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

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

MARGARET SNYDER

BY

RICHARD JOLLY

New York, 28 March 2002

Transcribed by Ron Nerio

RICHARD JOLLY: This is Richard Jolly on March 28th, 2002, interviewing Peg Snyder. Peg, thank you very much for joining in this interview. Perhaps you might begin by telling us something about your early life, growing up, I think, in New York. What did your mother and your father do? How do you believe these things influenced your subsequent career, before the UN and in the UN?

MARGARET SNYDER: I was born in Syracuse, New York, or just outside, in a village of 5,000 people called East Syracuse. It was the second largest railroad yard in the United States at the time. That was before there was any diesel train around, so the trains were all chugging out black smoke. My father was, if you will, a "country doctor," a general practitioner who did welfare work for the county. Besides having his own practice, he took care of some welfare patients.

My mother was a teacher of Latin and German, until World War I came along and the county didn't want to hear anything about German anymore. So she started teaching other courses. Incidentally, she played the piano in the silent movies, which I think is an interesting part of my background because the fellow who played on opposite nights was getting seventy-five cents a night playing the same movies as she was playing, and she was getting fifty cents. That experience introduced me to the need for equal opportunities for women in employment.

RJ: Was your mother involved in any of the formal movements for women or equal wages or anything like that?

MS: No she wasn't, Richard. She graduated from Syracuse University in 1917, thanks to one of the first New York State scholarships. She taught for a very few years, and then she married. And in those days, most women turned to the family. She was, in effect, my father's appointment secretary and family financial record keeper. So she was not engaged in public life

until after my father died. Then she did run for the school board in our village. She got involved there.

RJ: Did she talk though about this difference in wages? How did you become conscious?

MS: I must have heard it from her. I think so. After leaving the silent movies, she went to work at Woolworth's. When you wanted to buy a piece of sheet music, there would be someone to play it for you. She took these jobs to earn enough money to take the streetcar to the university and buy her lunch. She wasn't what in today's terms would be called a feminist, except that all these experiences quietly came out. So they were inside her and surfaced from time to time.

RJ: Seneca was very important—

MS: Seneca Falls, yes.

RJ: It's not all that far from Syracuse.

MS: Yes, that's right.

RJ: Did Seneca Falls come into your consciousness at that time?

MS: Not in those early days. I can't tell you just when Seneca Falls came into my consciousness, but it wasn't when I was in high school, I don't think. I was busy with getting through high school. I had two older brothers. One became a medical doctor and the other an aeronautical engineer. As the third child, I was permitted to be more adventuresome and was also in the shadow of two very bright brothers who received all kinds of honors. So I had to live up to that and try to be a good student. I became valedictorian of my class.

After getting through high school, I went to college here, near New York, at the College of New Rochelle. It was a liberal arts women's college at the time. It now is coeducational with

branches in Harlem, on Wall Street, and elsewhere. It's an interesting place now, a Catholic women's college then.

RJ: How did you come to choose New Rochelle?

MS: A priest friend of my father had known about it. He was a poet and a friend. My parents didn't want me to go to Syracuse University where they had gone. My two brothers went to Notre Dame University. Our parents liked the idea of a Catholic school—and that was part, I think, of my formation in terms of social justice and economic justice. I have very little doubt that this part of my formation, which also came from sitting with my father at night when he'd come home, and he'd talk about his welfare patients and ponder: "How do you affect change? How can people come out of their situation, and have jobs as everyone else has, and pull themselves out of being on the dole, so to speak—being on welfare?"

So we used to struggle with those ideas with him in the evenings. And that was also, I think, a complementary part of my concern for equity and social justice, not just for women but for people.

RJ: This was the late 1930s?

MS: This would have been—I was born in 1929, so it would have been in the 1930s, yes.

RJ: Unemployment, the Depression, [Franklin] Roosevelt?

MS: That's right. That was happening all around us, yes indeed. And that was part of the reason for my father's work in welfare, I'm sure. But at that point, we took it as normal. That was the world that I knew, because these things already existed when I came to the age of reason, learned what was going on and how to comprehend it.

RJ: Do you remember any of the more political side of Roosevelt—the New Deal?

