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**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF**

**JAN PRONK**

**BY**

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THOMAS G. WEISS: Jan, I wonder whether you could tell the record a little something about your family background, where you grew up, and whether in your view there is any link between this background and your eventual political career or political stances.

JAN PRONK: I was born in 1940, about six weeks before the Netherlands was invaded by the Germans in the Second World War. I do not remember much from the Second World War. But the last winter period, I was about four to five years old, does contain a number of events which I really was conscious of: the hunger; the Germans in the streets also chasing people; the liberation; the planes flying over the Hague, which is the city in which I was born, in the Netherlands; bringing food to the people; the liberation with Canadians in the streets; the flags being waved. Together it did set a framework, of course, in the setting of many stories of my parents, about what happened in the war and the discussion in the Netherlands on fascism, tolerance, Nazism, freedom.

It did play a role during my education at school, but it was not only theory. The fact that I really had some specific images of the war did help me understand things. And for that reason, I always tried to read newspapers. I had an interest in information, news. When I finished my secondary school, I started to study economics and that was a rather deliberate choice. I wanted to study a social science. In the framework of my study of economics, I could make a choice for business economics and macroeconomics. It was a deliberate choice to study macroeconomics for social and political reasons. I was extremely lucky to have as a teacher Jan Tinbergen, who was the most well-known Dutch economist, world famous. I wanted to study with him irrespective, more or less, of what he was teaching, because I thought to be very close to such a renowned scholar could not be missed. You should not avoid such an opportunity. And he was the teacher who really helped me to establish a link between my discipline, macroeconomics, and

politics, the thinking of political order, a social order, peace, development. It was a rather logical sequel of a number of, not perhaps choices which I had made, but opportunities which I had been given, during my childhood, and during the period I was in school and studying. And after that I was developing a rather logical interest in questions of development, world order systems. Without the two important events, the Second World War and having Jan Tinbergen as a teacher, it would perhaps have been different, but this may explain an ongoing interest.

TGW: What did your parents do? How did they make their living and what kind of religious background did they have or you have?

JP: We are members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which is a Protestant church. We have many different Protestant churches in the Netherlands. It was the regular, bigger Protestant church in the Netherlands. My father was a schoolteacher; my mother was a schoolteacher as well. As a matter of fact, the whole family does consist of schoolteachers—my brother and sister. I am the only exception. From my father's family—his father, for instance—I have a relation with the, well, fisheries industry, because I was born in the Hague, but in particular, in Scheveningen, which is a part of the Hague, a seaside resort at present. But it mainly was known as a fishing harbor. And my grandfather was a skipper. My grandmother never had regular Dutch clothes; she was always wearing a traditional costume. My mother has a background, her family in Rotterdam, and that was a background of civil servants, another category of people.

TGW: Is there a link between religion, this schoolteacher background, and your own political views, which are categorized, I suppose, in the Netherlands, as somewhere to the left of the spectrum?

JP: I was always, each Sunday, going to church, and I was also in my student days a Sunday schoolteacher, because I liked, though I was not a schoolteacher officially, I liked to

teach. And I was very much interested in questions on the relation between religion, church, and society. Where I was going to church in Scheveningen, there was a traditional interest in preaching on those specific issues—ethics and religion, but in particular not only micro-ethics but macro-ethics. You may say that, for instance, religious philosophers, such as Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German scholars were often quoted and were seen as guiding teachers, a link perhaps also with what was known in Germany as *die bekennende Kirche*, the church which makes a choice. I also was influenced by Dutch religious teachers, such as Kraemer and Verkuyl, who on the basis of Christian mission in developing countries had become politically progressive, tried to do away with traditional missionary activities, bringing in humanitarian activities as well as political activities, to the extent that they were asking for understanding for wishes of people in developing countries who wanted to become independent.

On the basis of such contacts within my church, I rather soon, but helped by a number of older friends, established a relationship with the thinking in the World Council of Churches. In 1968, I was one of the members of the Netherlands Youth delegation to the Netherlands Youth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala. Each seven years such an assembly was taking place. It had started the World Ecumenical Movement in 1948, in the meetings in Amsterdam, and Evanston, and New Delhi. I was following those meetings and the writings on it. That meeting in Uppsala was quite important for me, because it brought everything together—religious macro-ethics as well as my own study on economics and on the economics of developing countries and contacts with progressive young people coming from Third World countries.

The quest for liberation and independence was linked with the necessity to change the societies of the richer countries themselves. In Uppsala, for instance, a very important agenda

item was how to combat racism within northern countries. And the question how to give shape to missionary activities in developing countries, the traditional mandate of the churches, was formulated upside down: do missions at home. You have to change your own societies, rather than going out of your own societies to Third World countries to preach the gospel. Don't preach the gospel overseas, but translate the gospel at home into such a change in domestic policies that people in other countries really are able themselves to find a good place in God's creation.

Such activities on the verge between religion, social action, and politics were for me quite important—not completely new, though, because in the second half of the 1960s, in the Netherlands, we had a kind of the renewal movement throughout the society in which, in particular, the younger generation did play a role. It was a protest movement against the generation which had dominated political, social, and cultural life during the 1950s, the period of recovery after the war. Though I was not in the middle of it, I became quite interested and gradually also politically active in a new left movement within my political party. This was the Labor party, which I had joined in 1964, right after I had finished my studies in economics in Rotterdam.

TGW: Did you do a thesis? Or what degree level did you finish in 1964? And in spite of the fact that you had this profound respect for Professor Tinbergen and his role as a scholar, you obviously chose a more active career with economics rather than an analytical one. Was there any particular event that pushed in that direction?

JP: In 1964, when I was finishing my studies, with what could be at that time seen as an M.A. in economics—it was a different title at the University of Rotterdam—I was offered a choice between two options. I was selected for the diplomatic service or I could join the team of

scientific collaborators of Jan Tinbergen in Rotterdam in order to do research, to assist in teaching at the university. I wanted to go abroad, but I thought it would be better to further educate myself by continuing research in his team, rather than going abroad in diplomatic service as soon as possible. So I took the opportunity to stay in the university and I was teaching development economics, doing research on development questions as well as on another field of work of Jan Tinbergen, which was the theory of optimum regime: what is the best economic order for a society? It is a kind of sequel to his thinking on what is the best economic policy in a country, being followed by his research on development planning or on economic planning. It is on the basis of such research in the 1930s on business cycles policies, in the 1940s on reconstruction policies, in the 1950s on stabilization policies, anti-inflation policies, anti-unemployment policies, better income distribution policies. In the meantime, he became very much interested in questions concerning aid to developing countries. Thereafter, he elaborated techniques for development programming, the planning of economic development in macro terms, and in specific sectors in developing countries. In the 1960s, this was followed by work on international cooperation and programming.

Of course, the distinction between the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and the 1960s is very rough, but you understand the stages more or less. During all these stages, he expressed an interest in the search for optima: the optimum rate of savings, optimum economic growth, optimum taxation schemes, the theory of optimum economic regime, the optimum distribution, et cetera. Thereby, he used the welfare economics approach. So, for instance, what is the optimum regime for a society within which economic policy, planning, growth, and development can flourish? I was doing research on this together with my teaching on all aspects of development processes. In the team, which was a team at the Netherlands Economic Institute at Erasmus University of

Rotterdam, I gradually became the person who in particular did the popularizing, the addressing of other groups in the Netherlands on issues such as development aid, international trade, and UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) questions, which after 1964 became quite important.

I was more or less interested in just building abstract models. Well, it is a combination of such activities: research, teaching, and public information on development questions, which kept me busy for six, seven years. I was working on a Ph.D. thesis on the optimum economic regime, but gradually I became more interested in development questions themselves, which took most of my time. And then we had elections in the Netherlands in 1971. As a matter of fact, the spokesperson for my party, the Labor Party, on development cooperation died. I was at the time, in the Netherlands, well-known as a spokesperson for development issues. I was active in my party, so I was asked to run as a candidate. I just made it in 1971 and became a member of Parliament. I had to relinquish my ties with the university because being a member of Parliament is a full-time profession in the Netherlands. So, I became the spokesman of the opposition for development issues right away.

TGW: All of us have mentors, and we are very fond of them. But not many of us have a Nobel Prize winner for a mentor. What was he like as a person? Was this an inspiring or was this a more distant relationship?

