

JK: You mean to write the book?

TGW: Yes, which came out in 1968, but were you thinking already about writing such a book in the late 1950s or early 1960s?

JK: Yes, I gave it some general thought.

TGW: So you were taking notes and continuing to read?

JK: Of course the book by Hadwen on how UN decisions are made.

TGW: That was the 1968 book. How did you meet John Hadwen? He was in the Canadian mission in New York?

JK: Yes, that is right, yes.

TGW: How did the two of you decide to write a book?

JK: Well, I think we had come to the conclusion that we had both discovered experiences that were worthwhile to write the book for which there seemed to be a possible market.

TGW: And it sold decently over the years?

JK: Yes. Well, not—

TGW: You didn't make a fortune on royalties from this book?

JK: No, nothing of—no.

TGW: So was it just your sense that there was a hole in the market and that it should be written that pushed you to do this?

JK: Yes.

TGW: The Dutch government already was taking a role in pushing what would later become known as, I guess, foreign aid or development assistance. What was the motivating factor in the Dutch government's leadership on this issue?

JK: Well, I think they felt it was of importance and they took the initiative, rather than do nothing, something like that.

TGW: But it was important to push—this was hardly a subject that everyone wanted to hear about. So maybe we should spend a moment on your role in the Council of the UN Special Fund. This was not a popular subject in Washington, I know.

JK: No.

TGW: What happened during debates in New York on the Special Fund?

JK: Well, the Special Fund was considered something possibly desirable. The Dutch government thought it was desirable. The United States did not think it was very desirable.

TGW: Why?

JK: I think their problem was because the U.S. in general didn't want too much international involvement. They had a general preference for the Bretton Woods institutions, and that there wasn't a need for any new organizations.

TGW: Well, doubts about new organizations, of course, have been a traditional American policy. But what changed in their attitudes? I mean, subsequently the IDA and the International Finance Corporation, et cetera, came on stream. Was this a creative adaptation in Washington? And what was the role of the debates in New York about SUNFED (Special UN Fund for Economic Development) and the eventual creation of new windows in Washington?

JK: Well, Washington wasn't too much interested. But the Dutch and others felt that something had to be done. And that is how a certain amount of action took place. Not much, though.

TGW: But, how do you think ideas, in this case of a Special Fund, comes up in New York, is debated, was pushed, didn't have a receptive audience, at least in relationship to Washington? What happens between this sort of new idea and its eventual implementation in Washington? What was the importance of the debate in New York that you chaired or for which you acted as vice chairman, on the Special Fund, and what was eventually created in Washington? Do you see that the idea and the negotiations were then picked up in Washington?

JK: It got picked up in Washington, probably unavoidable. And so that is how finally some action took place.

TGW: And did delegates in New York, to the extent that one can generalize, did delegates in New York feel relieved or pleased? Or was this a source of disappointment?

JK: They were pleased that at least some action took place.

TGW: And in some ways the fact that the Bretton Woods institutions were involved meant that there would be substantial financing as opposed to probably what would have happened in New York. Did anyone actually think this was probably a better idea to have it linked to the Bretton Woods institutions as opposed to the United Nations?

JK: Well, I don't recall that specifically.

TGW: This is also the moment when the First Development Decade is launched. Were you still in New York when President [John F.] Kennedy made this proposal or had you just moved to Geneva?

JK: I think I had just moved to Geneva, yes.

TGW: Well, I mean, was there an excitement with that announcement, where delegates, if you were—

JK: Yes, there was some light excitement, not too much though.

TGW: Really? I guess in retrospect, it seems like such an earthshaking idea, particularly for the United States to take an initiative on this development. But you don't recall this as being seen as a breakthrough of any sort?

JK: No, I don't think it was seen as a big breakthrough.

TGW: Were you still in New York when the Congo became independent, or had you moved to Geneva?

JK: I don't recall. I think I had gone to Geneva already.

TGW: Well, how did this form of independence and the relative chaos in the United Nations' role and trying to do something about it, how did this influence your and other diplomats' thinking about the possibilities for the United Nations to play a role in world affairs?

JK: Well, I think it was probably thought of as a generally positive effect, something of use.

TGW: And the sort of black eye that resulted subsequently, was this—

JK: Black eye?

TGW: Well, in the sense that the United Nations did not, after the assassination and the problems with the UN force, it certainly was not seen as an important player. It seemed to have botched it, in retrospect. Of course, the ONUC (UN Peacekeeping Operation in the Congo) operation, I think received decent marks, but I think at the time, particularly in Africa, I think it was seen as an awkward problem. Did this have any influence?

JK: No.

TGW: Do you recall Ghana gaining its independence? This was the first independence of an African country, actually, in 1957. How was this seen in New York? Was this seen as an important event? In retrospect Ghana was seen as an important event in the independence struggle. Do you recall the reaction of diplomats in New York to [Kwame] Nkrumah and the independence of Ghana?

JK: Well, I think it was considered of some importance, but there wasn't too much attention given to it.

TGW: So this is another one of these times in which, in retrospect, it seems more important actually than—

JK: Perhaps, yes.

TGW: Perhaps it was?

JK: Yes.

TGW: That is interesting. When you were sitting in New York, do you recall the tensions or what are subsequently seen as tensions between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions which were *du jure*—but not really *de facto*—really part of the United Nations?

JK: Right.

TGW: Do you recall discussions among diplomats or among secretariat officials about the relative roles of these two sets of multilateral institutions?

JK: Well, the one side won't accept it, but the Bretton Woods institutions had their own task, and they changed. So the idea was more to fill up some sort of vacuum left by the Bretton Woods institutions rather than to push them out.

TGW: What was the vacuum, what exactly?

JK: I think the vacuum was to give more attention to low-cost foreign aid, to concessional activities. That was a sort of vacuum.

TGW: Why were these ideas and notions more important, or seen as more important, in New York than in Washington?

JK: Well, I think the Washington institutions wanted to lead their own life, and they didn't want too much interference. And in New York they felt that there was a vacuum with which something should be done, something like that.

TGW: But what about the membership of the two organizations? What was the impact of the infusion of many developing countries and the organizational structure in which there was one state, one vote, rather than the weighted system in Washington? In your view, did this explain at least part of the interest in these subjects in New York?

JK: Yes, I think in New York the thought was that there was a vacuum that should be filled up in time with the Bretton Woods institutions.

TGW: But why did the membership in New York push these issues, whereas the membership in Washington was reluctant to consider them until subsequently?

JK: I think that in New York they felt that something could be done, and therefore should be done. The Washington institutions had felt no need to have any big change.

TGW: Was this a result of donor domination in Washington, or was there a more equitable playing field in New York?

JK: I don't dare to answer that. I don't know, I'm not sure.