MS: Oh yes. I remember stickers in our windows favoring the New Deal at that point, yes. That was the political orientation we were getting. Later on, my father became a Republican. I think it was the idea of, quote, socialized medicine, unquote, and the fear of it, that the American Medical Association (AMA) had at the time. Then he became a Republican, and so did my mother.

RJ: Were the concerns of unemployment and welfare—did they influence you in your choice of New Rochelle, or what you decided to study in New Rochelle?

MS: Oh yes, because even when I was a high school student I worked summers at a settlement house.

RJ: In Syracuse?

MS: In Syracuse. It was at the time when African-Americans were moving north after the war, you remember. And so there were very difficult situations, and there was a settlement house named after a bishop—the Bishop Foery Foundation. I think it was called. I did volunteer work there. That was one of the experiences in my background that gave me the idea that I would do social work. But when I got into college I decided I liked philosophy better, so I had a double major in sociology and philosophy.

RJ: Now you were going to college in the late war years, is that right?

MS: Oh yes, toward the end of the war. I graduated in 1950.

RJ: Does the Second World War stick in mind for any reasons?

MS: It stays in mind only in the sense that many of the fellows a little older than I went to serve in the Second World War—a little bit older than my brothers. We just missed having our family in the midst of that.

RJ: So your brothers didn't—they didn't go.

MS: No, my older brother had a medical problem. The middle one, the doctor, joined the Air Force at the time of the Korean War.

RJ: But when you were at New Rochelle, then there were GI students coming back?

MS: In this way, it was a women's college so we weren't experiencing that. When I experienced that was after I graduated and then did my Master's and took a job as, quote, dean of women. It's an extinct species now, but I took a job as dean of women at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. Again, it was a liberal arts college—a Jesuit liberal arts college. Then, yes, we had many returnees among the college students who were on the GI bill. They brought a maturity to the student body and it was useful.

RJ: Let me just also ask about the origins of the UN. Were you conscious, during that time, of the founding of the UN and Eleanor Roosevelt's roles?

MS: It was on the radio—"if she were my old lady"—about Eleanor. You know, there were a lot, a lot, a lot of critics of Eleanor.

RJ: You have to expand that. I don't remember the criticisms.

MS: In America, Eleanor was thought by many not to behave the way a president's wife should behave. A president's wife should be a president's wife and look nice and be a hostess.

RJ: And she was too activist.

MS: She was very active, of course. There was a columnist—and I forget who it was—who always said, "If she were my old lady, I would tell her such and such," meaning if she were his wife.

RJ: Do you remember being outraged about that?

MS: Oh yes, but any woman was criticized, any woman in public life was criticized. But I think what you are looking for is for me to say we were an internationally-oriented family. We

were not. Syracuse was far from New York City. And there were, as you said rightly, so many concerns with employment during those years, and then the war came after the Depression. The internationalism was only vis-à-vis the war and not toward the creation of the UN.

RJ: I didn't ask you about your high school. This was the local high school?

MS: I went to the local public schools until high school. And then, because I was always being compared to my two brothers, my mother decided to send me to women's high school in Syracuse. So I commuted every day on a bus.

RJ: That was your choice? That was your mother's choice?

MS: I think it was my mother's influence, to a large extent. But I didn't mind leaving a situation where teachers kept saying, "Now, if you were like your brother, you wouldn't do that.

RJ: But this women's high school, or girls' high school, must have had a pretty good record.

MS: Oh yes, it was a small girls' high school. And it was a place to make good friends, and work together. I was an avid student of Latin. Of course, I had help with my homework! I lived what you'd call an American childhood, or middle-class American—lower middle-class American childhood—of parents whose grandparents had come from the old country and who were themselves first-generation achievers. In that atmosphere, we had to do more than they did.

RJ: Your mother—had she gone to college for her teacher training?

MS: Oh yes, she went to Syracuse University.

RJ: So the idea of the girl of the family going to college was sort of expected.

MS: It was expected. It was expected from the beginning. We all, all three of us, had to do well in high school and get ourselves to college.

RJ: So let me take you to New Rochelle. Apart from sociology and philosophy, do you remember particular ideas exciting you at the time, or what the students were talking about?

MS: I think it was the Young Christian Students (YCS). Do you know them? It's a movement out of Belgium. That particular group introduced the idea that your religion and your student or work life weren't two different things. You had to live a whole life, and you had to be committed to other people. I suppose the influence was coming from my classes as well and the example of our teachers. And then trying to understand the thought processes in the world through philosophy and relating them to everyday life. Those experiences set me up for being involved with universities later on. But I think as much as anything it was the Young Christian Students.