JP: It was extremely inspiring, also because he was so modest. He was widely recognized as one of the most brilliant scientists in the Netherlands. He had been the founding father of econometrics, in the 1930s. He was, with Ragnar Frisch from Norway, the first Nobel Prize winner in economics. I remember how he received the prize. He was very pleased with it, but he also did say, which was characteristic, that he would have wished to have received the

Nobel Prize for peace. For him, it was always more important to translate his theoretical thinking into concrete development and peace and reconstruction activity. Whenever—which was a very important lesson for me—whenever he could make a choice between further elaborating theoretical research into even better theoretical abstract models or trying to translate it into policy advice, even if not all data would be available as is so often the case in developing countries, he would go for the second. He was criticized for this by a new generation of econometricians at the University of Rotterdam in the 1960s—Henry Theil—but he made that deliberate choice.

He was a very good teacher. He was able to make even the most complicated questions transparent. I became fascinated by his way of thinking: orderly, systematic, and focused on the purpose of finding solutions for priority problems. He was extremely modest also as a person. He had the smallest room possible you could think of in the university, about one-quarter of the size of the room in which we have this interview. He always took with him just handmade sandwiches by his wife to the office and nothing else—no official lunches, never. Everybody loved him. At the same time, he was a bit away from reality. I wonder whether he could easily have survived if he would have been part of a harsh daily reality.

He had very simple things in which he really could enjoy himself. He loved tramways. When he got the Nobel Prize, we organized a festivity for him in Rotterdam, and we were driving with an old-fashioned tramway through the city, and he enjoyed it very much. He died in 1991, about ninety years old. Until the last week of his life, he was still writing articles, sometimes giving an interview, writing letters, also to me—which he had done since I had become a minister in the early 1970s—sometimes giving me advice on his own initiative. So he never stopped thinking, writing, working.



TGW: In some ways he sounds like my own mentor, Leon Gordenker, at least in terms of modesty and this unpretentiousness with which he approaches things. And he remains active, very active, in his late seventies. I hope he continues until ninety. You used the word earlier to describe your task in terms as a “popularizer.” For a while, you also wrote a column in a Dutch weekly.

JP: A Dutch weekly, which is *Economisch Statistische Berichten* (ESB), which is the opinion weekly for economists.

TGW: This is something like *The Economist* or—

JP: No, it is also a weekly in which you could find more or less theoretical literature, but very often it is policy-oriented. So, you say, *The Economist* in the U.K. (United Kingdom)? No, this is more academic, but it is not an academic theoretical journal. *The Far Eastern Economic Review* is a bit more like that. But it is for economic policymakers, businessmen, students, and it is still the weekly for economists.

TGW: Did you think of making that as a career, or as an alternative career—as a journalist?

JP: I was pleased, as a matter of fact, to leave academics, because I like studying and analyzing, but I really missed a link with action or with politics. If I would not have had my activities going through the country, delivering speeches, writing articles, popularizing, speaking at conferences and congresses, then my agenda would not have given me much reason for satisfaction. “What am I going to do during the next three months?,” is not a question which appeals to me. At the university, we were thinking in terms of a research and teaching mandate for the next quarter of a year. That made me nervous. When I became a minister, later on, I had

an agenda on the basis of quarters of hours, which was the other opposite, rather than quarters of years.

I enjoy politics, management, analysis, study, and reflection. But I need a combination. It should not be only action, because it then becomes superficial, neither only study, because it becomes empty. As a matter of fact, I had two teachers. Tinbergen is one, and the one other was Joop den Uyl, the leader of the opposition in the 1960s, and my first prime minister in the 1970s. He was then the main Labor politician. He was exactly the opposite of Tinbergen. Tinbergen went from theory to practice. Den Uyl went from practice to theory. He was a very good politician, controversial, an original thinker, an intellectual. People either loved him or hated him. I loved him. He never said, "I have decided and this is final." He continued asking questions, tried to underpin his political choices with a foundation which satisfied both theoretical insights and a value system. I needed these two teachers to understand the dynamic balance between political action and analytical wisdom.

TGW: This may seem like a strange question, but it is coming from an American, and that is: You described your entrance into politics and your interest in development. How can one make a political career on the basis of what is essentially kind of a foreign policy matter?

JP: The Netherlands is a small country. Joseph Luns, a former minister of foreign affairs, used to say: "we are so small that we have an extremely big world outside us, and that makes foreign relations more important than for a bigger country for which the world is much smaller because it is more self-contained. The Netherlands has a history of relations with other countries which are still dominant for our own fate and future, both in political and economic terms. Sixty percent of our national income is export-based, unlike the USA, where it is less than ten percent.

This is creating a different society, also in cultural terms. Not that Dutch people are so open-minded, as it is sometimes being said. Often the Dutch are rather parochial. But we have more information about the world outside us than people in a big country do have. Moreover, there is an awareness of being dependent on the outside world, in particular on stability, welfare, and peace in Europe. Policies in the Netherlands were oriented towards European cooperation and integration: never again a holocaust; no new world war; unify Europe, not only for economic reasons, but in particular to do away with the conflicts on the European continent, which had plagued this continent for centuries.

European integration was a political, not an economic mandate, intertwining the economies of the six and later on the nine and twelve European countries, as the only possibility to avoid a future conflict. This went together with decolonization. We had two colonies—one in the East, Indonesia; one in the West, Surinam—and the Dutch Antilles. These three issues—European integration, the Cold War, and decolonization—were very important for, in particular, small countries in Europe. For such countries, much more than for a big country, such as the United States, foreign relations are determining the destiny of the nation.

TGW: I guess I was also intrigued, though. The European Union strikes me as an easier case to make for a European than development aid, assistance, or cooperation, which still seems to me, even for an outward-looking Dutchman or woman, a more difficult payoff and a more difficult path

JP: That may be true, but things go very fast in society. You may say that a progressive person, in the 1950s, was in favor of a strong NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and a strong Europe. That person would have become an established thinker and an established politician, at the turn of the 1950s into the 1960s. In the mid-1960s, it had become mainstream

thinking. Europe plus NATO. Progressive people, at that time—and I am speaking in particular about young people—were thinking beyond those categories. Progressive views became, in particular, framed by alternative thinking on decolonization.

In that period, the establishment was still in favor of keeping the colonies. That was in particular the case in the Netherlands. In the 1940s, the Dutch government had sent twice—in 1947 and 1949—so-called policing expeditions to Indonesia, which had declared itself independent. That was a traumatic experience for progressive people already at that time, because they felt that the Netherlands was denying independence to others, two years after we had become liberated ourselves from foreign occupation. I was one of those who, in the 1960s, discussed alternative answers to such questions. In our view, development did not only mean economic development, but also independence, and self-reliance, and eradication of poverty by people in developing countries themselves, instead of “doing good” for them.

TGW: Actually, I would sort of like to go back to decolonization and independence. Do you recall—I don’t know, I suppose this would be the mid-to-the-late 1950s, not the Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Asian independence, but the first rumblings of African independence. And then quickly after, Ghanaian independence and others became independent, do you recall thinking that this was going to be important? I saw this because certain people—Brian Urquhart recently said that at the outset of the charter regime, most statesmen were thinking that this would take seventy-five to a hundred years. And here, by the time you were in university, clearly it is fifteen years later and we are in a new era. Do you recall, other than the Indonesian case, these other independence movements?

JP: In Europe, the struggle in Algeria, for instance, played an important role because it was affecting one of our allies in the European Union. France was denying independence to

Algiers, which had major consequences for human rights as well as for the domestic political situation in France itself. I also remember strongly the beginning of the group of non-aligned in 1956, the Bandung conference. Then I was sixteen years old. It was heralded as a very important event in the newspapers.

As a matter of fact, I remember Sukarno, [Gamal Abdel] Nasser, [Jawaharlal] Nehru, as being portrayed as leaders, as heroes, not as villains. In the Netherlands, however, Sukarno was seen as a villain, because he had declared Indonesia independent and because he was chasing the Dutch out of Indonesia in the 1950s. Worldwide he was a hero. If you held Nasser and Nehru in high esteem for their leadership of the non-aligned, you could not make a distinction between these two and Sukarno.

In the 1950s, Africa played a lesser role in the political debate in the Netherlands. South Africa in Holland always had been an important issue, though racism was not. The traditional relationship between the Dutch and South Africa is well known, of course, and they were speaking our language and, as a matter of fact, the Boers came from Holland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, in the 1950s, information about apartheid started to have consequences for the traditionally good relations. Other events as far as Africa was concerned, including those in Congo, got more prominent attention during the turn of the 1950s into the 1960s. Korea—I remember very well, but that must have been true for everybody in the world, how important Korea was. We also had a Dutch battalion in the United Nations forces. The war in Korea did play a role in making people aware that there was a world outside Europe and the U.S. That was not a matter of left or right, but it was a matter of willingness to look beyond traditional borders. So these early North-South issues, together with the East-West conflict—Hungary—were the major issues in the 1950s.