TGW: I see. Before you got to Geneva, what were or how did the existence of the Non-Aligned Movement, which began in 1955 and another conference in 1961, make itself felt? When you were in Geneva at the beginning of UNCTAD, how did this group of countries

become a major force? How was their presence felt in New York at the end of the 1950s, or early 1960s?

JK: Well, you mean how was the presence of the Washington institutions felt?

TGW: No. How was the presence of the Non-Aligned Movement demonstrated, and what would become later the G-77, when you were in Geneva? What was their agenda? How were their concerns present in New York debates at the end of the 1950s to early 1960s? Do you recall how this had an impact on either discussions, decision-making, or the agendas?

JK: Well, there was some thought of some importance, but nothing much to be done, I think, just a feeling things would go the way they go anyway.

TGW: So it was not really the Non-Aligned Movement so much as the eventual call for a Conference on Trade and Development in 1962 that was crucial?

JK: Yes.

TGW: That in review put the agenda of developing countries squarely in front of the United Nations?

JK: Yes, yes, exactly. I think that there was certainly importance or multi-interest in developing countries.

TGW: Perhaps we should move ahead to Geneva. You were there during an exciting period from 1961 to 1969. How would you characterize the differences in the atmosphere of negotiations in New York versus Geneva?

JK: Well, in Geneva there was probably more of some sort of idealism that something should be done to try to change things. That was the main difference probably.

TGW: The institutions that are based in Geneva are visible. It is now I suppose called the humanitarian capital, but it is certainly the economic and social capital in the sense of the

presence of some specialized agencies—the ILO (International Labour Organization), WHO (World Health Organization), et cetera. And ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) meets there every other year. It is seen as the center for economic and social discussions as well. Does this mean, because this is more the agenda of developing countries, that this is their capital? How would you explain the presence of “idealism,” as you have called it, versus the focus in New York which tended to be more on obviously security than on the issues of development that were of concern to so-called underdeveloped countries?

JK: Well, I think there was a feeling that one could use the situation as it was and try to come out with a better understanding rather than do nothing.

TGW: Well, perhaps the better way to ask this is what happened in Geneva in and around the first sets of discussions leading up, in a preparatory way, to UNCTAD? Were you involved in the preparatory discussions?

JK: Yes, I think I was a little bit involved.

TGW: And at the first UNCTAD?

JK: Yes, the feeling was that there could be an answer to various problems.

TGW: This definitely was not the view of the United States?

JK: No, no, the United States did not feel it was necessary.

TGW: How did developing countries, which by this time are in the organization—there is a substantial number of them—1977 and more—how did they get their agenda to you, now the permanent representative of the Netherlands? When they came to see you, how did they present their positions?

JK: I think, they just presented their positions. It is possible they gave a bid of some sort, but their views were fairly well-known, so there wasn't very much new to it.

TGW: What were there views?

JK: Well, their views were that trade and development should get more attention than was happening in the existing situation.

TGW: But earlier when you had been associated with GATT, instead of an International Trade Organization (ITO), this was the concrete measure. "It was better than nothing," as I recall you saying. How had your attitude or the attitude of other countries changed now a decade later, or a decade and a half later, in relationship to a new organization? It wasn't an ITO, but it was an UNCTAD.

JK: Yes. Well, I think the feeling was that something like UNCTAD was useful. There was no reason to oppose it. And so they were positive in their views that they should support the establishment of UNCTAD. And that is how UNCTAD was established.

TGW: But originally it was conceived as a "conference" which would indicate that it was supposed to be a temporary or a one-shot affair.

JK: Yes.

TGW: When and why did this become an organization, instead of a conference?

JK: I think that quite quickly they saw that just a conference was not enough and that you had to make it an organization. That happened very quickly at that time.

TGW: When did the U.S. attitude then change?

JK: Well, the U.S. gradually accepted the situation, maybe after a year or so. And then the U.S. didn't oppose it.

TGW: The group system, which became codified and was in the multi-volume sets of UNCTAD documents, when did Group B, or the developed countries begin functioning? Do you recall? I mean, was there a group, a developed countries group?

JK: I don't remember exactly when it began, but it certainly began more or less at that time.

TGW: Was Group B cohesive in any way?

JK: Well, it was cohesive in sort of a passive way, but there was nothing much not to be together. There was no great fervor to be overly active.

TGW: To act as a group, whereas the developing countries were trying to act as a group?

JK: Yes.

TGW: Once developing countries acted as a group, did this make the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) countries or group be more persuasive?

JK: Yes, they also had at least to develop a minimum of activity.

TGW: Who organized the meetings of Group B? How were they called?

JK: They were called at the request of any government. They didn't have any particular procedure. If somebody wanted a meeting of Group B, there was a meeting of Group B.

TGW: Who serviced it?

JK: I think the country who called most, for it also serviced it.

TGW: So there was no secretariat?

JK: No, as far as I remember.

TGW: When did you meet Raul Prebisch? Was that at this time also?

JK: I don't recall, but I met Prebisch very early. I met him also in Latin America at a meeting where I had been sent—the ECLAC, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. There I met Prebisch.

TGW: What is your recollection of him?

JK: He was an impressive figure, of course. He had exquisite views and was somebody who knew what he wanted.

TGW: What was his role during the lead up to UNCTAD? Was he obviously going to be the eventual Secretary-General? How effective or ineffective was he with delegates in Geneva and elsewhere?

JK: Well, I think he was fairly effective in convincing them that something like UNCTAD should be set up. He pressed for that. He knew what he wanted. He was usually listened to.

TGW: Was it the force of his ideas or the force of his personality that worked?

JK: A combination of both, I think.

TGW: And in Singer's case?

JK: Well, Singer too was, because his views and his attitude were influential.

TGW: But in his case it was more his views than his personality?

JK: Yes.

TGW: Well, when the two got together to do work, was this a dynamic duo?

JK: Yes, it was, yes. It certainly was.

TGW: What was the debate about the establishment of UNRISD (UN Research Institute for Social Development)? The Dutch government was interested in this institution?

JK: Yes.

TGW: How did that occur? Whose idea was it to put together this institute?

JK: I think Jan Tinbergen was very much behind it.

TGW: But what was it supposed to do and why? And what was the need for such an institution? Why couldn't the United Nations itself conduct the kinds of research that were proposed?

JK: The UN could have done it, but didn't do it. So it was always easier to make a new institution than to use existing ones. That is how it also originated. Nobody was very much against it. And nobody was very much in favor of it. So those who wanted it got it accepted.

TGW: Why is it that one needs to create a new institution? I ask this question not simply because the United States is usually against such new bodies. Why is it that UN or other institutions tend toward sclerosis and when one wants a new idea pushed or wants a new approach it is easier to establish a new institution?

JK: It is easier to get interested in new institutions than to try to go on with the old ones. So new ones seem to fill some sort of need, even though there may be no actual need for it. Something like that happens all the time. People feel they must create something new rather than to use the existing.

