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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF
VLADIMIR PETROVSKY

BY

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THOMAS G. WEISS: This is Saturday, Tom Weiss interviewing Vladimir Petrovsky at the official residence of the director-general of the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG), at 12a route de Pregny. Good afternoon.

VLADIMIR PETROVSKY: Good afternoon.

TGW: I wonder whether we might start at the very beginning, and whether you could tell me just a bit about your family's background, where you grew up, and what it was like being a young boy in the Soviet Union of the late 1930s.

VP: Well actually, speaking of my background, I was born in 1933 in the city which was called at that time Stalingrad—now Volgograd. My father was a railway engineer; my mother was a doctor of medicine, a hygienist. Then my father became a military man, and during the war, in 1963 [*sic* 1943] when he was wounded, he was moved to Novosibirsk. In Novosibirsk I was in school and that was a very important moment for me. At that time, you are starting to think of your future, of who you would become. For us, there was no question whether we would go to the public or to other sectors, because all the sectors were public at that time. But being born in the province, living in a multicultural community, I was very much interested in relations between nations and states and the outside world looked very much attractive.

But it so happens that during the Second World War, Novosibirsk was one of the major stopovers when the American delegations came to Moscow, because the route was very difficult during the war. They traveled from New York through San Francisco, and often made stopovers in Novosibirsk. But during the war, there was not much activity, not much social entertainment. And once, when Vice President [Henry] Wallace of the United States came to Novosibirsk, the local authorities had decided to organize a meeting with him and the schoolchildren. At that

time, we had a pioneer organization, a kind of Boy Scout organization. And I, as representative of the pioneer organization, welcomed Vice President Wallace.

Anyhow, that was my first international experience. During the war, we were very much interested in the way the cooperation between allies is developing, very much fascinated especially with the people-to-people relations. A lot of American, British, and French newspapers and magazines had been published in Russian at that time. So we had gained an interest, and for us, from out in the provinces, it looked very fascinating. Also, during the war, for the first time in the history of diplomacy, had been published in Russian by a very famous academician, Tarley. Some of the books of the British and the French had been translated, such as K. Nicholson, E. Sutton, and J. Cambon. I was very much fascinated by diplomacy as an instrument of negotiation. But for me, diplomacy revealed an unfamiliar world of know-how for understanding and making agreements. Since that time, my interest was in diplomacy per se, in the technique of negotiation.

Later, in 1951, I joined the Institute of International Relations. My dream was to become an academic and to write. I wanted to study diplomacy and, first of all, different national styles. And when I was a student, I prepared what was called a thesis in the institute on the reform of British foreign service in 1943. And the Scientific Council of the institute had taken the decision to publish my thesis as a book. I was accepted without examination to postgraduate studies in 1957.

But that was a period when reforms were under way in the Soviet Union. One of the reforms was that you could not go to postgraduate studies if you did not work three years in some kind of public service. So all of us postgraduate students were sent to the Foreign Ministry. But at that time, another reform was the changing attitude towards the United Nations,

the increasing interest to use it not only for public relations, but also for practical deeds. That's why all of us postgraduate students who studied Britain, the United States, or other countries were sent to the Department of International Organizations.

Then, in the same 1957, I was sent to the Soviet Union mission to the United Nations. So it was the start of my diplomatic career. Though the first two years was in the general service, from the start I was very much involved in the diplomatic activity. There was the period when the national liberation movements had started. I was assigned to work in the first and special political committees as an expert dealing with the problems of Algeria, apartheid in South Africa, and other colonial issues. And it so happened that in 1960, three years after my service there, there was a change of ambassador. The new ambassador arrived and I was appointed as his assistant.

And it so happened that at that time, [Nikita] Khrushchev arrived for his official visit to the United Nations. It was another, I would say, unexpected development in my diplomatic career. His chief protocol had fallen ill and the ambassador had received the instruction to recommend somebody from his office as the chief of protocol of Mr. Khrushchev during his stay at the General Assembly. So I became a chief of protocol of the prime minister of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), though I had not much experience in these matters. It was a very difficult and at the same time very interesting diplomatic exercise. There was the first meeting of Khrushchev with Fidel Castro, and meetings with all other heads of states and governments who attended this first summit at the UN. I could show you the photo pictures. The question of the restoration of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Soviet Union had been discussed in unofficial meetings with Golda Meir.

So this experience as a chief of protocol brought me to the attention of the foreign minister, A. Gromyko. And when I finished my work in the mission in 1961, I was invited to work in the personal secretariat of Mr. Gromyko. I worked with him as one of his private secretaries dealing with the information he received from different sources. It was the time when the Berlin Wall had been created and the Cuban crisis had occurred. I was privileged to accompany Mr. Gromyko in a number of his foreign trips.

Working in the foreign ministry, I continued my studies of diplomacy and foreign policy. In 1964, I published a book, *Diplomacy of Ten Downing Street*, in which I had tried to analyze the foreign policymaking process in the United Kingdom and the role of diplomacy in this process.

Then after these four years with the foreign ministry, I was suggested to go to the UN secretariat. At that time, the quota of the Soviet Union was not fulfilled. Especially the foreign minister was not well-represented in the UN Secretariat. That is why, at a quite young age, I received a good position at the UN as political affairs officer and became a P-5. I worked six and a half years in the UN Secretariat as a special assistant to the under-secretary-general for the Security Council affairs. That post was traditionally occupied by a representative of the Soviet Union.

At that time in the organization there was a growing interest in peace research. I was put in charge of peace research and I established close connections with the academic community. My interest had moved from diplomacy and foreign policymaking to the theory of international relations and foreign policy, the subject which at that time was unknown in the Soviet Union. I was very lucky to become a part of the circle of Professor Hans Morgenthau, where I met a lot of people, many whom are now prominent in academic and political circles.

When I returned to Moscow, I wrote the book on American foreign political thinking. For the first two books on British diplomacy, I received a degree of Master in International Law. For the book on American foreign policy thinking, I received a doctorate degree in historical science.

Because I was involved in this academic community, immediately when I returned to Moscow in 1971, I was invited to the high position of chief counselor of a just created department at the Foreign Ministry. At that time, since the Soviet Union had started this détente with the United States, my new book attracted a lot of attention in political circles, and I had provided the background papers to give the understanding of how the real foreign policy thinking goes, not in ideological terms but in practical terms. The book had been translated and edited in most of the Eastern European countries and had been recommended as a textbook.

Soon I had become a head of the American Department of the Foreign Policy Planning staff, taking into account my experience in the United Nations and with the United States. In 1974, I had been appointed as the secretary-general to the delegation which had started the Helsinki process—the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). So I came to Geneva for first time in 1973, and I spent two years there in preparing the Helsinki Final Act. Everybody speaks now about three baskets, but there was a fourth—I joke “forgotten”—basket, of which I was a Soviet representative, and which was for me one of the most important baskets. We were discussing at that time the follow-up of the structures of the European process in the future. The participating countries were not ready to create the organization, and any permanent body agreed to table what was called the process—the Helsinki process of cooperation, which has continued through the Cold War. It was transformed into the organization after the end of the Cold War.

In 1978, I was a member of the Soviet delegation to the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament. I was very much involved in working out the multilateral machinery for disarmament and the rules of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). At that time, Moscow and Washington had just started serious negotiation on arms control and they were much concerned that there should be no interference from outside in their bilateral talks. That is why the rules of procedures made strict regulations with regard to the public activities of the secretary-general of the Conference on Disarmament. I could not know that twenty-five years later, when I had been appointed the secretary-general of CD, that I would become the victim of my own position in 1978.

During my work in foreign policy planning, I had direct access to the foreign minister, Mr. Gromyko, and had fulfilled some missions on his behalf. At the beginning of December of 1978, Gromyko told me I should be ready to go at the end of the week to Geneva, where he would introduce me to his American counterparts as the new head of the press department and as spokesman of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. So these proposals stood only for four days, and then he invited me and told me that he had changed his mind and had decided to appoint me as head of the Department of International Organizations and to give a rank of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary.

In January 1979, I was appointed the head of the department and had become the member of the Collegium of the Foreign Ministry. The department was dealing not only with UN and other multilateral bodies, but also with disarmament. After the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan, when relations with the West were very much deteriorated, the only silk thread which kept the dialogue with the West was the consultations on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. I was

very much involved in these consultations and co-chaired them with the Deputy Foreign Ministry of Atomic Industry.

I continued to work in academic spheres. The study of diplomacy and foreign policy thinking gave an impulse to rethinking our own approaches to foreign policy and international relations. So I wrote a number of books, including *Disarmament: Concepts, Problems, and Machinery* and *Security in the Nuclear and Outer Space Era*, in which I advocated the necessity to overcome old confrontational stereotypes, to have a new look at security problems, and promoted multilateralism as a major instrument to deal with the nuclear and outer space era.

In May 1986, when the period of changes in the Soviet Union had started and [Mikhail] Gorbachev had come to power, I was appointed deputy to the next foreign minister, Mr. Edouard Shevardnadze. I was put in charge of disarmament and international organization. I also received the special task to start the *glasnost* in Soviet foreign policy and was responsible for the press department. In my capacity as deputy foreign minister, I had a lot of special missions. I represented President Gorbachev in a number of meetings. I strongly believed in the necessity of nonviolent, democratic, evolutionary transformation and attached special importance to multilateralism. In my opinion, in an interdependent world we need to develop the new multilateral calculation. It should be based not on the traditional concept of the balance of force, but on the balance of interest, which includes the military and the economic considerations but is much broader.