TGW: I am interested, in particular, in your recollection of Bandung. And I wonder whether this was linked to Indonesia and reporting on Indonesia. I mean, the location of the conference, per se, because I have asked several other people and—

JP: That can have been the case. I do not remember. Indonesia did play a role, of course, in the Dutch newspapers. As I said, we were being chased out. We had a West Irian policy, which was very prominent. The Dutch government did not want West Irian to become part of an independent Indonesia. That also was a question dividing left and right in the Netherlands, but the left on this issue was extremely small in the 1950s. However, the general view was that we were losing Indonesia. The country had had a great cultural significance for Holland as a country with the history of an imperium. Many people who had come back in Holland from Indonesia and had been integrated well. A minority group coming from the Moluccan Islands was an exception in this respect. Throughout the years, this group kept our colonial history alive by claiming independence for the Moluccans, independence from Indonesia, as a matter of fact, and demanding support from the colonial state—the Netherlands.

TGW: Is it in retrospect the seeming coherence of solidarity of Sukarno, Nasser, and Nehru, who were then becoming a larger force in world politics?

JP: No, this is not a retrospect. That is what I remember.

TGW: At about this same time, apparently thereafter, the First Development Decade is articulated by John Kennedy at the General Assembly. What do you recall from that moment? Was it exciting, or was it seen as a kind of a political gesture that was empty of content or of import?

JP: The development issue came already in the 1950s, in the Netherlands. There was a major speech by the Dutch queen, in 1954, in St. Peter's church in Leiden. Queen Juliana's

speech in 1954 can be considered path-breaking at the time, but it's still modern. Of course, the terminology is different, but the ideas are modern. At the time, we got a grassroots movement in the Netherlands lobbying for development aid. Churches played a role, but also others. And the well-known NGO (nongovernmental organization), NOVIB (Netherlands Organization for International Support), was founded at that time.

So development gradually became an issue, on the political agenda in particular, of civil society. The main issue was to increase aid to developing countries, but United Nations thinking on trade, as a necessary complement of aid, was also put on the agenda, in particular by civil society groups. I remember the launching of the First Development Decade. Tinbergen was involved in the model building for the United Nations Development Decade. At that time, he was the chairperson of the Committee on Development Planning (CDP). Tinbergen was also, in his lectures at the university, referring often to the work of Jakob Mosak as the United Nations economist working out a model for the First Development Decade. Tinbergen also often referred to other UN publications on how to program development, for instance those by ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)—at that time it was ECAFE (Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East)—and ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America). So I was very familiar with the First Development Decade as a student of Tinbergen.

TGW: Were there references—this is interesting, because I am going to ask to what extent the United Nations came up in the curriculum, or earlier on, before getting to university, and whether the League of Nations did? Was there an enthusiasm that surrounded the United Nations as part of the curriculum in secondary school?

JP: I didn't know much about the League of Nations as school boy. You knew about it. I had not been aware about the economic work within the League of Nations. You were told that the League of Nations had been too weak. The most well-known event for youngsters in the lessons about the League of Nations, of course, was Ethiopia. You learned about the failure of the League of Nations and not the reasons why it had failed. I did not have much insight in the work of the League of Nations. It was something of the past.

Consciousness very often starts with something which you have witnessed, in one way or another. I listened to my father's stories about the economic recessions of the 1930s as to tales from a distant past. Stories about the war I could understand because I had been part of it—of course, not really, but there were images which were branded on my eyes. The United Nations, for me, was Korea, because what had happened in the 1940s I could not very strongly relate to the UN. Korea was perhaps the first important event as a youngster. Thereafter came the vetoes in the Security Council. That was prominent. That's what you understood as a schoolboy in the 1950s. Well, you may say, after I was sixteen or seventeen years old, I started to get more insight in it. And again it was Tinbergen, who helped me a little bit, because he had worked with the League of Nations in the 1930s and developed his business cycle theory. There he had developed his econometric work, with [Trygve] Haavelmo, an international trade economist. Both worked in the framework of the League of Nations in the 1930s.

TGW: What about the other subjects that were—that you lived through, that may have had an impact on ideas? I am thinking here in terms of international cooperation or assistance, as it were, of self-enlightened self-interest, the investment of the Marshall Plan. What do you recall from that? And how did this enter into the classroom, if at all?



JP: You knew about it—the Marshall Plan and OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)—as a school boy. You knew that Marshall aid had been given by the generous United States. That was the way it had been portrayed. In the 1950s, I became aware that it also was quite sophisticated. There was an economic interest for the United States in helping Europe, not only a political one. Moreover, it meant demand stimulation, which is important for world stability. And thirdly, it was sophisticated in terms of decision-making. Countries taught themselves good economic governance. OECD countries were allowed to decide themselves how to spend the aid, according to their own priority, but taking into account some boundary conditions. The United States were not going to tell Europe which investment projects ought to be financed out of Marshall assistance. This was a sophisticated, modern approach.

At the same time, I soon became aware that the Marshall assistance could not be seen as the model for development assistance, because it was a capital injection into a structure which was basically healthy, in terms of knowledge and social and political systems. It was reconstruction assistance. The bottleneck was capital. Everything else was more or less in place, which is not the case in a developmental process.

TGW: What about the role of the Bretton Woods institutions? And I presume that Tinbergen was a colleague or acquaintance of [John Maynard] Keynes and dug into management. How were these institutions portrayed in relationship to what they could have been or should have been? Where was the world going in terms of economic management?

JP: Tinbergen was more UN-oriented than World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund)-oriented, in his teaching and in his thinking. That is clear if you go through his literature and through his writings. Of course, there was a relation. His booklet, *The Design of*

*Development*, a World Bank publication in 1956, was a classic. However, we were more oriented towards the UN than to Bretton Woods. That may have branded also my future orientation a little bit. The relevant school of economics, at that time, was mildly Keynesian. The criticism of Keynes became more prominent in the literature and in the teaching in the early 1970s than it was in the 1960s.

TGW: I think it started earlier in the United States, the 1960s—

JP: But not so much in Europe.

TGW: Let's see. Maybe we are almost into 1971/1973, being a member of Parliament. What do you recall your first days being like? And never having run for office, I am not quite sure I am qualified to ask the question. But what did you feel like as a very young man, I mean in your very early thirties, running for office?

JP: Oh, it was not so difficult, because we do not have a district system in the Netherlands. We have a system of proportional representation. So, I was being put on a list. And I just made it because in the elections of 1971, as compared to those of 1967, my party won with a number of seats and I was in the margin. Holland is very densely populated. We have 16 million people, but from East to West it's 150 kilometers. And from North to South, it's about 250 total. So, it's a very small country, very densely populated, so you don't need districts, we feel. So it was not so difficult to run. It was more difficult to run within the party, because I had a number of contestants, and I got a marginal position on the list. But after having been elected, I wanted to honor expectations to the extent that I really could become the spokesman for development issues.

We had the Stockholm conference (UN Conference on the Human Environment) in 1971/1972. During that period, we had the Club of Rome publication. It was a prophesy of

doom if we would not change our policies. Joop den Uyl saw this as a major opportunity to renew our political program in the form of a political answer to the Club of Rome. He was really obsessed by the problem, as he had been obsessed in the 1960s by [John Kenneth] Galbraith. He also saw this as a major opportunity to bring together the parties of the left, a new common political program. So, he took the initiative to establish a joint commission with the other progressive parties, under the chairmanship of Sicco Mansholt, a former president of the European Commission. I was the secretary.

That brought me in the center of the thinking about a new political program for the 1970s, based on a new insight into the relationship between economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice, both at the national and the international level. You have to go for a better income distribution at home, otherwise you cannot ask people to change their own behavior. It is not an issue just of the West, it's a worldwide issue. You cannot, if there's scarcity of raw materials, say to developing countries that they would have less right to participate in the allocation of such resources than the rich countries. In 1972, I participated in UNCTAD III, in Santiago, as a member of the Dutch delegation. UNCTAD played an important role in the Dutch conscientization. NGOs did send many representatives to Santiago, and there were dozens of Dutch journalists. We came together in a country, Chile, which had chosen a democratic path for progressive change. The western democratic left was not in favor of Cuba or other countries where change took place through a violent revolution. Chile was the example in the world where change took place democratically. [Salvador] Allende was a role model.