TGW: And was the government of the Netherlands excited by this notion of an Institute for Social Development? It certainly put money into it, but what persuaded the government that this was a good idea?

JK: Well, it was—it seemed that was also an influence of Jan Tinbergen, that it was a generally good idea, and it might be something useful. And all these people were in favor of setting up something.

TGW: And you participated in the study that led to its establishment.

JK: Yes.

TGW: I recall your being a consultant to headquarters, but I wasn't quite sure—

JK: I was involved, yes. I was consulted.

TGW: And how was it different being a permanent representative as opposed to being a member of the staff? What kind of impact did this have on your own approach to issues?

JK: Probably as a representative I showed independence which one does not have as a member of staff.

TGW: To what extent did instructions for UNCTAD or ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) or anything else come from The Hague, and to what extent were you yourself responsible for the position?

JK: Well, it was often the position that one could suggest to The Hague a position which they would accept, which would happen many times.

TGW: I have the impression that larger countries have more problems in taking initiatives at the level of the permanent mission than smaller countries. That is they have bigger staff, their governments are more important. More instructions must come from capital. Is there any truth to that, or does this just vary country by country?

JK: Well, I think it is different from country to country but generally it is true, yes.

TGW: Did you have more independence in the 1960s than in the 1970s or 1980s? Were permanent representatives, say, more independent earlier than later? Did communications help or hinder independence of the permanent representatives? Do you recall how conference diplomacy began to change subsequently? I'm not quite sure when the term was coined, but the rules of the United Nations were in the group system, which clearly became codified at UNCTAD. But when did this system, or so-called system—in which you had developing countries and then developed countries and then the Second World of the Soviet Bloc, then

China somewhere else—when did it become the only way of doing business in the United Nations?

JK: Oh, that happened, I think, pretty soon after people were interested in these problems, so I don't exactly know what year, but it happened fairly naturally.

TGW: But as a result of UNCTAD it then became just a generalized way of doing business?

JK: That is right. Yes.

TGW: So that whether it was Geneva or New York, or another conference city, this just became the way of doing business?

JK: Yes.

TGW: Do you recall what kinds of relationships there were between the two agendas of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77? I mean in principle the Non-Aligned Movement started out around security issues, whereas the Group of 77 was more economic. But what happened so that they became more or less the same thing within a decade?

JK: Well, they saw that each of these issues deserves attention and that you shouldn't try to push one ahead of the other. So in that sense again you are living together. It became a natural thing. Something like that.

TGW: Not only by the first UNCTAD, but certainly by the time of the second UNCTAD virtually all countries had become independent. A few exceptions. But how did this influx of a large number of countries change the way that business was conducted in international gatherings? Was the group system seen as an important way of doing business? The fact that you are already 125 countries in one group would have made a pretty messy way of doing business, so was the Group of 77 then seen as a useful device?

JK: It was a fairly useful device, yes.

TGW: The OECD actually becomes the same as Group B. Was this important in terms of servicing the conference and negotiating needs of developed countries?

JK: The OECD was important because it was there and could always be used to do various things, so in that sense the OECD was of some importance.

TGW: When you say various things, what kinds of things did the OECD try to do? Was it their research capacity or their administrative capacity?

JK: It was both research and administrative that could be useful things at times.

TGW: What happened specifically when Dag Hammarskjöld died? In retrospect, and even at the time, he seems like one of the more exciting and dynamic Secretaries-General. How did his death and the interregnum before U Thant was appointed influence the way that multilateralism operated?

JK: The feeling was that multilateralism certainly shouldn't be decreased, it should be increased. And that Dag Hammarskjöld's example was a good example and should serve as something to be used by his successor.

TGW: And in the discussion about who should replace him, were you and Geneva consulted?

JK: No, we weren't that much consulted about that. It was mostly a New York decision.

TGW: At about this time, I'm trying to recall, you did some lectures on conference diplomacy in East Africa. How did this occur? Did you take leave or was this just part of the ministry's expectation?

JK: I had to use my summer vacation to give the lectures at Makerere University in Kampala.

TGW: I'm interested to go back to an earlier question about not only your ability, but your interest in wearing two hats. That is as a diplomat and in this case as a lecturer. But as somebody who could contribute on the literature about international relations, what pushed you to do this?

JK: Well, I think what pushed me was probably the feeling that this was something useful and should be done.

TGW: Well, lots of people claim they are too busy or that the life of a diplomat is already hectic enough, that they have no time, or that they are unable to pursue the kind of reading and writing necessary to maintain a quasi-academic career. You didn't find this to be the case?

JK: No, probably not. It was no particular problem.

TGW: In and around the development debates, what happened between the first UNCTAD in 1964, the main conference—it was then established—and the second UNCTAD in 1968? Do you recall the nature of the development debates at that time? Where I would like to take this is that you are quite concerned about the, I think you call it, the “semantics” of international relations and international negotiations. When did the G-77 turn more abrasive and more aggressive, which you saw as being counterproductive, or at least not as productive as it might have been?

JK: The G-77 felt strongly about their own world. They tended to exaggerate it a bit and that led to a situation where—the situation of the position of the G-77.

TGW: But how would you describe the position of the G-77?

JK: One which was to strengthen as much as possible developing countries without too much respect for other positions. That was more or less their situation.

TGW: But did the fact that they were so numerous contribute to this notion of solidarity and energy and what youngsters today would now call “in your face”? There was no longer a sense of the same kind of decorum that there has been earlier. What exactly contributed to this change in attitude?

JK: I think that many had felt that they should play their own role and not to worry too much about other institutions. The feeling that they should play their own role.

TGW: In terms of the development debates, you were in Geneva, and about at this time UNDP (UN Development Programme) is established, and UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization) is also established. What do you recall as being the important issues in leading to new institutions?

JK: There was always the tendency to establish a new institution rather than to use the existing one, because certain people want to play a role in a new institution. So they said let's make a new institution rather than using the existing ones.

TGW: And as the Dutch government had been supportive of SUNFED and supportive of UNRISD and other kinds of new institutions, the idea that there would be now a consolidated development program or there would be an Industrial Development Organization was seen as a positive thing?

JK: Yes, It was seen as more or less a positive thing, yes.

TGW: And as a natural development not as something to be resisted?

JK: Yes.

TGW: And do you recall needing to mobilize support within OECD?

JK: No, small countries tended to support it. The United States didn't want any change. But the smaller countries certainly were in favor of some specific action. So the pressure for a SUNFED and the Special Fund gradually grew.

TGW: What is there about smaller countries that makes them more inclined to support multilateral issues?

JK: Well, because they feel that small countries have a bigger say in multilateral organizations and more influence than in an existing situation.

TGW: So, in other words, in some ways a multilateral setting enhances your voice or it enhances your ability to act effectively?

JK: Yes, the possibility at least, it enhances the possibility.

TGW: So this is a different kind of enlightened self-interest of a small state?