And at that time we introduced the new concept of comprehensive security. The reason for this was that we saw two major problems for the country. The country was too much militarized and the country was too much isolated from the world. The concept of a comprehensive security treated security not in the traditional way as only military, but also as

economic, environmental, humanitarian. Then there were proposals made in the United Nations, but it took three years before we found agreement at the UN. At the beginning there was a lot of suspicion. The first reaction of the U.S. and some western countries was, "It looks as if it is propaganda of the Soviet Union, a new propaganda." For us, it was a really sincere attempt to start new approaches to international cooperation.

These talks were held on the high level between Gorbachev and [George H.W.] Bush in 1988, and the assistant-secretary of state, John Bolton, and myself. For the first time in its history, the United Nations made joint proposals on the new concept of security in all aspects. And what was pleasant was this resolution was adopted unanimously in the United Nations. Now this concept of comprehensive security is well accepted and incorporates the concept of human security, which means the security of a human being not only from violence, but also from hunger, disease, and environmental dangers.

I also strongly advised that in the process of *perestroika* and creating a democratic, legally-based society, the Soviet Union should use more extensively international standards. The UN recommendation is a good starting point, while the European standards are much higher. In the process of introduction of freedom of the press, I advocated very strongly the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) approach. In 1989, I was a head of the Soviet delegation.

The London forum was where recommendation for the freedom of the press was worked out. I was also very much involved in opening the foreign policymaking to the civil society at large. In 1988, I was invited to become the secretary-general of the CSCE Conference on Humanitarian Dimensions to be held in Moscow in the summer of 1991. It so happened that this conference was to take place after this putsch in August 1991. There was much discussion

whether to have it or not, but I took a very strong position and recommended very strongly to President Gorbachev to have this conference. So we had this conference in Moscow in September, which actually spread the standards of the protection of human rights which exist in Europe to all the space of CSCE, including the Soviet Union.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, I had two short appointments. I was first to represent Russia to the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Council of Cooperation, where I started a dialogue of New Russia with NATO. And then I was a co-chairman of the Conference on the Middle East in Moscow at the end of January. Then I joined the United Nations Secretariat in New York. I was put in charge of the political department, and I was asked by the Secretary-General to reform the political structure of the United Nations Secretariat. We had created this new political department, which both covered peace-promotion and disarmament. And the major task which the Secretary-General had put before me was to chair the task to prepare *An Agenda for Peace*.

I was very proud with this task. We were able to put on *An Agenda for Peace* all of the ideas which were actually formulated at the end of the Cold War. One of my dearest ideas was preventive diplomacy, about which I started to speak very strongly already in 1986. It was not easy to advocate this approach for the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Preventive diplomacy looked very much suspicious because it meant to open up countries to early warning. But in the long run, in the process of change there was an understanding that it is very important. Preventive diplomacy is actually the words I used. In the Charter we speak only of early warning. It was very important for me to develop the concept of preventive diplomacy, not only in the traditional sense—the idea of early warning—but to add the new idea of preventive deployment of the forces in areas of potential conflict.

I was also very much interested to put into effect the other activities of the United Nations in peace promotion. In *An Agenda for Peace*, we worked the concept of “four p’s”—preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building. In January 1992, the Secretary-General invited me. He said, “Now, it is time for you to realize your ideas.” He sent me here to Geneva as this under-secretary and director-general of the UN office to start to implement these ideas. So I came to Geneva. But I was immediately involved in the adaptation of Geneva International to the new political environment. It took some time before we were able to work out the new concept for Geneva. You know, Geneva is a mosaic of different organizations. Though it is European-based, it is in no way a Euro-centric organization. Geneva has the same global dimension as the central headquarters in New York. The question is to find our own face here.

The concept is now widely accepted that Geneva is a three dimensional center of international cooperation. First of all, it remains as traditionally the center of conference diplomacy. We now have twice the number of meetings as compared with New York. The conference diplomacy in Geneva is involved in working out different norms and rules of behavior. That may be why they are not so much publicly known, but this is the real norm-setting activity. As for the operation activities, I suggested to member states to consolidate the activities in five areas. First of all, the traditional humanitarian and human rights area. Now we are becoming the focal point for the promotion of human rights and humanitarianism. The second area is trade and development. We take advantage to have here the WTO (World Trade Organization), which is part of the Bretton Woods institutions. But on the other side, we have UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development), which serves now as a kind of link between the developing world and the WTO. In this dialogue on the social dimension of

globalization, the presence of ILO (International Labour Organization) is also right in place. The triangle of these organizations make Geneva the natural place for the dialogue on the social consequences of globalization. The third area which we now have in Geneva is science and technology. And here again, we have a tremendous advantage. We have ITU (International Telecommunications Organization), WHO (World Health Organization), and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization). In particular, in the period of the creation of an information-based society, Geneva with the ITU could be very helpful in spreading these matters.

Fourthly, Geneva is a center for disarmament negotiations. The operational activity is in New York, but negotiations are here. The Conference on Disarmament, which is unique in its composition—it includes all militarily significant countries—is a center for multilateral negotiations, which at the same time provides a framework for plurilateral and bilateral negotiations. Last, but not least, the first area of Geneva activity is research and training. We have here three institutes, plus two institutes in Torino (Turin, Italy), which are closely connected with Geneva. And last year, together with the rector of the UN University of Tokyo, we initiated this dialogue on policy and research, which includes all the institutes within the United Nations system and is a kind of common service for all our international system, which helps to avoid duplication and to facilitate the exchange of ideas. Actually, the advantage of this new research complex is that we have here a global view of globalization. In many countries, you have a different approach. You have an American view, a European view. But here we have a global view of globalization.

The third dimension that has appeared in the last years is that Geneva now has become a center for sharing political, social, and economic know-how on a high level. We have a lot of visits of the heads of states and governments, plus parliamentarians. In New York, they usually

come to make the statements from the General Assembly rostrum and in the Security Council. Here they come to make the statements at different conferences, but the major purpose now of the visits is to have the working meetings with the heads of the agencies, which as director-general I organized. And here at this table we have the meetings with the heads of states and the heads of the agencies. One of the heads of state, who came immediately after his election, talked at this table very clearly. He said, "You heads of the agencies, you always talk about good governance. But please explain to me, what is good governance in particular fields? What is good governance in the health area? What is good governance in business/labor relations?"

I think it is becoming very important that last year we made the agreements with the ITU to bring parliamentarians here. I have a strong feeling that, very often in a period of reform, many countries tend to invent the wheels which already exist in the international community. And our recommendations, our norms—it's for me a kind of driver's license. They apply it in the whole world, but its application depends upon the drivers, upon the governments and parliaments which apply them to their own road conditions. So this field of activity is already increasing, and we have a continuing pool of these high level officials coming here to get political, social, and economic know-how from Geneva-based international bodies.

And I think it is not only Geneva. It is also becoming a very important element in the whole activity of the United Nations. My personal feeling, especially after participating in this Millennium Assembly, which had the largest attendance of heads of states, and which accepted all these decisions on a consensus basis, is that the issue which existed since the first years of the United Nations and the League of Nations has been settled—the answer to the question, "What is to be done?" There is no more heated discussion on this issue. Everybody agrees that we need peace—peace not only as the absence of war, not only peaceful coexistence, but peace which

implies very close cooperation between states. All countries agree that we need security in all aspects, with particular emphasis on human security. All countries agree that we need development, which implies not only social-economic but also environmental protection—in other words, sustainable development. All countries agree that we need democracy. And all, of course, agree on the necessity of human rights.

Now, the major issue is how to achieve these goals. And this issue, how it should be done, for me is becoming no less easy than the question, “What is to be done?” Because the discussion of the question, “What is to be done?,” was very much political, theoretical, and conceptual. Now the discussions are very much pragmatic, oriented towards the rules, towards the practical deeds. And I think in these conditions the UN is becoming tremendously important as a center of agreed actions in all parts of emerging global society.

The other new development, which we face very strongly from here, is the changing concept of the United Nations. It was initially interpreted strongly as an organization of member states, but now after all these events—and I think Secretary-General Kofi Annan has a very clear position, and he has been supported very strongly—the organization is becoming people-oriented. We are open to all new actors. And here, in particular in Geneva, we have a lot of new actors. Take the governmental level. We have the IPU (Interparliamentary Union). Parliamentarians now want to have the meetings of the speakers of parliaments to bring their views to the United Nations. We have here the organization of local authorities. Local authorities also want to bring their views directly to the United Nations. Religious leaders—they do not want to be treated any more as in the past, a nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but rather as a special entity within civil society.

And, of course, the major new partner for us is the business community. The business community, and the transnationals, actually are to a certain extent pioneers of the new emerging global society, and they are developing their own global and regional structures. Plus civil society—we have about 900 NGOs in Geneva, and they are also very much active. For me, from my experience, civil society is tremendously important for democracy. I remember my last statement, when I left the diplomatic service in Russia. I stressed there that my experience was that living democracy could exist only if a strong civil society acts. But it is also very important to accept civil society as a partner of the United Nations. From the point of view of preventive democracy, the best early warning signals the UN receives are from the NGOs.