TGW: We skipped rather over the issue of Cold War. That is, we mentioned Cuba, right, so we can just go back before you run off to your meeting and thinking about, I guess,

probably the Suez crisis and the Hungarian invasion at the end of the 1950s. What was the residue of this, at the university, and then as we move through the 1960s in your political career?

JP: Hungary did create or reconfirm a very strong adherence to Europe and NATO. We were receiving many refugees from Hungary, in the Netherlands. We had anticommunist riots in Amsterdam. The communist newspaper in Amsterdam was attacked. The Netherlands always has been a good ally of the United States, strongly in favor of NATO. The New Left in the Netherlands, at the end of the 1960s, when everything was changing, also started to question NATO, and the Dutch NATO membership. That was based on Vietnam, mainly but not only. It was also Portugal. The fact that we had a member of NATO which was still colonial, and repressing the colonies, was seen as unbearable.

The New Left movement in the Netherlands used this as a starting point for an alternative political program. In my party, we had heated debates on our membership of NATO, resulting in resolutions on whether or not to stay in NATO. The outcome was always very close—fifty-five percent to forty-five percent. We never voted to leave NATO, but fifty-five to forty-five percent was rather close.

It was not so much the Cold War as such, as well as mistakes by NATO itself, which fed the criticism. At that time, the Cold War meant Czechoslovakia. The Russian invasion called for a strengthening of NATO. But it was difficult to find a balance. Some political groups tried to establish contact with people in Eastern Germany, in the DDR, for instance. I never participated in that group, but it did raise a lot of publicity. Others were involved in finding ways of communication with North Vietnam. There was also a strong movement in favor of independence of Angola and Mozambique. Representatives of liberation movements, such as MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation

Front), visited the Netherlands often. The American involvement in overthrowing Allende also raised much criticism. So the Cold War was not so much seen as East-West, as well as having negative consequences in the Third World.

And then there was the Middle East. Holland has been always strongly in favor of the position of Israel. The Arab countries did not have much sympathy during the period of the wars in the Middle East. That was known also in the Middle East. When, in 1973, there was the oil crisis, we were also identified as a very special target by the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries. There was a special additional boycott of the Netherlands. We were seen as very strongly oriented towards Israel.

TGW: How would you describe your own political views having evolved in the twenty-five to thirty years, before we plunge back into 1973?

JP: Politically, I had chosen in favor of democratic socialism in the 1960s. It was a rational choice, on the one hand—the result from my study in economics. It was also a political, ethical choice, following discussions on church and society. In the 1960s, in the Netherlands, a New Left movement renewal took place, whereby young people took a political stance already very early in their student days and didn't allow themselves time to reflect. Twenty years later, in the 1980s, this resulted in many of these people shifting to the right. I did not. I had made my political choice less emotionally and not as a teenager.

So, if you ask to what extent have you evolved, then I must say that on the basis of the choices made—ideological, political—I didn't change too much. I always tried to base political choices on rational scientific insights. The world has changed a lot, which means that a number of the political views which I was adhering to in the 1970s, I wouldn't, at this moment, go for as strongly as at that time. One important example was the concept of the New International

Economic Order (NIEO). I wrote about it. I defended it in Parliament. I spoke about it also in addresses to the United Nations. I still think that we need a change in the system. I'm not a person who would say, "We just need some marginal changes within the existing system," like, for instance, McCracken in his famous OECD report, or [Henry] Kissinger in his speech to, I think it was UNCTAD IV.

TGW: In Nairobi?

JP: Indeed. But it is a gradual step-by-step approach, not because of lack of ambition, but because you have to work within the present system, you can't change the present system. You cannot think it away. You are part of history. So, the room for maneuver is extremely small.

TGW: Actually, you became a minister right at the time of the NIEO. In retrospect, or not in retrospect, how do you look back on that first oil shock and maybe the second one?

JP: It was a fundamental event. It did in this country, the Netherlands, dominate the policy-making, both international as well as national policies. We concluded that we had the answer already in the reports of the Club of Rome and in the Mansholt report, which I just mentioned. We only had to translate the findings of these reports into a practice earlier than we had expected because of the upcoming scarcity of the by far most important raw material in the world economy: oil. "The world will never be as it used to be!," Den Uyl told the public. It turned out to be otherwise, but anyway, we did not underestimate the problem.

For me, the oil crises had to be analyzed not only in terms of the production policy of the OPEC countries, but also as a North-South issue. It was North-South confrontation, where the oil producing countries, the G-77 (Group of 77), the non-aligned countries, now had a weapon in the struggle with the richer northern countries. It was an economic weapon—oligopolist price-

setting. It was difficult, because this weapon was not only used to strengthen the case of the developing countries as a whole. The poorest oil importing developing countries were also the victim of the rising oil price.

OPEC established a fund to help these countries, but it did not compensate. Moreover, efforts to link oil-based finance to investments in food production and food security in developing countries failed. But developing countries as a whole were able, for a number of years, to stay together, to make a political case. And there was a strong link between the New International Economic Order concept and the oil crisis, in political terms. In the Netherlands, we were able, after difficult discussions in Parliament, as well as within the government, to express our support to that concept. Other countries, in particular the so-called “like-minded,” did the same. I was invited to chair the negotiations at the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations, in 1975, on the concept of the New International Economic Order. These negotiations, after a very difficult debate, did produce a consensus text.

In one other respect, the oil crisis did affect Dutch policy. When I became a minister for development cooperation in 1973, I wanted also to have contact with the Arab countries. That was before the oil crisis. The previous government had not established aid relations with Arab countries. In my view, that was not balanced. So, I decided to start an aid relationship with Egypt, Yemen, and Sudan. The oil crisis was in particular difficult for us. I was able to show to OPEC countries, with the help of friends, that our policies had changed already. This all resulted in a better relation between the Netherlands and the Arab world, which had not been very well in political terms, in the 1950s and in the 1960s.

TGW: In terms of paths not taken, I have two questions. What if a better provision had been made for the NOPEC (non-oil producing countries) countries, the developing countries who

suffered most? And, I guess, the second question related to that is, what if a less confrontational path had been taken, something akin to the like-minded states? What would have happened?

JP: I had sympathy for OPEC. The G77 had tried all the other ways, without much success, even within UNCTAD. In 1972, there was a major review of the Second Development Decade. It failed as well. It was clear that the 0.7 percent target would not be met, just like the promises of the First Development Decade had not been kept. All evidence, already in 1972, showed that the promises of the Second Development Decade, which were ambitious because we had promised to do better than during the 1960s, also would not be kept. So, the G77 needed an economic confrontation. Just to continue asking and talking would not have helped them at all. This confrontation could have helped, if they would have been united, which means if the OPEC countries would have done more for the NOPEC developing countries, which they did not. In the end, they lacked a vision. Some did have—a country like Algeria, for instance, did have a vision. Most of them stayed apart. They had a chance at the World Food Conference, in 1974, in Rome. The outcome of that conference, a tripartite arrangement, was IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). It was a brilliant concept—oil for food.

It could have been a bridge. I co-sponsored the resolution in Rome. I had a close contact with [Manuel] Perez-Guerrero at that time, who was leading the Venezuelan delegation. The result was that it was not an anti-western resolution, because it was OPEC plus the Netherlands. Some western countries followed by abstaining rather than voting against. However, IFAD never became the great “oil for food fund.” Why not? OPEC remained hesitant and the West remained suspicious. And soon the momentum got lost. The crucial year was 1979. Neither CIEC (Council on International Economic Cooperation), nor GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), nor UNCTAD V succeeded. And in that year the world slid into economic



crisis. It made northern countries even less willing to answer aims. In addition to this, fear of OPEC was weakening—the higher oil price made investment in higher cost oil exploitation in the West itself and also nuclear energy more competitive.

Moreover, it had turned out to be possible to play OPEC countries against each other. Instead of “oil for food,” it became “oil for weapons.” So, gradually, the Group of 77 saw its position crumbling.

TGW: But your stance, as you mentioned, should we describe it as pro-G77? This didn't make you friends in all places. I am thinking particularly in Washington.