JK: Yes, I think so.

TGW: The idea that the UN system or so-called UN family was becoming larger and more decentralized, how was this viewed within the Dutch government?

JK: Well, I didn't mind that. I think that the Dutch government is in general in favor of such a development.

TGW: No, no, but it is not the fact of doing nothing. Maybe I'm not expressing myself clearly. The system was not as cohesive as one had imagined at the outset. The Jackson report (Study of the UN Development System), for example, really talked about consolidating the presence of United Nations agencies, which of course never really occurred. We still have a set of separate fiefdoms, which are all fairly independent. Was this ever seen as a negative development by the government, that it would have been more sensible to pull these disparate institutions together?

JK: No, it wasn't necessarily seen as a negative development. It was seen as a fairly positive development potentially.

TGW: For what reason? I mean this would make more dynamism, more activities rather than waste, which is what the United States tends to emphasize.

JK: Yes, yes. I would say the activities as theorized might not be possible, not become possible.

TGW: So, there is a flexibility—there always has been a flexibility—in Dutch support, which I've always tried to understand, because I think it is positive for researchers and positive for institutions. But many other governments prefer to have more centralization, or more micro-management. So I'm trying to understand why, in your view, the Netherlands is so flexible in its support.

JK: Well, because I think they felt that by being more flexible they could be more useful to become more effective. And to do nothing, that would not happen.

TGW: Was there any thought given to trying to bring the now expanded Bretton Woods institutions with their new windows closer to the United Nations system? How was this viewed within the administration?

JK: Well, they would like to see them close it. The institutions themselves didn't want that. They didn't try to influence that in a particular way. In other words, the independence of the Bretton Woods institutions was always more or less a fact to be accepted, like it or not.

TGW: Well, the establishment of UNDP and the idea or the notion of what was called technical assistance and subsequently became technical cooperation—how was this viewed in the Netherlands?

JK: Well, this was accepted as something which was potentially useful and also the Netherlands became a strong supporter of UNDP.

TGW: The fact that technical assistance was relatively inexpensive in relationship to a Special Fund, was this important?

JK: No, that didn't play too much of a role, I think.

TGW: Only cynics would say that technical assistance is cheaper, therefore, it is better to establish the UNDP?

JK: Yes, the cost of the matter was not the most important thing.

TGW: There is a much-ignored debate, or at least in my view fairly-ignored, which is always on the back burner: namely, disarmament in development or disarmament for development. This has actually always been a concern of the Netherlands. Why is that? Is it the notion of liberating funds that could be used in other ways?

JK: Yes, that certainly played an important role.

TGW: And the term disarmament within the Netherland's doesn't conjure up any images that it conjures up in Britain, France or the United States?

JK: Apparently not.

TGW: I would like to go back for a minute to the Economic Commission for Europe which, of course, is also in Geneva, and your participation in it. You chaired a number of meetings for a couple of years. What was it like to be in about the only place where East/West discussions were occurring?

JK: That was indeed the case, and the Economic Commission for Europe was there and could be used and we decided when we felt it should be used.

TGW: What kind of discussions took place? What was the tenor of the discussions between South and West in that setting?

JK: Well, they were more of technical matters happening to come up, various kinds. But the ECE was there and therefore should be used.

TGW: But, does that mean that it is better to have technical discussions than political discussions?

JK: Yes, I think so. Yes.

TGW: So the fact that the ECE was looking at statistics and what academics would call “low politics” made it a useful venue for discussions?

JK: That is right, yes.

TGW: And how did politics intrude in those discussions? For instance, when there was a crisis over the Berlin Wall or a blow-up in Soviet American relations over Cuba, what happened in the ECE? Did one remain at a technical level?

JK: Yes, at a technical level and felt one shouldn't get involved too much in big conflicts, to stay outside of the big conflicts as much as possible. That was probably the general desire.

TGW: There is the theory of functionalism that purports that this is a sensible way to proceed. Would you yourself judge this to have been a sensible demonstration of the theory?

JK: Yes, yes, I think so, sensible.

TGW: And within the ECE—obviously this is not a universal gathering and therefore the Group of 77 and China are not present—did the West get together and the South get together before discussions to try to iron out what was the eastern or western position? Or was this simply all member states of the ECE coming together to work out their discussions—their differences in public?

JK: Well, both happened probably. They tried separately, then tried to get together jointly.

TGW: During the previous period of time—when you were in New York—the Treaty of Rome was signed. But now while you are in Geneva, Europe is a reality. How did the existence of Europe make a difference within gatherings of the West, or gatherings of the entire international community? Did Europe have a distinct voice or were they still trying to organize themselves?

JK: Yes, I think they tried to have a distinct voice, but they were living with so many cases I don't think it was possible.

TGW: When, in your view, did Europe begin having a consolidated view within international negotiations?

JK: The idea that there should be a European view was considered important by almost everybody.

TGW: How do you see the future in terms of Europe making its view known vis-à-vis the United States, vis-à-vis developing countries, vis-à-vis Japan?

JK: Well, I think that it was accepted that this would happen more and more. And a European union was an important channel for that.

TGW: So if you were rewriting your book about conference diplomacy you would have to insert a section on Europe?

JK: Probably, yes.

TGW: It has always struck me that most of the demands from the South really were demands on the North, in a sense that the concessional finance mainly came from western countries, in the sense that it was their markets to which the South wanted access, et cetera, et

cetera. So one cannot ignore the Soviet Bloc. But I was just wondering to what extent they were serious partners in the first UNCTAD, the second UNCTAD, and the other discussions in Geneva, and to what extent they were usually considered an afterthought by the South?

JK: Well, I think they were gradually considered as being of some importance and should be treated as such.

TGW: And so, in your view, they were important partners and not simply present?

JK: Yes, I think so.

TGW: Do you think that will be the case in the future?

JK: I can't say. I don't know.

TGW: It seems to me that Russia has its own internal problems and therefore, in international debates, it doesn't play the same role.

JK: No.

TGW: Well, this is the end of the first morning session. I thought that in the next session we would look at your career in Paris and also back in New York during the tumultuous 1970s. But this is the end of the first session on the 11th of November. Thank you.

JK: Okay, thank you.

TGW: This is November 12th, Thomas Weiss is interviewing in the morning in The Hague, Johan Kaufman.

Well, we left off yesterday in Geneva. And we're now moving back to New York. It is about 1974. This is the height of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). In your writings, you have emphasized that mutuality is preferable to confrontation. However, this was the height of confrontation. What do you think brought about this confrontation versus mutuality?

JK: Originally the various sides were all common elements to what they wanted. Gradually they realized that they had to find some common elements. And the UN Development Programme was one of the—certainly one of the—results of finding a common element for a joint action. Rather than going it separately.