YCS taught a thought process—observe and judge and act—that I use to this day. You look at what the situation is. You judge it in accordance with what you would hope it would be or by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it ought to be. And then you plot your strategies and actions. Those three steps have stayed with me all my life. And they have served well. When I came out of college we started Young Christian Workers back in Syracuse—people doing all kinds of blue collar or white collar work.

RJ: When you look back, do you think there were any respects in which the education of this early Christian experience was narrowing rather than broadening—sort of closing your mind to certain opportunities or approaches which now seem too narrow or unnecessary or even just wrong?

MS: I think intellectually we were allowed to move as far as we wanted to. When I wanted to go off and work in Schlesweig-Holstein to take care of postwar people, the family stood in the way—when I wanted to go overseas and do some international work.

RJ: When exactly was this? When you'd finished in New Rochelle?

MS: When I finished my bachelor's degree. One of my classmates and I decided to go to take care of war victims in Schlesweig-Holstein.

RJ: But you didn't go?

MS: I didn't go. I went to graduate school instead. That was a little bargain struck with the family. But I don't think that the religious part of it was all that narrowing. Let's put it this way, I came from a family with a broad concept of Christianity. My father clearly had to deal with family planning in his medical work. He was in a church that was not in favor of a lot of things, but he just dealt with them. This is what you do.

RJ: Well that in itself is a strong lesson and perhaps even a role model that one's religion, one's faith, can give one strong commitments, but the specifics of the teaching perhaps should be dealt with more pragmatically.

MS: Right, you live by your conscience. That may at times conflict with authority in terms of one's faith, but you are bound by your conscience.

RJ: Do you remember your father consciously worrying about the issues of family planning?

MS: No, I don't think he worried about them. People do this and people do that. Why did my parents have three children? I had to think about that—instead of eleven children, as was on our family tree. So I was in a family that believed that this world was a wonderful place, yet there were problems in it and you faced them. Creation is such a beautiful thing: a flower or a leaf or an animal or—

RJ: Or a child.

MS: Right, or another person. They were all so amazing that you had to think about all of this beauty having come from somewhere.

RJ: Now you've said that you didn't go to Schlesweig-Holstein, you went to graduate school. Again, why and where?

MS: I went to graduate school at Catholic University in Washington. Living in the South—the District of Columbia—was a very formative experience. I don't know if you know the system called little sisters and little brothers in college.

RJ: Explain, yes.

MS: My "little sister" at New Rochelle had been an African-American. She lived in Washington, so when I went down there I said, "Oh, let's meet, Janie. Let's get together." I proposed meeting her in a drugstore, and she said, "We can't." I tried to find a place where we could even sit at a counter and have a meal together. I became angry and speechless. I hadn't experienced what she had lived with all her life. Racial inequality and injustice really hit me in the face.

RJ: And this is 1949/1950?

MS: It was 1951/1952.

RJ: You were aware of this from what she had said or other experiences in New Rochelle, or it was almost a total surprise to see it?

MS: I was aware of it. I used to work with the Catholic worker movement in New York. Dorothy Day—does that name mean something to you? She's a very famous American who was a Catholic, what shall I say—pacifist, anarchist, various things, and published a little newspaper called the *Catholic Worker*, that still to this day costs one cent. And if you think you can get off their mailing list, you can't. It has followed me around since I was twenty. Dorothy Day was a

well-known New Yorker. If you go on a tour downtown of the Lower East Side of New York City where she established her *Catholic Worker* during the Depression, you will hear about her and other labor leaders.

I had been exposed to inequities as a college student and knew about racial discrimination, having worked in Syracuse at that settlement house. But it really hit me in the face with a close friend, who had been a classmate almost—a couple of years behind me—and suddenly we could not sit down and eat together, share a meal. That was quite an experience.

RJ: And in the Catholic University, you were studying sociology?

MS: Right.

RJ: What particular specializations or special term papers?

MS: I had to do a Master's thesis, and curiously enough, I did it on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) for women. That was in 1952, before the 1970s when the issue flared up again. But I did it then. I remember thinking, "I don't know whether I believe in this or not because there are so many good arguments on both sides." It was difficult to come down on it, but I did write my thesis on that.