JP: I had a difficult discussion with [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan, who was in 1975 the leader of the American delegation as a permanent representative to the UN. He has written brilliant books. In one of them, he was reflecting on the Seventh Special Session. In that book, he described me as “dangerous,” because I believed in it. He was a very able negotiator, but he also understood that the USA should not isolate itself. And I did not want to get a resolution without the U.S., because without the U.S. cooperating, there would never be a new order. So it was step-by-step, tricky, with very small margins to maneuver.

TGW: In speaking of Mr. Moynihan's comment about you being a believer, a fervent believer, your style has always been open, and frank, and decisive. Some people say direct, aggressive, or worse. Do you think this has served you well? Or do you think there have been some downsides to this, in your ten years as minister or in national politics?

JP: Well, everybody makes mistakes. Sometimes even if you want to compromise, the other side may see you as somebody who is too assertive. I never have been aggressive—but assertive, yes. I think I can mediate. I have done a number of mediation jobs, both on economic issues as well as political issues. Such mediations have produced results, at least on paper. The

Seventh Special Session was an example, but also United Nations conferences on the least-developed countries, and also Rio (UN Conference on Environment and Development).

Gradually, you learn to chair and to mediate also by watching others, like referees in sport matches. You have to be fully impartial, even if you belong to a group. Otherwise, you lose the confidence of negotiators. You have to be both firm and flexible. You have to secure that all parties accept the process and that disagreement about the process will not jeopardize substance. And you have to develop the skill of using the element of time.

TGW: What was it like, after having been minister, to return to lecture—something you hadn't done in a while—when you went back to the ISS, in 1978?

JP: I like study and reflection. In my work, I have always tried to combine three things: politics, management, and study. Study means also teaching, reflecting, reading, writing. It is not possible to do all three things well at the same time. That would make you superficial and less effective. So, choose not to do one of them only, but always concentrate on a combination of two of them, and another combination some years later. That keeps you alert. You can organize your own career in stages, or make use of changes which are taking place because of political developments.

So, after 1977, when my party went into opposition, I had the opportunity to be a member of Parliament—politics—and also to study. Within UNCTAD, I did not consider myself a politician. I was organizing and facilitating negotiations. And I was participating and sharing in analyses on the process of international economic development and trade. I learned a lot during those six years. I was able to refresh myself. After those years, I wanted to go back to politics. In 1986, I ran again as a candidate in the elections in the Netherlands. I came back with new experiences and new insights. That helped me to contribute new ideas as a member of

Parliament for three years, during which I also taught international relations at the University of Amsterdam. Three years later, I again became the minister for development cooperation, until 1998. I could use what I had learned in the 1980s. A lot had changed: the new international economic crisis, the no-nonsense period, the shift from the [Raúl] Prebisch doctrine in the center-periphery model to a mutual interest doctrine, which had been forwarded by the Brandt Commission—I had been a member of the Brandt Commission—and later by Gamani Corea in UNCTAD.

TGW: When did you meet Gamani Corea?

JP: I met him in 1973, in UN meetings. At the time, he was chairman of the UN Committee for Development Planning. In that capacity, he was the successor of Jan Tinbergen. Thereafter, he became the secretary-general of UNCTAD. I had much contact with him as a minister for development cooperation. I used to go to meetings of the Second Committee of the General Assembly, to UNCTAD meetings, and to meetings of the World Bank Development Committee. We supported the idea of the Common Fund, also financially. It was a token of renewal of the New International Economic Order. Stabilization of commodity prices and, if possible, halting a deteriorating terms of trade was essentially for poor commodity-exporting countries. Together with Tinbergen, I had done some research in that field. So, here again, when I became minister in 1973, I could try to put into practice what I had studied before.

I was active at UNCTAD IV in 1976, in Nairobi, as well as at UNCTAD V in Manila, in 1979. Gamani sometimes invited a number of ministers for informal meetings trying to pursue the issue of the Common Fund and some other policy proposals bridge. I always was part of that group.

TGW: You said that you learned a lot at UNCTAD. How would you describe the intellectual—if that's the right word—atmosphere within the house in terms of openness to ideas and approaches?

JP: UNCTAD had brought a major analytical input into international thinking on development in 1960s. In the 1970s, the debate on the instrumentalization of the NIEO to a great extent took place within UNCTAD—commodity prices, debt, preferential treatment, least-developed countries, transfer of technology, shipping policies. In the end, there were less results than had been hoped for.

Was UNCTAD radical? It was highly ambitious, a little ideological, and a little confrontational, and analytical. The original analytical base had been the center-periphery analysis. Northern countries despised this way of thinking. Whether right or wrong, in 1979 it became clear that in order to render negotiations successful, it would be necessary to choose a different analytical base. That is what Gamani Corea did: “Let's define a mutual interest in change. After all, we are all interdependent, dependent on each other—some more than others, but no one is not dependent. Let's define the grades of interdependence and define possible bargains, sometimes in sectors, in an integrated whole.” As a matter of fact, this had been the message of the Brandt report (*North-South: A Programme for Survival*).

It was not so easy to get the new analysis accepted. That was true for both staff and negotiators. But within UNCTAD, the leadership—the intellectual leadership and the political leadership of UNCTAD—changed. The G77 were a little slow in changing its approach, which was necessary given the new realities of the 1980s. And Europe and the United States didn't trust UNCTAD. In my view, Gamani Corea did not receive the credit he deserved. And gradually, UNCTAD changed from a forum for negotiations into an institute for research and

capacity-building. There was no other international organization which could fill the gap, despite the organizations which, from the very outset, had been dominated by the West, such as GATT and the Bretton Woods organizations.

TGW: Would you say that ideas went from the secretariat to the G77, or from the G77 to the secretariat, or was there a two-way traffic?

JP: Theoretically, it emanated from the secretariat more than from the G77, though sometimes it came also from the G77. But that was very strongly dependent on the quality of individual negotiators. Most of the negotiators were not too representative of the thinking in their own capitals. So you were very dependent on individual negotiators. They didn't change in Geneva. It was a good life, of course. Geneva saw many negotiators and ambassadors who always stayed there, which is also true for the staff of the United Nations. And more or less, we were negotiating on an island. Geneva was an island. But on that island, you could study, reflect, come up with new ideas. And there were also quite a few progressive thinkers coming from many countries who were willing to have discussions trying to catalyze negotiation processes on a number of issues in the UNCTAD framework.

Also, coming from the younger generation of less traditional economists in Europe and the United States, UNCTAD was able to come forward with a number of new ideas—for instance, on non-tariff barriers, and also international trade in services. Before GATT took up services as a new field, it had been conceptualized in UNCTAD—shipping, insurance, technology. That was done with the help not only of the staff, but also of experts from outside who were willing to have discussions in the UNCTAD framework. But it is only interesting for such people to participate in such processes if they know that UNCTAD as an organization is not just a study club, because there are enough study clubs. There should be a link with a

negotiation process, otherwise it's futile rather than a challenge. The fact that the West did no longer want to negotiate within UNCTAD made this forum also less interesting for analysts who wanted to make a contribution.

TGW: How would you—maybe this is a difficult generalization to make—but how would you compare either the average of the best staff within the international civil service as you knew it, and in your own ministry or national government, in a good government civil service?

JP: The World Bank and IMF were top quality, better than anywhere else, but biased. In comparison with the UN, money did not play a role if experts had to be hired. It was also attractive to work there, because those were the places where it happened, where negotiations did result in an outcome, though often not too beneficial for developing countries. UNCTAD was better than the UN in New York, as far as economic research and policy studies were concerned. In New York, there were only a very few people. If you compare UNCTAD with the original commissions, UNCTAD also had more quality. If you compare it with a number of UN organizations from a technical point of view, you could compare the quality with that of ILO (International Labour Organization) and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization).

Compared with the staff of the permanent representatives and the ministries in the rich and in the big developing countries, UNCTAD was at par. However, these countries do always have more people in a broader range of skills and experience. The problem of UNCTAD was also that people stayed too long. An organization needs regular renewal of its staff in order to keep ahead of new developments in theory as well as in practice. The recruitment system of the United Nations was a shame—contracts for extremely short periods, no career development, selection on the basis of not too relevant criteria, no exchange of staff between different

organizations within the system. But UNCTAD did do better than many members of the UN family.

TGW: Did you see what, over the years, many people describe as tensions between the UN system and the Bretton Woods system? Is this tension useful, creative, or a waste of resources?