TGW: In other words, the UNDP was a compromise earlier. But in the New International Economic Order, there were a number of confrontational stances, demands by the South on the North. You suggested that subsequently the language improved and the approach improved. What was occurring in the mid-1970s that brought on this confrontation?

JK: Well, originally there was the feeling that something entirely separate and new had to be done. And that was a confrontational aspect. Then gradually it was realized that it was better to look for a joint element, which became the UN Development Programme.

TGW: What did the Yom Kippur war and OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and the first oil shock have to do with bringing about this approach?

JK: Well, I think the Yom Kippur War and related developments made people realize that separate action was not superior to and probably inferior to joint action. That understanding grew gradually.

TGW: Was it during this period that you are in Paris that Jan Pronk became minister of development in the Netherlands? Was it 1973, 1974?

JK: Approximately that time, yes. I don't know the exact date.

TGW: Well, he was an unusual minister of development. What do you recall about his having come to the ministry?

JK: He was more or less unusual because he took original approaches.

TGW: For instance?

JK: Well, for instance, in realizing that something like UNDP could be important, going back to the same thing.

TGW: Was his style unusual?

JK: Yes, his style was original, direct and saying what he thought and not turning around.

TGW: This indeed put the Netherlands in the forefront of developmental assistance and thought. And at about the same time your friend or acquaintance, Tinbergen, also became involved doing work on the second development decade. Did you follow this closely?

JK: No, not too closely. Tinbergen was certainly involved in all those things. And, of course, the UN was always very happy to use his experience and knowledge.

TGW: As I recall you contributed to a Festschrift for Tinbergen. I recall one of the essays in your collected writings, which Nico Schrijver mentioned to me. He said that you were quite honored to have participated in this, as the only practitioner.

Well, let's go back to Paris. You were the permanent representative to the OECD. The OECD at this time becomes, as you mentioned yesterday, the kind of secretariat for the Group B in UNCTAD parlance, or the developed countries in other contexts. How do you evaluate in retrospect this development in OECD as a secretariat for wealthy countries?

JK: Well, I think it was very usual. Secretariat was more suitable. And so it became from both sides very logical that the OECD would perform this task. And that was useful.

TGW: And so this became a quasi-institutionalization of the secretariat's role.

JK: Yes, yes.

TGW: You had left Paris when the CIEC (Conference on International Economic Cooperation), or North-South negotiations, began. But the French government was frequently in

the forefront of trying to push various North-South issues. Did you have good relations with the French government while you were in Paris? Do you recall?

JK: Yes, I would contact—nothing very spectacular, but they were certainly useful contacts and exchange of information on both sides. It is always useful.

TGW: One of the things that you've emphasized in your writing was the importance of various kinds of regional organizations. The OECD is a kind of regional organization for the West. But, in addition, it is approximately the same period, shortly after the creation of the European community—we have ESCAP (UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific), CSWA (UN Commission for South West Asia), the OAU (Organization of African Unity), et cetera. How do you see this development in international relations, the growth of regional organizations?

JK: Well, I think the fact that these came into existence gradually was useful. Everybody benefited from that exchange of information of various types. I think that was probably the most important thing, to get more information.

TGW: Would you see that there is a comparative advantage of regional organizations versus universal ones like the UN?

JK: Yes, the regional ones can more easily specialize in particular aspects, in a sense they can be more useful. The general ones tend to become fuzzy.

TGW: In the sense that their agendas are too wide to be covered, and the regional ones can become more focused?

JK: Yes, that is right.

TGW: When the 1973 Yom Kippur war broke out and OPEC raised oil prices, did you think that this would have a substantial effect on international relations?

JK: Well, at that time we certainly thought so, yes, that it would have a substantial effect. We were concerned about it.

TGW: How did the Dutch government react to the fourfold increase in oil prices, which then, of course, led to what became known as the demands for the New International Economic Order?

JK: Well, the Dutch government didn't like it particularly. There was not much they could do about it.

TGW: You made the most of it. One of the other themes that comes out in your writing revolves around human rights, what is now called "individual rights." But at about this same period of time or shortly before the Convention on Economic and Social Rights was adopted. How do you see the gradual development and emphasis upon economic and social rights? This originally grew out of a Cold War confrontation, SouthWest. But do you see this as a positive development?

JK: Yes, yes, the position of economic and social rights could be quite important.

TGW: Originally this was seen—and I think this was not just in the United States but elsewhere too—as a sort of Soviet ploy, or a socialist country ploy, to ignore political rights. How did you view them?

JK: Well, on the Dutch side it was not so. It was not seen as a totally controversial issue, and that it was something that one could live with and one could accept. It was not a concern which others had.

TGW: Do you think this was a reflection of Dutch character or Dutch domestic politics?

JK: Dutch domestic politics also has a tendency to find common solutions rather than confrontation.

TGW: At some juncture in your writings, it may be later than this, you emphasize the role of non-governmental organizations as important elements in the dynamics of negotiations.

JK: Yes.

TGW: Do you recall your interactions with them—when they began and how they intensified?

JK: Yes. We had some contact with them, and they played a role. And so we had early contacts with organizations like the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), and those contacts were rather encouraged on the Dutch side rather than discouraged.

TGW: In other words, these were governments in exile, so to speak. That is a different kind of non-government.

JK: Yes.

TGW: So the Dutch government was favorable to relying upon these emerging voices that were seen as legitimate in Palestine and in Namibia?

JK: Yes, we recognized that they existed and it was better to try to have an understanding with them than to have a confrontation. That was quite important.

TGW: I guess I was wondering about your own views in relationship to private groups—Amnesty International, or private development advocacy groups—and whether these played a role in Dutch politics or UN politics or in multilateral negotiations. For example, at the host of global conferences that began around this period of time. Of course Stockholm in 1972 (UN Conference on the Human Environment), then the World Population Conference in Bucharest, the World Food Conference in Rome and the Special Session of the General

Assembly. Do you recall your own thoughts about NGOs and how they were playing a role in international relations?

JK: Well, I think we thought they were of importance. And it was better to listen to them and to try to get their views adjusted to ours or vice versa rather than to have confrontation with them. In that sense that was useful.

TGW: So once again, this was, keeping your mind and your ears open to ideas and trying to integrate them as opposed to rejecting them?

JK: Yes.

TGW: About this time, as we're thinking about bridging roles, the proposal for like-minded countries emerged as a role to bridge powerful countries in the West, and demands from the South. Do you recall the origin of this idea?

JK: Well, I think the like-minded countries idea goes naturally with a great many people at the same time as being one way out to avoid confrontation. And I don't think it can be said it originated at one particular point. It was a natural idea to come up and to get certain importance.

TGW: Were all of the Nordic countries and Canada in this adventure from the outset?

JK: No, the U.S. and probably Canada at the outset were hesitant about this. So I think they gradually came along. I believe.

TGW: When you arrived in New York, was this before the Special Session on development—where the program of action was developed—or after?