RJ: Were there any particular teachers who influenced you or mentors or other experiences?

MS: Well on the way, yes. I think the people who were related to the active life, like the Young Christian Students and the Young Christian Workers—those kinds of people, and the Catholic worker movement, Dorothy Day, the Baroness Catherine de Hueck, and members of the Grail Movement and others. Day died a few years ago. She has been proposed as a "saint," but some people in the church don't want her to be made a saint because she had a child out of wedlock, for example.

RJ: Now then tell me something about your career by then between Catholic University in Washington and—

MS: I went back to Syracuse, and I got a job as supervisor of health education in schools, which really wasn't my cup of tea at all. But then through the Young Christian Worker Movement I was asked if I wanted to apply for a new position that was coming up at a new coeducational college, Le Moyne College, as dean of women. So I applied. And sure enough, at the age of twenty-four, I was younger than many of the veterans who were students at the college at the time. I stayed there for seven years. It was interesting. In those days, the dean of women had to deal with both academic and social lives of women. What had happened was that the approving association, called Middle States—it's the American system—had come along to approve LeMoyne, and they said, "Look, you say you're coeducational, but there's not one woman on the faculty and there are 100 men—not one woman. So you must do something quickly and at least get a dean of women." So that's how the job opened up.

RJ: So in a sense, you were the first woman to be appointed?

MS: They promoted a secretary so that I would have a few months to get used to the college in another position. I was the youngest dean of women in the United States, according to the national association. But that also was an interesting experience for seven years. But at the end of the seven—I guess we all go in sabbatical cycles—I decided that I needed a change of venue. That's when I took a year's leave that turned out to be a lifetime.

RJ: And went to East Africa?

MS: Kenya, yes.

RJ: To Kenya. Just before I ask you about that, if you were the youngest dean of women in the United States, there must have been newspaper articles, or college promotion of that idea. There must have been people coming to you and saying, "You are pioneering for women."

MS: Oh yes, the local press in Syracuse. I'm sure I have some articles. I don't know what I've sent out. I don't think information on that stage of my life has yet been sent out to Princeton University, where I have an archive in the Seely Mudd Public Policy Papers. It includes my work with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and UNIFEM (UN Fund for Women). The archive is next to that of Sir Arthur Lewis.

RJ: Excellent.

MS: Which I think is just a fine place to be.

RJ: I was trying to find our whether you saw yourself, or other people indeed saw you, at that time as pioneering for women in the United States. And did that give you a certain fiery sense? Did you see yourself as a low-key feminist or a high-key feminist or a highly-professional woman, but indeed pursuing a pioneering role?

MS: Oh yes, I was certainly a pioneer because this was the first of the Jesuit colleges—which, as you know, include Georgetown and Boston College and many others—in the United States, the first one to be coeducational. No other one started coeducational. So there was a pioneering element there, but that were zero facilities for women. Men had a beautiful dormitory on campus, but women couldn't live on campus. So we had to buy a house. I got in connivance with the members of what was called the Board of Regents—businessmen who raised money for the college. That was before such people owned the colleges, as a board of directors does now. They bought a very large house off-campus that we made into a dormitory,

and then they bought another one, and then they bought another one. So that's the way we brought women into the picture.

About being a feminist, one must remember that we are speaking of the 1950s, a decade before the "second wave" of feminism rose in the U.S., which is usually identified as 1968. I think, therefore, that "professional women" is a more appropriate identification—and that was revolutionary enough in the 1950s.

There were some very bright girls applying—so many that they had to keep the enrollment of women down. I think today it's something like 60 percent women. And now, of course, several women have served as president of the faculty senate. Now the college is completely integrated, male-female. But it wasn't in those days, so that one kind of had to pick areas and work on them.

RJ: You don't describe it though with a great sense of struggle. But there was quite a lot of struggle? At the time, there were a lot of men who were against these changes?

MS: I think not that many. I think they didn't know, more than that they were against. Yes, there were men who were against. There were men on the faculty who didn't want to hear anything about this. And of course, I brought as role models people like Dorothy Day to come and speak to the students and to give them a spectrum of the possibilities of their lives and futures. That brought plenty of controversy down on my head.

RJ: Any other role models you brought?