JP: On the whole, the balance is useful. Of course, there's always, like also between ministries, a tension between disciplines. For instance, between macro and micro, or sector approaches, or between economic and social, or between economic and environmental. That is a continuous tension, not unhealthy, because it's a political debate. The issue of adjustment, which was dominant in the debate of the 1980s, needed such tension in order to challenge conventional wisdom as well as vested elite interests. UNCTAD helped, but so did ILO (International Labour Organization), UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), and UNEP (UN Environment Programme), with some effect. There were changes in both the World Bank and in IMF in the 1990s: the human face of adjustment, environmental impact of economic development, consequences for people of macro programs, the willingness to accept safety nets. The second generation adjustment programs are different from the first generation programs. That is not only the result of thinking within Washington itself, or of confrontation with governments, but also of confrontation with bodies of intellectual thought in the UN family as a whole.

TGW: You mentioned the Brandt Commission—Brandt I and Brandt II. And you participated not only in these, but also in other groups. What is their exact impact on the role of ideas, and what makes some of these reports more useful than other commissions?

JP: Timing is very important, and the choice of a political concept, which all of a sudden is being seen as eye-opening. Such an example is the Brundtland report (*Our Common Future*).

It came at an appropriate moment, when the world was recuperating from the economic crisis and people were searching for a new perspective. The definition of sustainability: No future generation should have less choice options than any present generation, due to choices made by the present generation. That is a value applicable to each and every individual and nation. And it is the responsibility of any present generation. A great concept and good timing, which made a difference.

The Brandt Commission report had experienced bad timing, because we published our report in the midst of an international economic low. The concept of interdependence and mutual interests was good, but the times were not conducive for a new approach. Of course, we didn't know that, because we started when economic perspectives were still better. The concept of sustainability can be compared with the concept of interdependence. Sustainability presupposes interdependence between present and future generations. But as against the mid-1980s, it didn't tick in the 1970s. I don't know why. It was not the quality of the report—it was a good report. It was not too theoretical or too ambitious, not at all. It was not reflecting just the radical views of the developing countries in the 1970s. It was not one-sided. The Brandt report was a good report. But it didn't tick.

TGW: Could it have anything to do with the—

JP: The composition?

TGW: No, the presence of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan?

JP: In that respect, it was bad political timing indeed. But you don't know this when you start. So sometimes this is just a matter of good luck. Many of the commission reports, by the way, do have only a very long-term impact. I was also a member of the Carlsson Commission on Global Governance and the Future of the United Nations. It has not been taken up. There



were, in my view, a number of very good ideas in it. This report was a sequel of the Brandt Commission report, because it resulted from meetings of Brandt Commission members who were reviewing their insights and recommendations of ten years before against the background of a new international reality—the end of the Cold War. Also, the Palme report on disarmament (*Common Security: A Programme for Survival*) could play a role, in particular because of the timing: the upcoming change in the relation between the superpowers.

TGW: You mentioned the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Were you taken aback by the rapidity of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

JP: Everything went very fast and I may have overlooked possibilities for a change in the 1980s. In the beginning, for me, [Mikhail] Gorbachev was just another [Leonid] Brezhnev, another [Yuri] Andropov. The language he used was different, but, I thought, not fundamentally, only a little bit adjusted to the circumstances of the 1980s. I remember how my son criticized me. He was a student at the international school in Geneva. They had had discussions at school, and he said, “You are wrong. We believe in the man, he is different.” Clearly a person like Gorbachev did appeal to young people in the West, more than to a generation which had become cynical, even if you disliked Reagan’s confrontation policy.

When I came back to the Netherlands, Willy Brandt asked me to accompany him, and Egon Bahr—one of the architects of Brandt’s East-West détente policy of the 1970s—in 1987, to Moscow, to meet Gorbachev. Members of the Brandt Commission report had often, but this far without much success, tried to involve the Russians into North-South cooperation. We had a full-day discussion with Gorbachev in Moscow. I saw a different person. I saw somebody who really wanted peace and an open and free society. He had not yet published his book, *Perestroika*. Thereafter, it went very fast. He took the right decisions, he did what he promised

in the discussion with Willy Brandt. He has really made a difference and turned out to be the right man at the right place, though later on he could no longer control what he had started or at least had catalyzed.

After 1989, I thought that the major challenges would be to define a new international development policy beyond the Cold War. The changes in 1989 were not only important for Eastern Europe, they were important for the world as a whole, in particular also for Third World countries. None of them would anymore be manipulated by one of the two superpowers in order to maintain the status quo, for reasons of sphere of influence. Moreover, the end of the Cold War meant for developing countries that change was possible in a non-violent way. Change in order to have more freedoms, democracy, and human rights could be brought about without a violent revolution or a civil war. That was shown by Central and Eastern European countries. Change, either emanating from the top, by leaders such as Gorbachev, or by a people's movement, such as in the former DDR, without being oppressed by either the regime itself or by a foreign power. Such examples could be followed by southern countries as well. That has happened indeed. Some leaders stepped aside voluntarily, instead of trying to stay in power forever, as had been the case in quite a few developing countries. Grassroots movements, students, teachers, women's groups raised their voices and started a process of non-violent change.

So, 1989 really heralded a new era. But at the same time, new conflicts emerged or re-emerged after a long period of silence lasting since 1914, or since the high point of colonial rule: nationalistic, or religious, or ethnic, or language conflicts, often of a cultural identity character, but mixed with social and economic inequalities. These conflicts emanated from the changing character of the development process. They were a great risk, not only for the sustainable

development of a country, but also for international relations. So, a new answer in the field of international development cooperation also had to take into account the new conflict manifestations. In the 1970s, I had always maintained that development is conflict. I had meant social and economic conflict. These could be managed by creating win-win situations—higher growth, more to be distributed, in particular to the poor, but without the rich having to give up part of their wealth. Identity conflicts are different—there is no win-win solution. An improvement in the position of one group implies that another group has to step backwards, rather than a little bit forward as well. All this became so important within development processes all over the world that development policies had to be shaken up.

TGW: When you spelled out these new policies in *A World of Difference*, and *A World in Dispute*, in 1990 and 1993, where did these ideas come from? I say this because this project is about intellectual history. Where did you come up with these ideas? I mean, were academics useful? Were advisors?

JP: I wrote *A World of Difference* with a number of people in the ministry. I chaired the group. By the way, Prins Claus was a member of that group. I wanted to rephrase the Netherlands development policy on the basis of the insights which I had gathered in the ten years before. Additional thematic and sectoral insight on, say, health, rural development, gender, environment were provided by development experts from within, making use of a number of evaluation studies and inspection reports. It was an in-house job. We didn't use much expertise from outside. The advantage was that a fair degree of ownership was developed. That is better than an approach whereby an administration received a mandate to implement a report written by external consultants. We drafted the next report, *A World in Dispute*, in a similar fashion.

TGW: Well, one of the ideas that went out of fashion was the role of the state, was the role of management. And there seems to have recently been a turnaround. Without resurrecting the foolishness of state-dominated economic planning, there is nonetheless a role for the state. How do you explain this? When do you think this came by? Certainly by the 1997 *World Development Report*, even the World Bank had admitted this. But what was the turning point, or why?

JP: There is a cycle in ideological or analytical thinking. In a way, some Keynesian ideas also have been resurrected. The failure of adjustment also, of the first generation adjustment programs, was a reason to rethink the role of the state. But also, the requirements of sectors which are essential for a sustainable existence of a country or society, education, the judiciary and so on. The relation between the state and the nation cannot only be judged with economic yardsticks, as seems to be the view based on the so-called Washington consensus. Many states were inefficient or even corrupt. But you cannot save a nation by just dismantling what is wrong. You have to work out an alternative, which is being created, developed further, and maintained from within, gradually, not with the help of a shock therapy injected from outside—control with an alternative. And if there is not yet a middle layer in society, you need a state in order to embody a public sector which temporarily may fulfill functions that in a later stage of development can be carried out by a civil society middle class. You need a state in order to have a good public sector. And you need a public sector in order to foster the cohesion of the nation. Otherwise, you end up with lasting exclusion.

By the way, in that respect the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen has played an important role. It was more or less the last of the summits organized by the UN, which helped shaping a new development paradigm in the 1990s: sustainable development, a rights-based

approach towards development, social inclusion. But thereafter, the forces of globalization had become so strong that this paradigm eroded. The idea of good governance came instead: good governance as defined by the West again on the basis of the Washington consensus, everywhere in the world the same, irrespective of the specific circumstances of the country concerned. Good governance also as a pre-condition for development, and as a pre-condition for development assistance, rather than as an objective and as a possible outcome of development policies assisted from outside.