TGW: I could have stopped you numerous times to ask additional questions, so I am now going to go back and ask a few, if I may. I was very interested by your description of interwar cooperation—your being a teenager in schools as the Americans, the French, the Brits, and the Soviets were cooperating. How did you feel toward the rather brusque change in attitudes towards the West? At the end of the 1930s, one first had the Soviet-German pact. And then all the West decides to portray the Germans one way and then the Soviet Union becomes cooperative. Then after the war, in 1946 or 1947, we are back to an abrasive period. So how did you feel as a person about these flip-flops in attitudes toward cooperation? How did those evolve during these periods?

VP: First of all, I will tell you with regard to the Germans. What is very interesting, we in the Soviet Union during the war never had a negative feeling towards the Germans as such, towards Germany. The distinction was always made by the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition between the German people and the Nazis. Even during the war, I studied German. In school,

we learned by heart [Johann Wolfgang von]Goethe and [Heinrich] Heine. The attitude to German culture was very favorable. And all the atrocities were associated with the Nazis.

There was a famous expression at that time: “Hitlers come and go, but the German people will stay.” And I will tell you this lesson helped me very strongly when I was in the United Nations, and I was involved in the implementation of the sanctions. I am very critical of the concept of the “rogue state.” There could be no rogue state. It could be for me only rogue decision-makers—those who take the decisions, who mislead the people. And all the responsibility should be put not on the people, but on the rogue decision-makers. And I am very glad that in the long run this idea has been accepted in the United Nations. Now, when we speak about coercive actions, the word “rogue states” is beginning to be replaced by the proper word “countries of concern.” Sometimes, you know, experience is reflected at a later stage.

TGW: And how was the experiment of the United Nations portrayed to you as a teenager in school? And how was the League of Nations seen? As an experiment that failed because the Soviet Union and the United States were not in it? Was there great hope for the new world institution?

VP: I started to read the history of diplomacy and the whole activity in the League of Nations. These politics looked for me like something very difficult to understand and to grasp, because the history was also part of the propaganda at the time. To understand the then international politics, I was very much interested in knowing the techniques of negotiation and professional attitudes. Professionals are very much interested in understanding their colleagues and their behavior. Even the Soviet military, when they met with the Americans and the British, and the French in World War II established very good professional relations. The Soviet military, after the death of [Joseph] Stalin, was very interested in joining NATO. It was

ideologists and politicians who stopped them. In other words, the attitude was graded. There was a tremendous interest on our side on what was going on in other countries, because these countries were traditionally well-known culturally. And the isolation we felt very strongly. That is why, when the first reforms started under Khrushchev, we youngsters were very much open to understand and to know better the western world.

TGW: Do you recall what it was like? You hadn't had a chance to travel very much. So your first assignment, being dropped in the middle of New York in the middle of the 1950s, must have been fairly exciting.

VP: Very exciting. So I went, and of course you were always told when you went into another country that you should be very much suspicious. So we were part of this environment. I would say in the first days we felt a little bit uneasy. But little by little, it changed. The atmosphere in the diplomatic community was very good, in particular in the United Nations.

The major problem, as I remember—and that's what shocked me and I took it very strongly—was that though I always looked at the United Nations as a kind of center for meeting between different countries and finding some solutions, I found that the UN was too often used as a rostrum for propagandistic purposes. Even some of the diplomats were taught that. For me, the United Nations should serve different purposes—not so much to work for the public, but for finding practical solutions and agreements.

TGW: When we came in earlier, you pointed out the handsome portraits of you with all of the Secretaries-General, except Trygve Lie. Could you characterize your impressions about these people as persons and leaders? What were they like? What were your impressions? Not that these need to be footnoted, but how did you react to them as people?

VP: For me, of course, it was a big revelation. Before that, I had no chance to meet leaders. That is why I looked to them with great interest. I was very much impressed with their broad outlook, their ability to see things beyond the ideological and other battles, their desire to find some kind of solution which would be acceptable to all countries. They were the people who saw beyond confrontations and concentrated on political and diplomatic skills.

TGW: Even someone like [Dag] Hammarskjöld, with whom the Soviet Union had several problems?

VP: Yes, especially when things started in the Congo. At that time, of course, we tended to look at this ideologically. I had been present at the talks of Soviet Ambassador V. Tonin with Hammarskjöld. He gave me the impression of a man with philosophical cast of mind, who has his own vision of the world and of his role as the head of the international organization. The impression he produced, I would say, was very strong.

But I knew better other Secretaries-General. I met U Thant already when I was a young diplomat and he was a consular in the UN mission. U Thant and other Secretaries-General were very cooperative. They were internationalist by their nature and all of them have created a special UN culture of mediation. U Thant was tremendously helpful during the Caribbean crisis. The Soviet foreign minister Gromyko had direct telephone talks with him. He was helpful in creating a favorable climate for preventing the confrontation.

TGW: So you finished your Master's. You couldn't do postgraduate work. So you did your dissertation later?

VP: I did my dissertation, the first one, immediately after my first return from Soviet mission, New York.

TGW: In 1961?

VP: In 1962. And the other one after the second return from New York. So New York had a very strong academic impact on me. And I still remember with great thanks both Columbia University and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

TGW: Was it difficult being in the Soviet mission in New York during these high points of tension? You arrived just after the Hungarian revolution. And when you were leaving, the Congo had blown up. And Soviet positions were not always popular. I have never been an American diplomat. I would have difficulty defending certain things. What was it like being a Soviet official in a UN context and being criticized and having to defend some positions that were not very popular?

VP: The first period you mentioned; it was 1957 to 1961. At that time, I was just a young guy. We felt that the fighting was going on and we tried to understand what lay behind it. But it was a period of decolonization, when many countries were becoming independent and we were much in sympathy with this process of independence and of providing a normal status for all countries. But I will tell you, to be quite frank, for my generation—and of course I cannot agree with the first intervention of the Soviet Union—but for us the major shock was not Hungary. The real shock was Czechoslovakia, because Czechoslovakia had a strong reformist movement that wanted to give a human face to society. And the military intervention in Czechoslovakia was the first real shock. A group of people had appeared, not only in the Foreign Ministry, but in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, who could not accept the law of force as the guiding principle in international relations. That was a major shock, I will tell you, for our generation, which gave push to the reformist movement.

TGW: When you say “shocking,” you mean you were disturbed by it?

VP: Yes. Some of our colleagues, my good friend Mr. Lukin from the Duma, made a protest, and he was deprived of work. So some people suffered from this.

TGW: You mentioned newly independent countries. They were obviously seen somewhat as pawns, whether they were moving toward the United States or towards the Soviet Union. But as a phenomenon, how did they look to you? Was this an exciting moment? Did it seem as if a wave was spreading? Some people—Brian Urquhart among others—have mentioned that decolonization was supposed to take a long period of time. But all of a sudden, you have twenty, thirty, forty, fifty new countries, and by 1962 or 1963, everyone is independent, virtually.

VP: It was accepted by us as the emergence of a “third force.” Of course, ideologists worked very strongly to bring this or that country in their area. Some of them have tried to make the distinction between the countries of socialist orientation and others which follow the capitalist way of life. But still, for all of us, this was a third force, a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). And we were linked as allies in achieving the aims which could be achieved in the United Nations, and to work through them when it was a difficult thing. But it was always accepted as a third force.

TGW: What do you recall of Bandung (Asian-African Conference)?

VP: I was a student at that time. We saw it as a new political phenomenon.

TGW: How was it portrayed to students? Did this seem like a momentous event?

VP: Yes, a momentous event. Like the start of the appearance of this new third force. But it also coincided with the disruption of the Soviet Union with [Josip Broz] Tito, who was one of the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement. But Bandung was very important for us.

TGW: Tito was one of the founding fathers of this movement. Even though he had distanced himself from the Soviet bloc, did this seem menacing?

VP: The story with Tito has also affected us very strongly because Tito was highly respected during the war. He was considered the closest ally in the war, and he was tremendously popular in the Soviet Union. The first question mark appeared because some military generals refused to return the Yugoslavian medals they received during the war. That was the first protest which ever appeared in the country, which was very much totalitarian.

TGW: The first time you were in New York, you were there as a diplomat, as a Soviet official. But you moved back in 1964 as an international civil servant. Most of the depictions of eastern bloc and Soviet citizens working in the United Nations during the Cold War see them as tightly controlled by their governments, and not as international, if you will, as people from other parts of the world. Did this seem awkward? For example, Mihaly Simai, when I was interviewing him, mentioned that he frequently had to persuade people that he was not a Soviet pawn, that he was an independent official. I was just wondering whether you were ever kept at arm's length as an official because of your nationality, and how you felt working within the secretariat.

VP: Of course, at that time the situation for the Soviet citizens working at the UN was very much abnormal. We were considered to be transferred to the UN with ranks we had in the Soviet Diplomatic Service and were obliged to receive the salary according to these ranks. Thus, we returned the largest part of the salaries we received at the UN to the Soviet government. When we started the *perestroika*, one of my first proposals was to remove this rule and to accept the international civil service rules as they are. That was already in 1986. I said to international civil servants who were Soviet citizens, "We understand that if you are an international civil

servant, of course you need to work according to the rules, not to receive instructions. Of course, you are working there, you represent your country, you represent your own culture. And this is the advantage. But you are not supposed to be dependent on the missions.” It was one of the first moves when we proposed to apply the new thinking to the UN.

TGW: But did you feel within the secretariat that you were ostracized or were almost in a ghetto? For instance, Brian Urquhart has described trying to hold meetings and keep Soviet members of the peacekeeping staff in a corner, or keeping them out of the discussions.