JK: I think it was just before.

TGW: So you participated in the events which probably were the high point of confrontation of this un-Dutch position between North and South?

JK: Yes, yes.¹

TGW: What kinds of ideas were circulating within the Dutch delegations, or Dutch government, in trying to get over this confrontation?

JK: I think the main idea was to find common elements rather than diverging elements, and that search for common elements was relatively successful. It resulted also in the UNDP.

TGW: At about this time one of the ideas that was emerging related to basic needs or immediate needs, or meeting the essential requirements of the poor in developing countries. Do you recall how this idea emerged, and who picked it up and why?

JK: Well, I think it was gradually realized that when you start to live with the problems of developing countries, and adapt to it as much as possible rather than have confrontation. But that was certainly a realization.

TGW: There was quite a difference, or at least as I recall and understand this, of meeting basic needs versus starting at the top and letting aid or investment trickle down. But this idea was in some ways anti-state in that the government, or the governments of the Third World countries were what were on the agenda in the New International Economic Order. As I recall, basic needs was a more direct contact with peoples in society. Is this so?

JK: Right.

TGW: So many third world governments saw this as a kind of meddling? Do you recall this debate?

JK: Yes, there was some debate. But there was also the clemency to find the common approach rather than direct confrontation. In that sense the debate was useful. They had two common elements.

¹ Nico Schrijver: See Johan Kaufmann, *Conference Diplomacy: An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd edition (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1988), pp. 26-27.

TGW: At about this time, during your return to New York as permanent representative, I suppose one of the more visible U.S. ambassadors, Pat Moynihan. He was on the scene. Do you have recollections of his style?

JK: Yes, he was much—slightly on the confrontational side.

TGW: Slightly?

JK: Slightly or strongly, if you wish. And he thought that what he thought was right. And he didn't hesitate to put forward his views.

TGW: Well, he would not have made a good Dutch ambassador. I'm not sure he made a good American one either. This theme was actually in a recent book by Ed Luck about U.S. attitudes towards multilateralism, Ed emphasizes American “exceptionalism,” that is that somehow the United States—by virtue of the fact that it is so different—can do what it pleases, so to speak. This is hardly conducive to cooperation. Do you think there is any truth in this argument?

JK: Yes, there is an element of truth in there, of course. The U.S. always felt that it could do what it wanted, and that you should adapt to it. Yet on the U.S. side too, they saw the need for common elements. So from both sides there was a certain tendency to find common ground.

TGW: Just about the same time, another indication of exceptionalism would be the American threat to withdraw, which they eventually carried out, from the ILO, which was in 1975. How did you react to that?

JK: Well, we were very much against the U.S. withdrawing from any organization. They had, of course, left UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), and at various points we tried to convince the U.S. to come back to UNESCO. I think the main

argument was that a large country like the U.S. should be present and not absent. And if they had difference of opinion it should be expressed in the organization and not outside of the organization. It should be participating and not stay away.

TGW: And what was the reaction in Washington?

JK: Well, it was maybe very true, but for the moment we do what we want—more or less.

TGW: Exceptionalism?

JK: Yes.

TGW: So you were also in New York at the moment when the resolution that, I think, sent Mr. Moynihan around the bend—namely, “Zionism is racism”—was passed. What was your own personal, as well as professional, reaction to this resolution?

JK: Well, of course, the resolution was a bad resolution, Zionization. We certainly opposed it. But there wasn't very much we could do. And the U.S. attitude didn't help either.

TGW: In what sense? I mean the United States was definitely against it and said so?

JK: Yes, it was very much against it. The others thought there was no common ground anyway, so let's just go ahead. There was no hope for common ground.

TGW: Do you think it would have been better had the United States taken a lower key approach to this?

JK: Possibly. It was very difficult for the U.S. to do that, because they would be giving up some other principled opinions. So I don't see how it could have gone otherwise.

It had to go the way it had to go.

TGW: Well, at about this same time I recall there being a couple of sentences, very intriguing sentences, in one of the essays in the book about your role in trying to employ good

offices in relationship to the Egyptian-Israeli divide. Could you just spend a few moments talking about those social occasions in New York, between the Egyptians and the Israeli ambassadors?

JK: Well, I arranged for them to meet in my house. That was the main thing I did. And indeed the Egyptian and Israeli met in my house, and had some mostly social talk about common friends or even relatives. But the fact that this could take place was a considerable achievement. So I was very happy to do that.

TGW: So you got together the ambassadors in New York?

JK: Yes, these were the ambassadors in New York—Egyptian and Israel. They hadn't met before, so that was something of an achievement.

TGW: What was the outcome of this?

JK: The outcome was mainly that they had met, and got to know each other. And at some original point, the idea was that that would be the beginning of Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, but then the U.S. more or less took over as the main sponsor of those negotiations. And the contact that I made did not lead to anything else. But the fact that it had happened was important.

TGW: So this was not actually linked to America's taking over the initiative, which may have been a good idea, or [Anwar] Sadat's visit, but it was important in terms of getting the ball rolling?

JK: Yes. That is right.

TGW: Did you notice any difference in dynamics, or in the character of negotiations that occurred in Geneva, in Paris, and in New York? I mean you've written extensively about

multilateral diplomacy. Were there any striking differences in the way that international talks occurred in the three cities?

JK: No, I don't think there were any great essential differences. But on the basic problems, there were no differences.

TGW: Now, the problems were the same, but, for example, was the Group of 77 better organized, more articulate, more aggressive in Geneva than in New York? Or were the western countries better organized in Paris than in New York?

JK: No, you can't say there was much difference. They all behaved as they did. There was not much difference. I think. You might ask Hans Singer about this.

TGW: We certainly will. What role, as the 1970s move along, and we have the second oil price increase, and the beginning of the debt crisis, did the role of the like-minded countries change at all?

JK: No, I don't think they really changed, as far as I recall. I don't think so.

TGW: So you continued to simply try to play your bridging and mitigating role?

JK: Yes, yes.

TGW: Between part of the West?

JK: Essentially, yes.

TGW: What was it like after something over twenty-two or twenty-three years in multilateral affairs to then return to bilateral diplomacy when you moved to Japan?

JK: Well, there was a natural difference between multilateralism and bilateralism. And in Japan I had to look after specific Dutch interests, so there was a general difference between multilateralism and bilateralism. In Japan I was essentially busy on bilateral things in Japanese-Dutch relations.

TGW: But within multilateral arenas you were also quite aware of Dutch interests and what Dutch interests were in multilateral negotiations. But did you find returning to the purely bilateral arena more satisfying?

JK: I can't say it was more satisfying. It was somewhat different. But it was what it was. It was a type of work and it had to be done.

TGW: But this was your first extended stay in Asia.

JK: Yes.

TGW: In a couple of essays, in your book you mentioned longstanding, sort of Dutch experience in Asia and Asian influences. How did you experience those firsthand?