TGW: Actually, you mentioned this over dinner, earlier, that one of the main challenges of the 1990s, I think—I certainly didn't, but maybe you anticipated the nature of humanitarian threats or humanitarian crises. And as a minister of development, did you feel as if you were abandoning your portfolio in the 1990s, as more and more of your efforts, and more and more publicity, and more and more UN discussions were focussed on dealing with fragmentation?

JP: No, far from that, because development is a process of conflict, not only economic but also political and cultural, and you have to be where the problem is. And the fact is, always the poorest and the weakest are the victims. That is also true for cultural and identity conflicts. Just like economic conflicts, cultural conflicts are not exogenous. They are, to a great extent, an outcome of the development process itself. And if you think that you just can continue with regular development programs and use separate external instruments—foreign policy—unrelated to development policies in order to deal with the conflict, then you are missing an opportunity to apply a comprehensive and integrated approach.

TGW: This is a question that tries to go to the previous two, in something you had a large hand in writing. In the Stockholm Initiative Memorandum, you speak about the need for a

new concept of sovereignty. How do humanitarian and human rights issues enter into a new concept of sovereignty? Is sovereignty contingent on a responsible behavior?

JP: Sovereignty, as far as I am concerned, is not an absolute concept. Of course, you need it in international law. But you need it together with other concepts, which are human rights oriented. The sovereignty of a nation should serve the rights of its people. National sovereignty contributes to a nation's cohesion and stability. But it should do so in the interest of people and not disregarding them or subordinating human rights to the interests of the state. Of course, this may give rise to dilemmas in international relations. Is humanitarian intervention justified? To answer that question with an absolute "no," under all circumstances, would not only constitute neglect of human values, but it would also be a kind of ostrich policy. The consequences of human rights abuses in a country may affect other countries—for instance, due to migration, cross-border violence, and terrorism. The reaction to human rights abuses by elites in a country does not stay within the national borders of that country. So, there is a mutual self-interest of all countries to both guarantee national sovereignty as well as to condition it.

TGW: I totally agree. What would you say are the main personal payoffs, or what are the pluses and minuses of holding a ministerial job versus holding a senior United Nations job? I guess this is by way of asking whether you would consider going back to the UN at some time. How do you feel about this, as a person?

JP: In 1986, I wanted to be in a position again to take decisions and not only to prepare decisions being taken by others. At a certain moment, I got restless. I wanted to back to the arena. I wanted again to participate in political negotiations as a player myself, together with all the other players, rather than facilitating them by forwarding the analytical tools and options. The second reason why I really prefer a political position rather than being a civil servant is that

a politician has a constituency. A constituency keeps you alert. You have to respond to questions, you are being held accountable. As an international civil servant, you are only being questioned by your superiors, and not on substance.

As a politician, I have to go to Parliament. They can send me away. I have to explain to people in cities, in meetings, why I am advocating this option or solution and not another one. I like being held politically accountable. I like the political debate. Would I like to go back to the UN? Yes, I feel that, after having been active as a politician, I could again bring some political instincts and experience in a UN administration, for a number of years. So, I like changing roles and I like making use of lessons and experiences from a previous period, in a new position. That keeps me sharp.

TGW: I wanted to go back to the Stockholm Initiative Memorandum. This is a direct quote: “unless we develop an ethical basis for human survival, all our technical solutions may turn out to be ineffectual in the long run.” What, in your view, is the appropriate balance between practical and ethical? Or is this just simply a false dichotomy?

JP: No, it’s not a false dichotomy. I have seen so many proposals, publications, ideas based only on what ought to be the case, in the view of the author. Most of them are non-starters from the very beginning, not taking into account power realities nor the economic reality of the day. So, you have to make a combination between what you think is feasible and what you want to be done.

May I refer to Tinbergen again? He always said to his collaborators: “I want to change reality, but my time horizon is the next five years. I won’t set targets for twenty years from now. They would be just theoretical aims, and I wouldn’t know how to accomplish them because the instruments are not yet available. Then I’ll refrain from it, let others do it.” That is an effort to

find a balance between what is, today; what you think is necessary, later on; and what is feasible in a reasonable period, what is manageable, politically manageable.

I always liked that. He was not short-sighted. He never thought only five years ahead. Read his writings. He had a vision on what he considered an optimal order, to be established in the long run, given exogenously determined values. Such an order would set the boundary conditions for policies in the short and medium term. Well, in pragmatic terms, that is a good balance.

TGW: There was one idea that I have wanted to ask you about earlier. These days it's impossible to write a policy document without referring to the role of women, or gender. When do you recall this actually infiltrated—if that's the right word—development policy in the Netherlands?

JP: We had a strong feminist movement, here in the Netherlands, emanating from the 1960s. This resulted in much action around the UN Women's Conference in Mexico, 1975 (UN World Conference of the International Women's Year). I was asked to lead the Netherlands delegation, because the theme of the conference was women and development. We were able to focus on problems of women in the West, as well as on often quite different problems of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. We had prepared our position with the help of some researchers on women and development issues. Els Postel and Joke Shrijvers were among them. On that basis, one of my successors as a minister for development cooperation, Eegje Schoo, made this a priority issue in development policy. I could build on it, when I came back in 1989. Gender became an essential aspect of the criteria for the allocation of aid, because it was generally understood that poverty had become feminized—with consequences for



children—and also that women are the one and only driving force in a people-centered, bottom-up development process.

TGW: You mentioned Mexico City, and earlier we had talked about Stockholm and the Food Conference in Rome. Are these major ad hoc conferences—

JP: They were crucial for the development of the thinking and for efforts to find a new consensus. From Stockholm in 1972, until recently in Cairo, Beijing, and Copenhagen, new ideas presented at these summit conferences and some policy convergence helped to change development policies both internationally and at the country level. The problem with these conferences, however, is the automaticity of the so-called review conferences five and ten years later. I am afraid that we have made a mistake in allowing the “Plus Five” or “Plus Ten” conferences to create room for a complete re-negotiation of the outcome of the original summit. To review whether the results and commitments made at the summit have been implemented is quite useful, but it is not wise to re-open the agenda.

It would be better to focus on implementation and on the black spots in the whole process, to share experiences, to exchange best-practice examples. To start all over again, already five or ten years later, is risky, because those who feel that the summit outcome did not fully reflect their views will see the review conference as a second chance. That is creating an imbalance at these review meetings. Rather than focusing on future implementation, these meetings tend to concentrate on renegotiating the past. The result is a greater polarization than would be necessary. The review will, at best perhaps, end with a reconfirmation of the outcome of the original summit. When that is the outcome of a fight, it may be heralded as a success, but in fact it is nothing more than the status quo. And it paralyzes further progress. The UN should

reconsider this process and find new ways to organize international debates in a less traditional setting.

TGW: These conferences oftentimes revolve around an idea that's already come about. So, is there utility in publicity? Is there utility in getting governments to take seriously an issue and come up with a position? Is there utility in creating new institutions? Or perhaps all three of them?

JP: It is important from an ideas point of view. You have to be selective. You cannot organize such conferences for each new issue, time and again. That would erode the instrument of a world summit. And I would like to warn against creating new institutional structures within the UN for each and every new issue which has been put on the agenda. That is rendering the UN into an effective body, with much overlap between various international bodies, endless repetition, and continuous internal strife. I am in favor of institutional reform of the United Nations, starting with a merger of intergovernmental bodies, rather than with a reorganization of the secretariat. Such a reorganization will follow a weeding out of the intergovernmental machinery.

TGW: One of the factors in these conferences, and in political life in general, is the proliferation of NGOs and other elements of civil society. Did you have any idea, in the 1970s, when in fact, I presume, you helped finance a certain number of these, that in the year 2000 we'd see such a healthy array?

JP: It was important to strengthen nongovernmental organizations as part of the civil society. In international conferences, you need the participation and contribution of civil society—all major groups. In the end, governments will have to take decisions. In democratic countries, they are fully representative and accountable. But governments would be wise

involving civil society fully in the definition of issues, in the development of options for solutions, in a discussion of the pros and cons, in the process of implementation and in reviews thereafter. If not, decisions by governments will not reflect people's opinions, because governments have a tendency to bureaucratize and to alienate themselves from citizens.