VP: We could feel it, certainly. But with Brian, even despite the differences, and even the differences of the age, I had established at that time very good contacts. You know, diplomacy is not only an official position. For me, diplomacy is first of all the personal relations. In diplomacy, personal relations, personal contacts, play a tremendously important role. And it depends on whom you are dealing with. For me, it was probably much more difficult to feel this kind of ostracism, because I was a special assistant, and head of the section under the Soviet under-secretary. That is why, within the department, we worked very closely with all staff members.

TGW: The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was one of the few places actually where East and West met in some guise and statistics were kept. How was the Economic Commission for Europe seen within the ministry?

VP: You need to understand how the management of foreign affairs was conducted in the Soviet Union. The country was very much ideological, and there was a certain understanding that the Foreign Ministry was supposed to defend the national interest while ideological interests were represented by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Whenever ideological

considerations appeared, we at the Foreign Ministry always had questions because we were supposed to protect the state's interest.

That's why I remember we had problems with ideologists because there were two completely different economic systems, one a market system, the other a central planning system. Some ideologists were very much afraid that through this economic commission market ideas would start to undermine the central planning economy. And by the way, on economics I made these proposals within the context of the concept of comprehensive security. I made the statement on economic security to the Second Committee. That was our answer to the New International Economic Order (NIEO). My message was always that we need to learn the know-how. I was always interested in techniques, in the way that things are done. I also attached tremendous importance to statistical data. We had a different economic system, but I believed that much could be used from the other economic system and from economic cooperation with the other side.

TGW: When you were moving back to the UN to take a position in 1964, the Third World had begun to take shape, and in particular UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development). Do you recall the Soviet position toward UNCTAD? In the West, UNCTAD was seen as a threat. GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) was their club, and UNCTAD was formed to be a kind of counter club.

VP: The general attitude towards UNCTAD was in terms of the third force for advancing their own ideas. It was treated in this way.

TGW: It was then seen as a positive development?

VP: A positive development in dealing with the capitalist countries.

TGW: In our project, we are very interested in processes behind the scenes, how ideas come, how they are developed, and how they are implemented. And one of the main vehicles was group negotiations. So I wondered whether you could share some observations about how behind the scenes the socialist bloc—which was always seen as an automatic partner of the Third World or the Group of 77 (G-77)—how that group came together and had a common position.

VP: Socialist countries and the group of countries who shared this socialist ideology had periodic meetings behind the sessions of the General Assembly. And I would say they were not easy meetings. There was always a lot of discussion with some countries like Hungary. In the 1980s, Hungary went very far along economic reforms. Poland had also its own experience. They were interesting discussions. The major issue was how to agree on the major resolutions. We have been to able to find common understanding at our professional level.

That was done through group discussion. But with other countries, I don't remember the group discussion. There were exchanges of views on the high level between the foreign ministers of countries most influential in particular fields. Before finalizing the instructions for the delegation at the sessions, we always had consultation with the Third World countries in order to feel how far we could go and not to break the common ground with the Third World.

TGW: Was there much dissent within the group? Because it seemed to me, as an observer, as a member of the secretariat, that there was almost total solidarity within this group, which most people interpreted as Soviet heavy-handedness, or providing rewards and benefits in order to have a Group D, or a socialist bloc, which was totally coherent on every issue.

VP: I will tell you that discussions were very heated, especially when changes started with *perestroika*. But we understood that in the long run we had some kind of common position

agreed by the leaders. But between ourselves we had very, very extensive discussions, both within the European group and within the Asian group of socialist countries.

TGW: Economic planning was really the main form that developing countries followed during the 1950s and 1960s, and they relied heavily on the Soviet experience. And it seems to me that in some ways development planning got a bad name because of that, even though it frankly is very sensible. What kinds of interactions were there between Soviets and developing countries trying to understand more what was going on with the Soviet Union—the plusses and the minuses of planning versus the plusses and the minuses of the market?

VP: Again I remember that there were no discussions directly about these ideas of planning, but development was never considered only as development. It was put in a broader political and ideological context. So it was part of a systematic approach.

TGW: Toward the end of your period in New York, the Jackson report (*A Study of the Capacity of the UN Development System*) was published. Do you recall reactions to this report, which actually looked at the UN system, which was proliferating and becoming very fragmented, and recommended becoming more centralized? It was never implemented, obviously. Do you recall how officials, yourself included, responded to that report?

VP: To be quite frank, it was considered as a kind of right-wing approach. We always considered that in all countries there were some kinds of extremist approaches to the UN. Studying the United Nations, I was very much impressed by Article 55, which says actually that the final aim and the conditions for peaceful relations is stability and well-being. And I can see that it was a very wise suggestion. It was the suggestion, I think, of the American delegation—Rooseveltian ideas. And when *perestroika* started, I reviewed this idea. But you know, before Gorbachev, to speak on stability in the Soviet Union was impossible. It was

considered as a kind of departure from the letter of ideology to appeal to stability, because stability was interpreted by ideologists as denying revolution and social changes.

I personally think that the United Nations should serve as a kind of a safety net, in particular, in the period of transition to democratic market economy. It could provide a kind of safety net for nonviolent, evolutionary, and democratic change. In other words, to provide a minimum of stability. But for you, sometimes it is hard to understand how much ideological considerations dominated political negotiation. Look at the concept of peaceful coexistence. When we started *détente* with the United States at the beginning of the 1970s, we understood how important it was in order to open the door for treaties to accept the declaration of peaceful coexistence. But for the Soviet leaders, the words “peaceful coexistence” were close synonyms of the prevention of nuclear war and the recognition of the principle of equality as the basis of security of the USSR and the U.S.A. We were lucky that Henry Kissinger understood this.

TGW: You mentioned Mr. Kissinger and you mentioned *détente*. The two words almost do not go together, and yet they do.

VP: *Détente* was made with Kissinger. It was in 1972, and actually he suggested it. U.S. Ambassador Raymond Garthoff described it very well in his book. He was my counterpart to facilitating the acceptance of the Declaration on Peaceful Coexistence by the Soviet leadership. I had the chance to prepare and send a secret paper to the Central Committee on the evolution of American foreign policy thinking towards the realistic, rather than military, aggressive approach to the Soviet Union. I explained in detail that from a pragmatic point of view the American theories of international relations, including the modified version of the balance of power theory, could have the interests of peaceful settlement of conflicts and cooperation, not only in political, but also economic, scientific, and cultural fields. In

ideological societies, unfortunately, the words sometimes meant more than practical deeds. The Declaration of Peaceful Coexistence was worked out by the Department of Foreign Policy Planning in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, where I worked at that time.

TGW: When did you write your book on American foreign policy thinking?

VP: It was in 1975. Before publication in 1976, I had some problems of an ideological nature. But because I was with the Foreign Ministry, it helped me to publish the book. Someone tried to claim that I was giving the rostrum for the imperialist ideology. But this book was not apologetic. It was critical. But it was the first book on American foreign policy thinking. It has been translated and published in many Eastern and Central European countries. A lot of people who I meet now say that for them, the first book was a kind of introduction to the way the Americans look at international relations and foreign policy.

Though I was in no way a dissident, I was a reformist. But I tried to understand our opponents and to be objective. I tried to explain the traditional approaches—idealistic and realistic—to the strategic analysis, the modern projects which were spread widely in the 1960s and 1970s, and the influence of all theories on practical foreign policy. There cannot be a white or black picture of the foreign policy. There are always people who were in favor of your country, or not in favor of your country, depending on how they interpret their national interests. And that is why I have decided to introduce the balance of interest as a guiding principle, which is more than the balance of power. Power is present, of course, and with power it is easy to promote your interests. But still, you need to develop relations on the balance of interests.

TGW: How did you learn about American foreign policy, theory, and practice? You mentioned that you were at Columbia. You were just reading there?

VP: I just had a lot of meetings with the academic community. I knew quite well Professor Morgenthau. I met Kissinger at the time. He was young. He was a professor, not in the government. We were young. My wife is also a political scientist. We kept close links with academics.

TGW: You mentioned one of the ideas that obviously dominates contemporary discourse. You mentioned earlier that as a result of the Millenium Assembly there does not seem to be much discussion about the importance or the validity of human rights. But during the Cold War, there was a huge difference about human rights.

VP: Indeed. This is an important point. It is really good that you raised it. The Soviet Union treated human rights very narrowly. Even before *perestroika*, the Foreign Ministry, with Andrei Gromyko, advocated very strongly agreements on arms limitations, and arms reductions, because we understood that the country was overburdened with military expenditures. The U.S. and western countries have gotten this message. And they suggested the linkage between disarmament and human rights. In the long run, because of the real interest in arms regulation, the Soviet Union agreed to deal with human rights, but emphasized only social and economic dimensions of human rights.

And this is how the idea of linkage was introduced in diplomacy. I was then dealing with disarmament, and strongly I criticized the concept of the linkages which were applied in negotiations. For example, in disarmament negotiations, because of the linkages, we could not move. But in practical negotiations, we needed to develop a diplomatic style of constructive parallelism. In other words, different groups of countries have different interests. And you need to start to negotiate. For example, in our conference on disarmament, there were three issues on which we could not agree—nuclear disarmament, prevention of the arms race in space, and the

treaty to end the production of fissionable materials. The countries linked these three issues. I told them, “Let’s start to move in all these three directions.”

Negotiation does not mean treaty-making. Treaty-making is a higher state of negotiation. We started negotiations, and in the process of negotiation we will see where and how far we can go. In other words, through this constructive parallelist approach, we could agree. And I advocate very strongly now constructive parallelism as a method of negotiation in multilateral forums. Linkage is not for multilateral diplomacy. They blow up the moment.