JK: Well, I think the fact that the Dutch had these experiences was of some importance. But otherwise they didn't play a big role. It was something one could use if necessary.

TGW: What do you see in the contemporary context in the Netherlands that reflects these long-standing treaty interests? The Netherlands is perhaps not as diverse as the United States or Canada, or an immigrant society, but it nonetheless is fairly multicultural.

JK: Yes.

TGW: Do you see this as being a direct result of Dutch trading interests in Asia?

JK: Well, I don't think it was related to it. The fact that we had the traditional interests in an area like Asia, influence is certain there. International behavior became sensitive to international things, rather than ignore it.

TGW: When you left Tokyo, you had been in the Dutch foreign service forty-five years.

JK: Everything included, yes.

TGW: That is quite a long and distinguished career. What was it like then to return to the role of an academic when you began teaching in Leiden?

JK: Yes, a so-called Cleveringa chair for one year. The transition to a teaching assignment was very pleasant. It forced me to think about things. And so it was a good development for me.

TGW: What were you writing at this time? You were revising your earlier books on negotiations and decision-making?

JK: Yes, I think so. Yes, mainly.

TGW: And that this was also about the same time that you and Nico Schrijver became involved in writing the early ACUNS (Academic Council on the UN System) report. What do you recall of those efforts, and why was it important to try to do that?

JK: Well, the ACUNS reports had a certain importance on their own. And the fact that Nico and I worked together on them probably improved those reports. So in that sense it was usual.

TGW: How did you meet Nico?

JK: I forgot how I met him. At some meeting probably.²

TGW: He was considerably younger and at the beginning of his career. So this seemed like a good complementary relationship. I know that he liked it.

JK: Yes, I think we both liked it.

TGW: Those early years of ACUNS, that is actually before I myself was totally aware of its existence. I was still in Europe. What attracted you to participate in the Academic Council on the United Nations System?³

² Nico Schrijver: No, I read some of Johan's articles, most notably his inaugural address as published in the *International Spectator*, the Dutch monthly on international affairs. I vividly recall that it was entitled: "Not words but deeds. Towards a NIEO." I invited him to give a lecture in my course on International Economic Law at the far-away Groningen University around 1983. Afterwards, we had tea. Later (from e.g. 1985) we met in the Dutch Advisory Council on International Development Cooperation. Johan was invited to chair a working group on international organizations and I was invited to become a member. We frequently met at the Foreign Office.

JK: Well, I was attracted by its international character, and the fact that it seemed to play a useful role. That was attractive.

TGW: Were UN studies in the Netherlands more popular than they were in the United States?

JK: Well, yes, I think in a small country like Holland compared to the U.S., UN studies had a certain standing, whereas in the U.S. it was not considered very important. So in that sense, on the Dutch side there was interest in this.

TGW: Well, about this same time things were changing very rapidly in the Soviet Union. Do you recall Mikail Gorbachev's ascension to power? Do you recall how you felt that this might change international relations? Subsequently when the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union imploded, so to speak, did you think that the changes in international relations would be comparable to those at the end of World War II?

JK: Well, slightly comparable, yes. They were important. So in that sense they were comparable.

TGW: But the end of the Cold War did not lead to a third generation of the international organizations. We still have the UN. How precisely do you think that the end of the Cold War has influenced international relations and actually more specifically the United Nations?

JK: Well, I think the end the Cold War realized that one could do things together, and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) was certainly one of the important things that could be done together. So, the sense of togetherness was improved by that.

³ Nico Schrijver: Johan was on holiday in New England. He had already been asked to write the report for ACUNS together with a younger person and Gene Lyons had asked him to stop in Dartmouth.

TGW: But the sense of togetherness or the possibilities for working together seemed rather obvious, certainly at the beginning of the 1990s. Do you think that they are as obvious now?

JK: In principle, now, yes—there is no change in the situation. So in that sense—

TGW: Except that UNDP is really under quite severe attack and even some of the traditional donors—the Dutch—have scaled back their contributions substantially or threatened to do so.

JK: Yes. The UNDP has always had to fight with occasional attitudes of interest of—it was one of the easier things to get rid of. But usually after some time it gets back in its standing.

TGW: So you are not depressed by the present state of affairs?

JK: Not too much, no.

TGW: I'll tell Mark Malloch Brown that. Because I think UNDP does seem concerned with its role in international relations and where it is headed. What do you think of the *Human Development Report*, as long as we're on UNDP? Have you followed this over the years?

JK: Yes, I've followed it, yes. Human development is useful. It is not outstandingly important. But it is certainly useful that it exists. And it is useful that it is made periodically. So on balance, the Human Development Reports are a positive development.

TGW: Well, they certainly have reintroduced the notion that development is a multifaceted affair. And certainly your own earlier concern with economic and social crises is quite well reflected in the tables and the arguments made each year.

JK: Yes. Yes, indeed.

TGW: Now, I would like to spend some time in a kind synthetic way, but before doing that I wanted to look at sources of ideas and I would like to try to understand better your own

thoughts about the role of global ad hoc conferences in the creation of ideas, or the nurturing of ideas. What role do you think has been played by this host of conferences beginning with Stockholm, and of course there were numerous ones in the 1970s, 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

JK: Yes.

TGW: Were these important?

JK: Yes, I think – I think that these large conferences were very important, if they were held, they focused attention on a particular subject, somebody like Tinbergen was also in favor of them. And these conferences were very useful potentially to everybody. And not harmful to anybody else. Only in the opinion of some people in the United States is it that you don't need any of that. We can take a passive attitude. But most people were favorable.

TGW: Which of these did you yourself participate in?

JK: Oh, I don't recall. Some of them, I think. I don't recall specifically which ones.

TGW: But within the Dutch government, these were followed closely, they were reported on?

JK: Yes, yes, they were reported.

TGW: Many of these, I guess not all of them, but many of them resulted in new institutions, for instance UNEP (UN Environment Programme) after Stockholm, the World Food Council after the World Food Conference in Rome, et cetera.

JK: Yes.

TGW: How did you react to the creation of new institutions as a result of these new ideas?

JK: Well, again, I think we found that the new institutions were useful, because they meant that the subject question remained under attention rather than was forgotten again. If you have just a conference and then nothing, the attention disappears. But if you create some more, then the attention remains. In that sense we were in favor of keeping up certain things.

TGW: So, the most famous of these would have been, I suppose, UNCTAD, which still remains a conference and still exists.

JK: Yes.

TGW: But, for instance, the UN Environment Programme then is an important way to keep this subject in front of the public and in front of governments in your view?

JK: Well, of course people said GATT is sufficient, you won't need anything else but GATT. But I think we felt that that was another—that UNCTAD was useful. That UNCTAD should be supported.