I am aware that after what happened in Seattle, governments are hesitating to involve NGOs, but excluding them would not be a sensible reaction. Seattle was not new. Similar violent protests took place in Copenhagen in 1970, and in 1982 in Berlin, at the annual meeting of the Bank and the Fund. The violence in the streets has to be addressed, but the protests should be taken seriously. International organizations, including the UN, are no islands, far away from world city life. They are part of the political reality and should not be afraid to be confronted and not afraid to answer. Confrontation can lead to a breakthrough thereafter.

Soon after Seattle, we had such a breakthrough, this year in the World Conference on Genetically Modified Organisms, in Montreal. There were many NGOs. It was a difficult negotiation, which had taken years. But we succeeded and could thereby show that negotiations on global issues within a UN framework are possible, and that these negotiations do not only focus on economic interests, but also on people's concerns—on health and the environment, for instance. We could never have accomplished this without the painstaking and constructive efforts of committed and responsible NGOs, including Greenpeace. They were technically very competent and had good contacts with all delegations. If only representatives of governments would have been there, and lobbyists from private business, the outcome would have been imbalanced.

TGW: One of the things that Professor Tinbergen worked on at the CDP (Committee for Development Planning), and actually you have included in the Stockholm Initiative, are targets,

specific targets, for primary education, or development assistance, and on, and on, and on. Most of the time, we don't achieve these targets. Is there a strategic or a tactical utility in setting targets?

JP: Targets help, if they are the results of a political process involving not only bureaucrats, but also civil society. In countries where that has been the case, the 0.7 percent target for ODA has been reached and maintained. That is how we did it in the Netherlands—a country-wide political debate in the 1950s and 1960s, with NGOs strongly involved, followed by debate within political parties, as well as amongst them. The 0.7 percent target was officially accepted by the then-government and by the Parliament in 1973. It was met for the first time in 1975, and never after that year Dutch ODA (overseas development assistance) was lower than 0.7 percent, irrespective of the political composition of a new government after elections. There was country-wide civil society support. But never take that for granted. Politicians should continue to address the issue of implementation, also by focusing on the quality and the effectiveness of aid. The same will hold for the Millennium Development Goals.

Quantitative targets also help countries to scrutinize each other. That is true, for instance, for trade liberalization targets, but also for climate change targets. But targets ought to be the result of an international political process which takes into account the specific circumstances of individual countries. Some flexibility is necessary, otherwise there will be failure right from the beginning. Targets should be seen by electorates, citizens, and taxpayers as a challenge and an opportunity, not as a burden and a straightjacket. There should be a mutual interest in meeting targets.

Finally, targets should not be input-oriented, but result-oriented. The ODA target is not ideal, because it refers to an input—aid. Citizens will be much more convinced about the need

of setting output targets, to halve poverty, to eradicate disease, to decrease child mortality, and so on. Such targets have a much greater appealing strength. People's support for such targets will not easily be eroded by misgivings concerning the quality of governance by elites. On the contrary, the target will stand, but new creative ways to reach them will be sought.

TGW: Where would you place the role of intellectual leadership in a job description of a new Secretary-General or new senior official? And who, in your view, in the last fifty years, or the last twenty-five years, would you classify as someone who was an intellectual giant or at least played an important leadership role?

JP: Let me start with Bretton Woods. I have always admired [Robert] McNamara. He was the driving force, political, intellectual, personal—always new ideas and initiatives, never giving up, always willing to listen to criticism. But the Bank always got the person it needed in that specific period. Sometimes it was an intellectual leader; sometimes a manager, like Preston; sometimes a banker, like Calusen; sometimes a politician; sometimes a bridge to the world outside, like Jim Wolfensohn. That is also true for the IMF. Jacques de Larosière embodied the confidence of the international financial community. Michel Camdessus was a political and intellectual giant.

The UN would never have gained the wide international respect it got if [Dag] Hammarskjöld and U Thant would not have been Secretary-General. [Kurt] Waldheim was a failure. [Javier] Pérez de Cuéllar was likeable but weak. Boutros [Boutros-Ghali] was strong. He was an intellectual.

TGW: Like the agendas for peace and development?

JP: Indeed. However, he failed because of his bad relation with the U.S. Kofi Annan can become a great Secretary-General. He is able to carry the system. However, you cannot say

that in general you need an intellectual, or a politician, or a manager. It strongly depends on the context. Of course, a good leader has to combine the three—good management, political skill or political diplomacy, and intellectual brilliance. But it is difficult to combine all three at the same time. We had a number of good leaders in UN organizations—Philippe de Seynes, Raúl Prebisch, Gamani Corea, Haldan Mahler, Jim Grant.

TGW: Let me try one proposition on you. As we are looking at ideas and the UN system, there seem to be four ways that ideas are consequential. Tell me if I miss something, or whether I am overemphasizing things. The first is that they helped change the nature of public policy discourse. They helped states redefine their interests—the terms of reference change. The second way is that, since norms oftentimes clash, the way of two good things going opposite directions, ideas are absolutely essential in trying to find a road map and to choose and to prioritize. The third reason that ideas are important in this whole business is that new coalitions or new constellation of actors—sometimes within governments, sometimes with NGOs and governments, sometimes with corporations, NGOs, or governments—but in any case, an idea helps bring together people who previously may not have defined themselves on the same side of the issue. And finally, it seems to me that ideas can take on a life of their own once they are institutionalized within a particular part of a bureaucracy or a particular part of a UN agency. Does that make sense?

JP: But are these alternatives?

TGW: No. I am analytically trying to say, what are the ways that ideas make a difference, at this point in time particularly—ideas evolving through international institutions?

JP: OK. You see examples of all of them, I suppose. The first three are important, in my view. Sustainability, perhaps, is a good example of the third. A new coalition sets through, with

the help of different groups, which in the past were antagonizing each other. Could you rephrase the first two?

TGW: Well, the second one is that when there are clashing norms, let's say, between sovereignty and human rights, that ideas, in this case, let's say responsible sovereignty, help bridge the gap between what are otherwise conflicting, irreconcilable goals.

JP: An example is the concept of humanitarian intervention. It was brought to the UN from outside, by international lawyers and by Doctors Without Borders. The concept of humanitarian intervention is still being discussed. It may be possible to bridge two ideas which are supposed to be in juxtaposition—national sovereignty and individual rights, but which not necessarily are so.

TGW: The first one is a redefinition of national interests with a new idea. I think, perhaps, the one we talked about earlier being mutuality. I mean, it is just a way of refraining—

JP: Interdependence, the mutuality of interests, is an example of that. Of course, these four options are not alternatives, but complementary or sustaining each other. Is there a fifth option? I would like to emphasize that no idea is sustainable in itself if it does not have an appealing value to people who are not in the system. Anti-apartheid and non-discrimination are examples of issues raised from below, not by the elite, not by intellectuals, but by people and victims themselves. Of course, you never know where something is originating. Where did a new idea come up? Was it raised by intellectuals or did it come from the streets? You never know. But at a certain moment, you have to touch the streets.

TGW: That's where the rubber meets the road, yes, and the streets? Is there a question that I should have asked you, that I didn't, and that you'd like to answer?

JP: Well, we didn't touch the issue of UN reform, but that's on the future. Without a major reform of the UN system, the system will become less and less relevant. I go rather far in that. Economically, I think we need what I call an Economic Security Council or a second chamber of the Security Council dealing with problems related to economic, social, and environmental security. Dependent on the security issue concerned, ministers of trade, industry, agriculture, finance, environment, and health could meet in that setting. Next, a civil society chamber within the UN, in order to connect world civil society directly with the UN, not only through their respective governments. And thirdly, establish a right for minority groups to appeal directly to the UN, not through the government concerned, but together with the duty of the UN—in the last instance, through the Security Council—to address the appeal. Such reforms could strengthen international democracy. Fourthly, gradually abolish the right to veto—for instance, along the lines set out by the Carlsson Commission. Fifth, establish new institutions within the UN system addressing the needs of today, such as an International Criminal Court and a UN Police Force, while at the same time ending the work of UN bodies established decades ago, but no longer a world priority today.

TGW: The last, the 1997 so-called reform basically barely scratched the surface and even there made little difference.

JP: That is true. It was a missed opportunity. It is high time to take UN reform seriously. Otherwise, the UN system would lose its relevance, become marginalized and replaced by new mechanisms set up by the big, rich, and powerful countries without a global constitution. That constitution—the UN Charter and its sequels—is a great achievement in world history. But, we run the risk of losing that achievement if we do not reform the methods of global consultation and decision-making.



TGW: I think that is a perfect way to end the interview. Thanks a lot.

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