TGW: We actually started on human rights. And actually the Soviet Union, and the socialist bloc, and eventually the Third World were very fond of economic and social rights versus individual rights.

VP: Yes, it was the Soviet response to the western insistence on human rights which made possible not only the dialogue but the agreements with European countries.

TGW: How was this finessed in Helsinki? It seems to me that Helsinki was really about the first generation of rights—or individual, political, and civil ones—much more than it was about economic and social. Is that right?

VP: Yes. But still it was a big compromise because the Soviet Union at that time was very much interested to keep the results of the post-Second World War agreements intact. The major concern was to keep the inviolability of borders. And the Helsinki Final Act provided this principle on inviolability of borders and the change of borders only by peaceful means. In exchange, the Soviet Union and its allies have accepted the broad concept of the protection of human rights, which included not only economic and social rights, but also civil rights. But when *perestroika* started, as I said, we moved from words to practical deeds. It was at the CSCE

Conference on Human Dimension that dealt with human rights that we, for the first time, adopted a specific program of action.

TGW: This is quite obvious once we get into the mid-1980s, but I am trying to think about Helsinki, where you were present and played a role. What was seen to be in the Soviet Union's interest in participating in this Helsinki process? Those of us on the outside saw it as an important step forward, but as hard to understand given the Soviet Union's definition of Soviet interests at that point. It seemed like a slippery slope.

VP: Yes. For the Soviet government level, it was very important to be sure that the results of the Second World War, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, remained intact. There should be no opportunity to change them by military force. That was the major thing. But there was a certain opening to the West. There was already the interest to have much more human contacts. The intellectual community was already very much behind this. And there was an intention to keep this process under strict ideological control.

TGW: When did *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which began really in 1985, start? Were there signs earlier that this might come about?

VP: Actually, the reforms were much in the air since the 1960s.

TGW: Did you think when Helsinki began that this was inevitable?

VP: The country was already actually moving in this direction. At least in the intellectual community it was widely discussed that the country was very much isolated, very much closed, that there were certain social guarantees, but there was no freedom at all.

TGW: In the West, I think it is safe to say that very few people anticipated the rather dramatic changes that began in 1985. Did you have an inkling of this before? Would you have predicted it?

VP: No. I do not think that we who were involved in this process could see a dramatic change. Actually, we thought that the democratic process would go, I would say, in an evolutionary way, without going to extremes. I was always strongly against extremism of any kind. I could not understand when, for example, some politicians claim that there can be no centrist position.

We have very much admired Russian literature, but some very interesting writers, for whom I have respect, contended: “Who is not with us is against us. If the enemy does not surrender, he should be destroyed,” or something like this. We could not understand such statements, and we felt that the country should become open, a normal society. I have always considered that we need to avoid absurdity, and we need to avoid absurdity and irrationality from both the left and right. We need to have the democratically accepted rules, and within the rules you could adhere to different ideas.

TGW: So the speed which change took, was a direct response to Mr. Gorbachev? Or, once started, things just—

VP: Once started, the changes developed very rapidly. And, of course, from my point of view, the most unhappy development was the putsch in August 1991, organized by people who wanted to stop the changes. And of course, this putsch accelerated the disintegration process.

TGW: What was Mr. Gorbachev like as a person?

VP: I think he was a very impressive political leader. Actually, I like to work with people who are not only operators, but also intellectually broad-minded personalities. Mr. Gorbachev has a broad political vision. He was very much open to new ideas. We had suffered very much because we could never express ourselves freely. Of course, certain control exists everywhere, but it was too strict. But Mr. Gorbachev was very open to all the ideas which were

suggested to him. When he asked us to prepare a paper, he himself contributed to this paper. As an example, I can cite his article on the UN.

TGW: The 1987 *Pravda* article?

VP: Yes, in which I would say were all these ideas that also were very important but were forgotten. I think at that time we already suggested to strengthen the role of the United Nations as a center for agreed actions. There were very interesting ideas contained in the Charter, which were forgotten. But I always considered, and still consider, that the United Nations Charter is a kind of “sleeping beauty.” Many things could be done on the basis of the present Charter. We are speaking now about the Security Council, but much already could be done without reform. The Security Council could meet at the level of foreign ministers. Ministers have much more power to take decisions than permanent representatives. It is not necessary to have endless plenary meetings. The Security Council could have some kind of subordinate bodies which would deal with particular issues. At least the Security Council could have the meetings in different places. Why not have the Security Council in the crises areas? Even during the Cold War, we had two precedents. I think once the Security Council had a meeting in Panama and the other time somewhere in Africa. I think it is also very good. We have this difficult Yugoslavian crisis. Why has not the Security Council met close to the crisis area, from where it could send a stronger signal?

And for other areas, there are a lot of opportunities in the UN Charter which could be used. The idea of Gorbachev’s articles was to give the new reading to the UN Charter and to let the international organization pilot the global changes.

TGW: I would like to understand better how that 1987 article was drafted. Do you remember in the old Soviet Union, lots of articles were reproduced? Every airport had stacks of [Vladimir] Lenin's collected works. But, when I arrived, I was in Moscow in September—

VP: Ah, you were there!

TGW: Yes. And in my taxi—I always looked around—and in the back of my taxi was a French translation of the *Pravda* article about the United Nations. And I was there to talk about the United Nations, and I had missed it because I was not in New York. I started reading. And I thought, “This is a revolutionary document,” not to use an ideological term. I said, “I wonder where this came from?” And I showed it to my colleague and said, “Well, this must mean a real change toward the United Nations.” So I am curious as to how this document was drafted.

VP: The first draft was prepared within the Foreign Ministry. Then we send it to the office of Gorbachev. Though he had a very strong team of his own speechwriters, the draft of this article came nearly through this team unchanged.

TGW: There was supposed to have been a speech at the General Assembly?

VP: Yes, but Gorbachev did not come. He went to the UN later in 1988.

TGW: But there were some elements that represented substantial changes in policy after years of being reticent toward paying peacekeeping bills, for example. They said, “We are going to pay all the—”

VP: Yes, tremendous changes. We made it quite clear that we are starting to pay all the contribution to peacekeeping operations. It was a sensation! It went beyond expectations. But we understood that we were entering a period of deep changes, and our feeling was that we needed to pilot the change in a positive way. And we looked at the UN as a safety net which would facilitate to take advantage of globalization and to minimize its damaging effects.

TGW: What role do you think was played by the Soviet troop presence in Afghanistan and the response to the Reagan Doctrine?

VP: The Soviet intervention into Afghanistan was the start of all disasters for our country. For me, it was a major adventure, and it was understood by many people within the Foreign Ministry. But at that time, the other services depicted in a completely different way. When Gorbachev came to power, one of the first suggestions of the Foreign Ministry was to start to move out of Afghanistan.

TGW: You were head of the international organization branch. Did you think that there would be a role for the United Nations in the extrication from Afghanistan? There had never been an involvement by the UN in a Soviet sphere of influence.

VP: Yes, but in the case of Afghanistan we understood that it would be impossible to leave Afghanistan without creating some difficulties within the country. That is why we discussed the role of the UN with the UN Secretary-General and, in particular, Mr. Diego Cordoso.

TGW: I guess I was thinking more about the fact that the United Nations, in its peacekeeping mode, had never been present in a crisis in which a major power needed help. The United States did not turn to the world organization, in spite of the catastrophe in Vietnam. So when I first heard that the United Nations was not involved just in the negotiations but was also going to be involved in some kind of monitoring role there, and in Angola and in Namibia, and then, as a result of this, in the U.S. backyard, in Central America, it did seem to me that the dynamics had changed fundamentally. I was just wondering whether this seemed like a sort of thing that a superpower did not do, because the Soviet Union was still a superpower.

VP: For me, the bad examples are much more attractive than the good examples. Once you put countries that are beginning to behave with interest in their own ways, it immediately makes an attraction for the other. Good examples are not followed so easily as bad examples. And there was also strong ideological interpretation of these events.

TGW: So you went back to the United Nations. Was this before or after the disappearance of the Soviet Union?

VP: It was just after.

TGW: Just after?

VP: Just after. Again, I will tell you, my career was very unusual. I set the record. After my return to Moscow in January 1971, I stayed in Moscow twenty-one years without foreign appointments. Each time I was suggested for some kind of foreign appointment, I always received a promotion within the ministry. The reason for this was I was very much connected with generating ideas and formulating concepts.

TGW: So actually, once you returned from New York, you had been in Moscow for some twenty-one straight years?

VP: Yes, though I traveled a lot. I headed a lot of delegations. But I never had the chance to get these foreign appointments.

TGW: What role do you think your facility with English played in all of this? You said you had studied German.

VP: I studied English in the institute. In school I studied German and continued it in the institute, but I never used it after graduating the institute.

TGW: But when did you start English?

VP: I took it at the institute.

TGW: So before you got to New York.

VP: Yes.

TGW: Was this useful in facilitating diplomatic contacts thereafter?

VP: Language, of course, is an instrument for us. I don't need to stay it. The only problem you have here in Geneva is that I studied French, but you know what happens today. English has become a kind of Esperanto.

TGW: A friend of mine did a study when I was here in 1980 or 1982 on documents that were published. They are all translated, of course, but how was it written in the first place? Who wrote it? The interventions that were made in meetings, including staff meetings. And it was actually 92 of all those occurred in English, much to the chagrin of the French delegation at that point because, as you say, English had become the Esperanto.