TGW: Well—

JK: Rather than UNCTAD meaning “under no circumstances take any decisions” as the joke goes. I forget who—

TGW: Joseph Nye, I believe, used that in an article in *International Organization*. I once had a job interview, and when I mentioned that I worked for UNCTAD, that was actually almost the end of my job interview, because the person had just finished Joe Nye's article.

JK: Yes.

TGW: The dean of the Kennedy School.

JK: Yes.

TGW: But I don't know who—

JK: I think I may have invented it.

TGW: You may have invented it.

JK: Yes.

TGW: After your Geneva career or during it?

JK: During it probably. Well, I quite agree that these global ad hoc conferences have played a substantial role in—if not the creation, at least the nurturing of ideas. Yes, in a related way there have been numerous reports from eminent persons. Do you recall the Pearson report on *Partners In Development* in 1969, which was commissioned by Bob McNamara at The World Bank? But there have been a host of these since, most recently the Commission on Global Governance chaired by Sonny Ramphal and Ingvar Carlsson?

JK: Yes.

TGW: What role do you think that these blockbuster reports have played in the world of ideas?

JK: The fact that they existed and that if I wanted I could find ideas in it of some importance. So on balance I think it was useful that they existed.

TGW: Some of these have been, I think, more crucial than others. For example, the Brundtland report (*Our Common Future*) certainly helped legitimate the notion of sustainable development.

JK: Yes.

TGW: But I think the record is fairly mixed. What about academics? Is their role in the creation and nurturing of ideas important, or are they really bystanders in relationship to governments?

JK: Well, I think it is potentially important, if they take an attitude and participate, it is important. If they are passive, then it is not important.

TGW: How do you think that ideas actually enter the UN system? What is the dynamic?

JK: Well usually some report can be picked up. The UN is full of reports. So if you have a new idea, you work on some area of the report and pick out of it, because almost all reports in the UN end up as a proposal for action.

TGW: And what is the relationship? Why is the proposal for action important?

JK: Well, it is important to the extent necessary to keep a subject alive. And without it, of course, the reaction and the idea tends to die away. I think.

TGW: But how precisely did the Dutch government, for example, react to a proposal for action? Were instructions given to report back on various elements?

JK: Yes, there would be instruction to report back. And the Dutch government would be either favorable or unfavorable. Pronk always liked think tanks. Very often you actually—it is unnecessary, but it can be done by something that had already been written or proposed. In the Commission for Europe it was not necessary to think of new areas. It could do what it was doing and could do it even better than it was doing.

TGW: I guess one thought that I have had over the years is that it is important for the UN to be ahead of the curve rather than behind it. And I'm wondering whether you think that in terms of writing the balance between orthodoxy and new ideas, the UN has played an important role? Or whether, indeed, the United Nations is behind NGOs and others in coming up with new ideas?

JK: Well, I think the UN generally has picked up new ideas, and has played a useful role. So the reports are sources of new ideas and then it can be picked up in the UN or elsewhere. But that I think was very useful.

TGW: Well, for example, you yourself, emphasized that the semantics of the NIEO were on occasion quite counterproductive. What I have in mind here is could the UN have played a role earlier in going against the tide, which seemed to be in favor of the developing countries at that moment? And I suppose later on the UN might have played a role in going against the tide when there was an infatuation with liberalization and democratization. In other words, at what point can the world organization step in and come up with a new idea rather than simply going with what is popular?

JK: Well, it can do so at any point where it sees the possibility for complete action. And the UN has done it occasionally. So the UN needs the pretext to step in. So if there is some report or some opinion, it can either criticize or comment a little, proportional term of action then that is useful, and that is happening probably fairly often.

TGW: What role actually do personality traits of national diplomats play within negotiations? How important are personalities in the realization of a successful strategy of ideas?

JK: Well, the personality remains important, because—simply because it is there. And you can't predict in advance exactly what the influence is. But it certainly is of some importance.

TGW: If you were going to design an ideal diplomat, what characteristics would he or she have?

JK: Well, they should be very flexible, open for new ideas. And see to it that he's completely in front about everything.

TGW: You mean direct, straightforward?

JK: Yes.

TGW: Would you say the same thing about the United Nations officials or would they have a different profile?

JK: No, not necessarily. They should also be open for new ideas. But often UN officials themselves are prisoners of some pre-existing ideas, then nothing happens. I would say in the world of the Economic Commission for Europe, not many officials were welcome to have any change there.

TGW: Do you believe that international civil servants are more—"biased" is perhaps the wrong word, but more "committed" to sets of ideas than national diplomats?

JK: Yes, I think international civil servants, generally speaking, although I can't generalize, are more committed to new ideas. National officials tend to be prisoners of preexisting opinions or their instructions.

TGW: Of their instructions certainly. How would you—after those many years following debates in New York, Geneva and Paris—how would you judge the quality of the international civil service? That is the people who work for the United Nations or its various agencies in one form or another?

JK: Well, the quality is, generally speaking, fairly high. Otherwise they wouldn't have achieved to have those jobs. So I think the quality is relatively high.

TGW: As high as the Dutch civil service?

JK: Well, you can't really directly compare. One doesn't know how to compare. But I would say generally, yes.

TGW: What, in your view, is the importance of leadership within the UN? Leadership at various levels, from the top to the director level?

JK: Well, obviously leadership is always very important. If there is strong leadership then something—action can happen. If there was no strong leadership, very often nothing happens.

TGW: When we're speaking of leadership, is this a more managerial leadership or would you also include the power of intellect?

JK: Power of intellect, of any new ideas of having new ideas accepted.

TGW: In your view, which names immediately jump to mind in terms of intellectual leadership in the UN?

JK: Well, I would say someone like Prebisch.

TGW: Any other giants besides Prebisch?

JK: I can't think of anybody now, but there must be some.

TGW: Well, actually one of the questions that we're trying to answer in this project is indeed who were these giants and how many of them were there. A list of one is not very impressive.

JK: [Janez] Stanovnic. He certainly influenced them. Singer, Pronk, and Tinbergen. I can't think of anybody else now.

TGW: Well, afterwards, you perhaps can fill in some of these names in the transcript. What about the role of the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) vis-à-vis the rest of the UN system? Do you see this as having been a productive separation, or do you think that relationship could have been more intimate and more reinforcing?

JK: It could have been more intimate, but the way it actually happened was more or less acceptable. The back and the front played their own role. And they tried to play that role. And that was it.

TGW: But do you think it is sensible that they are so separate from the rest of the UN system?

JK: The back and the front have always argued that they derived their own instructions from certain basic decisions and resolutions. If you put them under the general UN supervision, then they might lose their stature or their status. So it is better to have them have their own competences.

TGW: I learned at the ministry yesterday that the present minister, Evelyn Herfkens, is quite keen to push a closer association between New York and Washington.

JK: Yes.

TGW: Do you think this is a sensible idea?

JK: Yes, certainly sensible, yes, yes.

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