VP: Yes, and especially now with the internet and with all these computers. I think in the new world today we are becoming a kind of global society, one society. But the more we are united economically, informationally, and so on, the more we need diversity of culture. Unity through diversity—that's my motto. That is why I started here the "dialogue of civilizations," many years before the decision was made in the General Assembly. And I found it is very useful because we promote art not for the sake of art, but for the sake of dialogue. And it works quite well now. I always supported cultural exchanges because intellectual input and artistic input are tremendously important for all organizations.

TGW: So how did you feel, going back to the multilateral context in 1991, after being twenty years in your own country? Very exciting years, but the national service and international service are quite different.

VP: Yes, it is different from the viewpoint of your allegiance. Here you speak not for the nation, but you speak for the international community. In your attitude and your approach, you should always represent the interests of the international community. But I would say that this time of *perestroika* had very much prepared me for this. At that time we had developed an understanding that national interests could be best achieved by becoming a part of global interests. That's why for me it was not difficult to change from national thinking to international thinking.

TGW: You mentioned *An Agenda for Peace*, which I think probably may be the most frequently referred to document and certainly was distributed widely. I thought I was going to find a copy of it under my bedroom pillow. I kept getting copies from all over.

VP: It is not unlike a Gorbachev article.

TGW: Almost. How was that document pulled together?

VP: Oh, that was a very interesting exercise. We did it in a very short period of time. I chaired a task force which—

TGW: The decision was made in January 1992.

VP: Yes, in January. Our group included several under-secretaries and we worked very closely with the academic community.

TGW: Who was on that group?

VP: Many under-secretaries were there. I had my own staff. The secretary of the group was Tappio Kaaninen.

TGW: He did his Ph.D. at The Graduate Center.

VP: Tappio? Ah! He is very good and very precise. In our group, we had long discussions, and we always kept the door open to suggestions from the member states and

academic community. After four months of intensive work, we introduced the draft to the Secretary-General, Mr. [Boutros] Boutros-Ghali.

TGW: He made few changes?

VP: Yes, few. He also asked Jim Sutterlin to make his suggestions. Tappio can give you all the details—he kept the records. When *Agenda for Peace* was published, it was a period of a romantic expectation, like in literature. Now we are entering the period, using the German expression, *kritische-realismus*. But at that time, there was a great enthusiasm. We worked the weekend and so on. At the end of May, we already presented the draft to the Secretary-General and it was published in mid-June.

TGW: How do you explain that euphoria that existed for a few moments?

VP: Because at that time, there was a general feeling that we were entering the period of globalization, and the only center for the exchange of ideas and for agreed actions was the United Nations. Everybody was expecting that the United Nations would lead the process in that direction and everything would go right. We saw only the positive side and not yet the negative side, though already we could see that some kind of action should be taken to prevent negative developments.

TGW: It seems rather naïve in retrospect. What triggered all of this? Was it the reaction to the Gulf War? Or was it more, as you said, recognition of globalization?

VP: The major reason for this expectation was the end of the Cold War and the impression that after confrontation, the international community would start work in accord to meet the challenges of globalization. Of course, certain lessons extracted from the Gulf War also played a role. That's why we were pushing the ideas concerning preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping. But I think if I were to draft it now, certain accents should be changed. For

example, we rightly put emphasis on the use of political and diplomatic instruments, but nowadays I would strongly advocate legal instruments. I would even say legal deterrence.

My experience at the UN has shown that there is a very interesting psychological effect when you introduce legal instruments. You lose the political flavor and you treat a problem technically. And, from this point of view, the experience of the League of Nations could be helpful because it was really successful in applying legal instruments immediately after the end of the World War. In the 1920s, we find a number of very interesting decisions from a purely diplomatic point of view. The Locarno Agreements were very interesting, both from legal and diplomatic points of view.

TGW: They don't usually get a very good reading in history books.

VP: Yes, not a good reading. But again, we need to put it in its specific circumstances. At the time of the Locarno Agreement, Germany was in the process of changes. If the Weimar Republic would have survived, the Locarno Agreements could have played a stabilizing role in Europe.

TGW: May we just stop a moment because we are within a hair of the end of the tape. This is the end of the first tape on the 17th of November.

TGW: I would not be doing my duty as a want-to-be historian if I did not ask you to retell that story about the picture of you with Messrs. Castro and Khrushchev. That must have been a very exciting moment in 1961 in downtown and uptown Manhattan.

V: Yes, exactly. It was a very exciting moment because the leaders had never met and that was their first occasion to meet. The situation was very difficult. Castro stayed in Hotel Therèse in Harlem. He had problems with the local authorities, who refused him to stay in downtown. So he said that he would put up his tent on the territory of the United Nations! Then

he moved to the Hotel Therèse, and the first meeting took place there. For the second meeting, Khrushchev invited Castro to the Soviet mission at 410 Park Avenue. As chief of protocol, I was supposed to make arrangements. There was nobody in the Cuban delegation with whom I could speak in English, so I made contact with Mr. Castro directly and we agreed on his arrival at the mission at 7:30 P.M. But that time, a lot of journalists were staying in front of the Soviet mission and waiting for Khrushchev, who liked to speak with them.

At one point around 7:30 P.M., some other head of state was passing by and somebody told Khrushchev it was Castro. He went down and there was no Castro. People were beginning to look around and ask, “Who made these arrangements?” Myself, right. I was very nervous. It was 7:30 P.M. I called Hotel Therèse and they connected me to Castro. I told him, “What is going on? Khrushchev is waiting.” He said, “I am coming right now.” Then he arrived, and of course there was some tension. But then he used the phrase, “both of us are partisans.”

TGW: But “guerrillas”?

VP: Yes, guerrillas. That’s why “down with protocol.” So the ice was broken and that was how the meeting started.

TGW: He still rarely shows up on time for things. He is always very late.

VP: It is part of Latin American culture.

TGW: There was a dinner in New York recently during the Millennium Summit. I had had this pleasure before, so I did not accept the invitation to go. But he showed up almost two hours late for the lecture that he was supposed to be giving. I actually spent three days with him in Havana in 1991. He is extraordinary—a good sense of humor.

VP: Yes. Also he has an extraordinary ability to community with the people.

TGW: Very genuine guy.

VP: I had another interesting experience as chief of protocol. Khrushchev told me that he wanted to organize a luncheon for all the heads of state who were present. This task was very complicated because there were presidents, prime ministers, and the secretary-general of the Communist Party. I did not know how to make the seating arrangements. I went to the United Nations Chief of Protocol, who refused to give any kind of advice. This was the only time I remember the United Nations had refused to provide the “technical assistance.” Then I suggested to make seating in such order: presidents, secretaries-general, and prime ministers.

TGW: So you now have a footnote in the United Nations *Handbook on Protocol*.

VP: Yes. The new precedent had been created.

TGW: I had forgotten to ask. Before you returned to New York, how was the sudden collapse of the Berlin Wall interpreted? Did this foreshadow the disappearance of the Soviet Union, or was this just seen as yet another in a series of dramatic events?

VP: First of all, we understood that the question of the unification of Germany was on the agenda. There was no doubt about it. As I have already said, we wanted to avoid any kind of violence in the process of unification. The collapse of the Berlin Wall was not associated with the processes in the Soviet Union. There was a feeling at that time that the Soviet Union could not exist any more in its present form. But there were new ideas and new approaches. Even some Baltic leaders advocated the creating of some kind of confederation. The others suggested a new form of federation. There was the understanding that the process of changes would go, but not in a radical way. Some kind of intermediate structures would appear. But the feeling that the Soviet Union could disintegrate began to appear only after the August putsch.

TGW: I will tell one small story myself here. In August of 1991, there was a hurricane on the East Coast of the United States—the first hurricane in the Providence/Boston area that

there had been in twenty years. They usually stop far short of New England. And I had a whole series of young German children who were children of friends of Geneva. So we were told that we had to go in the basement. So we went to the basement of my house. And the only news we could get concerned the weather. We would hear about the winds blowing, and they every so often they would say, "Something is going on in Moscow." Now the winds are blowing at ninety-two miles an hour, or ninety-three miles an hour. This went on for hours. By the time a tree had fallen next to our house, and the storm was all over, we walked out and all these events in Moscow had taken place. So the storm in Providence took precedence over the storm in Moscow.

VP: And that was, of course, a period of rapid changes. And there was a tremendous desire to avoid violence. And I think, taking a look back in history, we still cannot realize the importance that the violence has been avoided. The violence could have happened. It started in Romania. It was prevented, but it could take place in other parts of Eastern Europe too.

TGW: You had been so closely associated with this dramatic set of events, and changes occurred daily in Russia. Did you feel as if you were missing something by going to New York?

VP: I would say that at that time I felt like getting another diplomatic assignment. I will tell you actually what my approach was, and I advocated it and presented it in a paper in December 1991. I considered that instead of the Soviet Union we needed to create some kind of regional structure. That was my idea. But it was considered, at that time, too radical. But some kind of regionalism is needed—a new kind of regional development. It is not only traditional, classical, regional organizations; it is new regional structures like the European Union (EU). Nowadays a whole restructuring of the system of interactions between states is going on. We have not yet analyzed the new situation. On the global level, we have the United Nations and its

specialized agencies. But we have a new level that never existed before—the transcontinental. It is NATO, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and the Non-Aligned Movement. The second level is classical regional organization. At the third level, new sub-regional structures are appearing today. So I think it is also the restructuring of several layers of international cooperation, which affects very strongly sustainable development. And this is the trend today to meet the challenges of globalization. So the question is how to develop mutually enriching cooperation between all these structures. And the United Nations could become a very useful facilitator.

When I came to Geneva, I suggested, in 1994, relying on my experience with OSCE, the same consultative process between the UN, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. We now have annual meetings of the heads of these organizations. The only purpose is to develop a complementarity. For example, if we send a human rights mission to country X, then it is not necessary for the Council of Europe to send the same human rights mission there. It could be better for the council to send it to other places. We exchange the information and so on. Recently, we have initiated target oriented meetings. Europe, which has a very much advanced democratic experience, still sometimes has problems with elections in crisis areas. And we, the United Nations, because of our involvement in democratization in all other parts of the world, now know how to organize elections. And we could be very helpful on this matter. So we now have these target oriented meetings. A very pleasant surprise for me this year: the European Union for the first time joined our tripartite process. This year, I am chairing this process, and next year it will be OSCE. I think this consultative process is very useful, especially now when new regionalism is becoming a political reality.

TGW: So you see a big future for regional institutions?

VP: In Europe now, we have a number of strong regional structures—the Baltic Sea Council, the Nordic Sea Council, the Black Sea Council, Southeastern Initiative, and the Stability Pact. Regional cooperation in the Mediterranean is very much in the air. New regionalism is flourishing. And what is very interesting is that it was initiated not only by governments. In some cases, it was initiated by local authorities. I strongly hope that with the end of the Yugoslavian crisis there will be the possibility to start extensive regional cooperation.

TGW: Speaking of regional cooperation, what was your sense in Brussels at NATO when you were the first Soviet—or was it the first Russian?

VP: Russian. I will tell you—maybe I am not supposed in my official position to make comments. I have my opinion. I think there was a wrong approach both on the Russian and NATO sides to this issue. I was very impressed when I was in Brussels to see how this collective decision-making was taking place in military affairs. NATO is a nucleus for developing collective security structure on a transcontinental basis—not only with the Euro-Atlantic, but also the Euro-Asian dimension. But first of all, NATO should change its aims, because the aims were defined during the Cold War in a strongly anti-Soviet context. Maybe even the name should be changed. And for Russia, that was my recommendation from the very beginning: instead of saying no, ask to join NATO and treat NATO as the nucleus of a new transcontinental structure of collective security.

TGW: Do you think, even after Kosovo, this is a good recommendation?

VP: I think it is. At least [Vladimir] Putin now has moved in this direction for the first time. Though, as I mentioned to you, the Soviet military after the death of Stalin raised the issue of joining NATO.

TGW: Is that right?

VP: Oh, that was the proposal after the death of Stalin. But it was immediately rejected by the ideological authorities. Professionals—military and police—are very much interested in know-how. I remember my father was in the fire brigades. The first brigades were tremendously isolated from foreign experience, but they were very interested to know how the fire brigades worked in other countries—just the technical and management process. Like in diplomacy, everywhere people are very much interested in the way the solutions are found.

TGW: You mentioned over the twenty year period between 1971 and 1991 that you had attended or been a part of many delegations. Were you part of the delegations to any of the major conferences—Stockholm, Bucharest, and Rome?

VP: Mainly I was head of the delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, after departure of the Foreign Ministry. Then my special responsibility was non-proliferation. I led our delegation to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), and actually we developed the constructive dialogue with this body. Chernobyl for me was a major experience. Actually, the immediate reaction to Chernobyl was for party authorities to close all the information, not to agitate the people, not to create panic. I was appointed chairman of the working group within the government, so we recommended to President Gorbachev to open the information and to involve the IAEA. He accepted our proposal. We prepared for him this draft of his famous statement. By the way, it was the first opening to real international cooperation.

The cooperation with IAEA on Chernobyl was very successful, and I would say for non-proliferation too. I kept these negotiations all the time, because even during this Afghan crisis, when everything had been suspended the only line of communication with western countries and others was for nonproliferation. We had very good cooperation with Americans, with the British, and with Germany. So I worked very hard with IAEA restructuring the whole policy. I

also dealt with UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). And, as I told you, because I was very much involved in *glasnost*, I was dealing with the European forums on the freedom of press. We prepared this first draft on the freedom of press with—how do you call the man who goes into outer space?

TGW: Astronaut.

VP: Yes, astronaut. It is Yuri Baturin. He was one of the major persons behind this draft agreement at the London Forum. And also this famous CSCE conference on the humanitarian dimension, which was held in September after the August putsch, was also a very difficult experience. At that time, the government did not know whether to have this conference or not, and I insisted very strongly in favor of the conference. I remember President Gorbachev was very much in doubt whether to have it or not. He said to me and Mr. Yakovlev, “Go to have the consultations with the United States and European countries. If they will insist, then we will have this conference. If not, then we will not have it. After this putsch, there are so many domestic problems.”

I had a very good meeting with representatives of these countries, and the message I received was very nearly unanimous. They said, “Do whatever is more convenient to you.” Still, I insisted on having the conference in September in Moscow. Foreign Minister B. Parkin strongly supported me. We said that especially in the period of democratic change, the introduction of international standards of human rights was very important. And President Gorbachev agreed.

TGW: I had asked you about the conferences because there are two views about global ad hoc conferences for the transmission of ideas: either that they are key, that they bring together different kinds of national governments and NGOs in the UN system, or that they are a

waste, with big expenditures and no results. I just wondered whether, in your view, these sessions were useful, or whether in general you could do without them.

VP: I would avoid this categorical approach. I think they are useful in the sense that they provide the possibility to mobilize public opinion, different NGOs, and governments. But these conferences can be counterproductive if they produce only words, when there is no program of action. The general appeals remind me a little bit of the practice in the former Soviet Union, when the good words replaced the practical deeds. If it is a conference, the conference should have immediate follow-up, a program of action. To have a follow-up creates a different impression and a different attitude. That is why we insisted very strongly for the Millenium Assembly to have a follow-up. But the conferences without follow-up ups, I think, are a waste of money. They will be soon forgotten.

TGW: Another kind of transmission belt happens through the reports that are done by eminent groups of persons. You mentioned earlier Pearson or Brandt or Brundtland. Both as a government official, and now as an international official who sees agencies in action, are these reports useful in getting reactions or follow-up from both governments and international secretariats? Or are they not so useful?

VP: Again it depends on how we work. If there is an agreement on certain actions, then it gives us the opportunity to ask governments to report on their activities and to press on the implementation. If there are general appeals, nothing could begin and everybody just gives lip service to these matters. But actually, the agencies now are very much pressing for specific programs of action in particular fields, which is very good. Of course, there is a big problem for us on how to develop cooperation with the agencies, and especially now that there is a change in the way governments are working. We have a problem because, for example, my constituency at

the national level is foreign ministers. The constituencies for the agencies are other ministers. And what keeps us united with the heads of state and others coming here? Very often even on the national level it is hard to coordinate policy with regard to international organizations.

TGW: Out of all of these major reports that have been done, you said, “It depends.” Which of these do you think have had the biggest impact?

VP: From these conferences, I think the Copenhagen summit (World Summit on Social Development). It has had an impact because there was a strong trends towards concentrating on more pragmatic issues, so it has kept the social dimension in the foreground. It is also strongly supported by the European Community. Of course, good work has been done on the environment. But to be quite frank—and this is my concern—on the environment we need to go much more strongly, because at the Millenium Summit this issue was a little bit overshadowed.

TGW: You mentioned both in your presentation to our group yesterday, and you mentioned in your own first remarks today the importance of remaining in contact with academia. Why?

VP: Because the challenges we are facing today are completely unprecedented. Of course, you could learn a lot from history, but not all could be applied. Being a part of academia myself, I know that when you are fully involved in academia you are free from day-to-day routines. You have a chance to have a much broader outlook, and you are much more open to new ideas. That is why the input of academia provides a good opportunity for brainstorming. Plus, also very important from academia, we could receive strong input and a broader vision of global development in the social and philosophical dimension. I am very much impressed by philosophical studies which are developed now in Europe. Philosophers now discuss the issue of a new civilizational paradigm. It is not only theory. For us, it is a practical approach—how to

deal with this. We need to deal with the changes brought by globalization. Sometimes we too much demonize globalization. The difficulties we are facing today could be explained by the change of the civilizational paradigm. That is why I think academic input can be helpful for us to provide a better context for what we are doing.

TGW: How concretely could the United Nations, or the United Nations system, make better use of theoreticians or academics who have ideas?

VP: I think to have periodic discussions on particular issues. Now different universities and institutes concentrate very strongly on diplomacy. Why not have meetings on multilateral diplomacy. And with the internet we could now learn very easily who is in this field. In particular, I see a major problem. My major message would be that we need to concentrate on global, regional, and national governance and to learn how to pilot changes in a positive way.

TGW: You mentioned that you had begun to get together UN research institutes. Is there a reason to have UN research institutes if activities are going on in universities? What is the comparative advantage of a UN research institute versus a university?

VP: A comparative advantage is that UN institutes consist of people from different countries. That is why they provide some kind of a global view of globalization, an attempt to build compromise approaches to the matters. But of course, if we developed the dialogue we could see if it could go further.

TGW: They understand what is going on more, but they are usually prevented from saying most things that are at all critical.

VP: Yes. But like I said, in Moscow during the *perestroika* period, the institutes were tremendously helpful for us. They provided a lot of input for these new ideas.

TGW: In speaking of ideas, which ideas during either your tenure in the UN or your tenure as a Soviet observer and participant in the UN do you think have really made a difference? Which have really shaken up the system, forced people to think differently, and then actually led to new policies?

VP: Very important was the drive to the integrated approach to peace, development, and human rights. In the past, our approach was, as I told you, only peace promotion. Now we could deal with the challenge of our time in a comprehensive way. Then I think it is also a very important idea to see the United Nations, not only as a forum open to the search for ideas but also as a center for agreed action. Also I think another important point which is stressed very strongly now by the Secretary-General is that we are a people-centered organization. It has changed immediately our constituencies, and we work much more closely with civil society and the private sector. It is tremendously important because on the issue of the social dimension we are ready to consider different points of view in a much more civilized way than at the demonstrations on the streets. It was done, by the way, in the Social Summit here in Geneva. We avoided any kind of clashes. A lot of work still should be done, of course.

And I wish also to repeat that we need to advocate the balance of interests approach. And also to show that in international organizations, of course, military and economic factors continue to be important, but the quality of leadership and of diplomatic skills is an important role as well. In other words, software is also important, not only hardware.

TGW: You mentioned leadership. As you think back over the last fifty years of the United Nations, who were the people who played the most important intellectual roles, who made a difference?

VP: Of course, first of all, the founding fathers. And in particular Roosevelt played an important role in creating the ideas, which is still not, I think, fully realized. Roosevelt's contribution was tremendous. I mean, first of all there was his strategic vision and tactical approach to the United Nations. But I think, again, that at different periods there were leaders who created particular attitudes to the UN. Take, for example, the leadership of liberation movements. Jawaharlal Nehru, Khrushchev, and his American counterparts—Eisenhower and Kennedy—also played an interesting role in their time. They did not shake up the United Nations, but they understood the necessity of cooperation.

Then, of course, the changes started. Here, Gorbachev was important. I would say there were some leaders in Central Europe, like Václav Havel, who played an important role, particularly in providing moral standards and moral values for organizations.

TGW: How would you characterize the people who work for the United Nations whom you have encountered over the years? How do they compare with the ideal of the international civil service? How do they compare with what you think is necessary? And how do they compare with a typical national civil service in qualifications, dedication, et cetera?

VP: In each service you have people who are really dedicated to certain ideas. And then you have pure professionals. From this point of view, I would not say—even in the national services you have people who are really dedicated, and others who go there to take advantage of this profession. The question is about proportions. This may be difficult to answer. Human nature is more or less the same in all structures. You have the extremists and you have the moderate people, the centrists. More or less, in the UN there are more people who got accustomed to working the bases of balance of interests, understanding that they represent different cultures. And the work in the organizations makes it necessary for people to develop

compromise. We are not an ideal organization, like any other bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is becoming a new global problem, at all levels. It has never been treated so, but I think it contains the same ills. That is why the introduction of responsible management behavior is particularly important.

TGW: One of the things that would certainly strike someone in Geneva—you mentioned this as the hub of economic and social and humanitarian affairs. How much unproductive concern with turf, to use the usual term, do you see here, versus how much pulling for the system as a whole? Criticisms are really made of the system, as they are made of lots of things, that there is far too much concern with careers, and my share of the pie, and my share of the ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination). How do you react to a criticism like that?

VP: Actually, criticism is very helpful. I am not afraid of the problems. My experience is that I have lived the last two decades in crisis situations. And I think problems are natural. It's a way of life. The real trouble starts when you are not solving problems. If a problem is there, you need immediately to see its essence and then to start to find a solution. You need to keep people informed and involved, in search of solutions. But one of the major problems for us, and of course for the whole organization—and in Geneva we have it also very strongly—was the wide range of different organizations. I advocate now very strongly, and even make the push, to create some kind of common services. Of course, we are different from the standpoint of substantive work. What we are doing at the Conference on Disarmament cannot be compared with WHO. But still we have related problems. First of all, information, travel arrangements, the provision of medical services. And we need to create common services, thus to avoid the duplication and to save money. The major problems, if you will ask me, for Geneva—and for the whole organization—is to do more with less resources. We need additional resources. And

these resources could be saved through better management, and whenever possible the complementarity of activity between different structures.

TGW: Do you think that clashes among these organizations are healthy? Do they lead to more productivity? Do they lead to new ideas? Or are they merely bureaucratic waste?

VP: I think both elements are present. But what is very important, as an example, Geneva should develop some kind of club relations between the heads of organizations. We have now established close relations with all heads of the agencies and the programs. People ask me sometimes, "How could it happen? You have such a high level of the heads of agencies. Many of them are former heads of state or governments." But it is a paradox. With such people, it is easier to deal. We have now developed a system of regular meetings. We have created a joint management and ownership committee, which reports directly to our meetings. We hope that through better procurement we will be able to save money. And my other idea is to do the same with our institutions to create also a common service for our academic community.

TGW: How would you compare the productivity of either officials or institutions based in Geneva versus New York? Is it about the same? Is it less?

VP: It is the same. The major problem, as I told you, is that the work of New York is very visible. It is the visible part of the UN iceberg because of decision-making of political statements. But tremendous work is done here. Whenever there is a crisis, we in Geneva immediately provide technical assistance and cooperation, whether it is a political/military crisis or natural disasters. This happens on a day-to-day basis. But it goes very often unnoticed. When something happens, it immediately draws attention. When I came here it was a time of turmoil. I kept the fingers crossed, but in the last years more or less things have been going well. Take UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), human rights, natural disasters. Nobody

speak of how many problems we have with natural disasters. What is done here is going completely unnoticed. But it shows that the UN structures work in a proper way.

And I think the staff is ready to take the new challenges. The staff understands the need to delegate work. What is very important is to delegate more authority to the Geneva office. We are still too centralized. I do not want to make the comparison with the Soviet Union, but we are set up with this centralization. Delegation of authority is not only to give me and my colleagues more authority, but also make it transparent. The delegation of authority should be accompanied by increasing responsibility. People would work much more enthusiastically if it did not interfere all the time into the micro-management at different levels.

TGW: One of the biggest changes in international relations in the United Nations in the last twenty or thirty years—and it is also I suppose one of the largest changes in the former Soviet Union—is the appearance of nongovernmental organizations, the expansion of civil society. How do you see this contributing to the work of the United Nations?

VP: As I have already mentioned, they are contributing substantially. When we are dealing with actions, for us the major source for knowing what is going on is nongovernmental organizations. But the real problem, as I see it, with nongovernmental organizations is the quantity of these organizations—a large number. And the problem is how this large number of organizations can make an input to our activities. When I was in Moscow, my suggestion was to create some kind of parallel general assembly of nongovernmental organizations more or less with the same structures as the UN General Assembly. Then it would be easier to get input from these organizations. Because it is a real headache how to get input from these organizations into our structures because there are too many and they do not always bring their suggestions to our

attention at the right moment. The parallel assembly of NGOs would facilitate our contacts with them. I understand they are also thinking about this.

TGW: It would be difficult to select them.

VP: Oh, it will take time to reach the agreement. The problem is that some NGOs have dozens of people, the others only two or three. But the general number of NGOs is tremendous. I think officially it is about 1,000 organizations. What can we do? I could not see all of them. But we need to have a dialogue with them because, as I said, my major concern was the participation of civil society, particularly in the new democracies, in practical deeds.

TGW: When you were re-appointed in 1999, what were the issues for your next term? What made you stay on? Is it still fun? Is this a good moment to be here?

VP: Actually, it is a good moment. Geneva is on the rise, and I feel I continue to contribute to piloting changes here.

TGW: As you look at the next half decade, or the next decade, or the next two decades, what are the biggest intellectual challenges that the UN system faces? What are the biggest issues that they need, that we need to come to grips with?

VP: The biggest issue, maybe I will return to what I have said—to find the answers to the question how to achieve the aims on which we have agreed. How to do it, how to move things, and how to organize our relations with the new actors, starting with regional organizations and NGOs. We need to become a center for all these new actors, to be helpful to them, to start to work with them. This is a new challenge for us.

TGW: That is an operational challenge.

VP: You are thinking about intellectual, of course. The intellectual challenge should be how to create this global society, united not only by economy and information, but also by high

moral standards. I think one of my major, I would say, disappointments is that the moral standards have been a bit loose. Now, at least at this Millennium Assembly, we are pushing them. Because you can work for solutions, but you should also be guided by moral standards. We need to be idealistic in our mindsets and pragmatic on actions.

TGW: When are you getting around to writing your memoirs?

VP: Not yet.

TGW: What are you going to call them? You have a good title, don't you?

VP: I never kept records. That is my problem. And sometimes you forget some of the details. You need also to read some of the materials, but actually all of my life was in practical diplomacy. Even when I was in politics, I was dealing with diplomacy.

TGW: Is there a question that you wished I had asked or a story you would like to tell?

VP: There are so many stories, to be quite frank. I just don't know what to tell. So many stories, so many impressions. The major thing, and the major lessons, is to keep human dignity in a period of changes. All these changes were a good testing ground for human nature. What I respect most of all: people could be different, but they could hold human dignity, even with people who adhere to different views.

TGW: Perhaps that is a good place to end this interview of Vladimir Petrovsky by Tom Weiss on the 18th of November. This is the end of tape number two.

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