MS: I'm trying to think of who else we brought who stands out on my mind. The Baroness de Hueck was another. And of course, I joined a professional women's organization, Zonta, and was able to bring women from the community—women doctors, businesswomen, to the campus as role models for the women, so they wouldn't have just male role models.

RJ: And then suddenly from this, you decide to go to Kenya. You have to tell me what leads to that.

MS: What I decided was that I really needed, after seven years, to take some time off. The college didn't yet have a sabbatical system, but when I talked with President Robert Grewen, he said yes I could take a year off. They would put somebody in temporarily. I think they understood. There were good members of the faculty and staff there. So that's what I did. But it came about through meeting Kenyans. We were very close to Syracuse University, and Syracuse University wasn't fully international but it was a bigger place.

RJ: It had a school of public administration.

MS: Yes, the Maxwell School.

RJ: And that had quite a number of Third Worlders, did it? Or am I wrong?

MS: Oh yes, it was coming up then.

RJ: And particularly Africans?

MS: Not at the time. A Program of Eastern African Studies came up a little bit later. I joined that later, after I had been in Africa. I joined it in the 1960s.

RJ: Aiden Southall, if I remember rightly.

MS: Aiden Southall was there. Fred Burke was the head of the program, and Aiden Southall was—Fred brought him there to teach.

RJ: But we're interested in why this led you to choose Kenya. What were the links?

MS: From my interest in race relations in the U.S. I had had, as I told you, a couple of experiences that keyed me up in terms of race relations. And I had friends who were interested, or beginning to be interested, in international affairs. I don't know if you recall the famous Berrigan brothers, who protested the Vietnam War.

RJ: Of course.

MS: Another brother came to Le Moyne as a veteran. He walked in—because he was considerably older than these people around—he walked in my office to commune. I introduced him to a friend who became his wife. So we were good friends. He was very interested in his family and in international affairs. The president of the Kenya National Union of Teachers, Stephen Kioni, was visiting them, and when we spoke he said, "Why don't you go and work with our women?"

RJ: This is the Kenyan who said this?

MS: Yes, he introduced me to the International Union of Teachers—a fellow named Ray Smyke. The union eventually had an office in Geneva, but was in Washington then. So through meeting people like Kioni and Smyke informally and meeting a series of lecturers, including the last British governor-general of Ghana, my interest in Africa grew.

The college asked me to meet the governor-general at a dinner party. I'm not sure why, now. But I must have been showing signs of interest in the rest of the world. When the time came, and it was possible to take a year off, I said, "Well, why don't I go to Africa and see where the roots of all this are and see if I can better understand the American situation." So I started looking around and was soon offered a job in Lesotho at what was the University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (UBLS).

RJ: Was this run by Roma campus, was it?

MS: Roma, yes. I was offered a job at Roma, but they wanted me too quickly. I couldn't manage getting out of LeMoyne and I didn't think it was fair just to disappear. So I tried for other possibilities. I went to the Peace Corps in Washington the day they opened their

doors. It was John F. Kennedy's young Peace Corps. They said, "Lady, we don't even have typewriters. Come back another day, will you?"

The African-American Institute here in New York had a Women's African Committee that helped to make a contact in Kenya for me. Then five members of the LeMoyne College Board of Regents became interested in my project and decided to raise money for me; they each wrote a check. And my alma mater, the College of New Rochelle, wrote a check. That's how I financed my first year.

RJ: And Gwendolyn Carter surely was linked to the African-American Institute.

MS: I believe so. I got to know her that year, and then at Kenyan independence. I remember Gwen Carter, with her crutches, climbing up in the pouring rain to witness the lowering and raising of the flags. Were you there?

RJ: No.

MS: Climbing up in these bleachers in the pouring rain. Leave it to Gwen, she did it. She later offered me a job at Northwestern University, which I declined.

RJ: And you went by plane? You went by boat to Kenya?

MS: By plane. I wore all my clothes. If you read that story about the Congo, *The Poisonwood Bible*, how in those days—it was about the time I was going—you only had very little weight allowance that you could carry on the plane. So you wore everything, and that's just what I did. I really smiled when I read that book. I sewed my sneakers into the sleeves of my jacket and got there. The Women's Africa Committee connected me with a women's organization in Kenya to spend a year with them, but the women's organization turned out not to exist.

RJ: Really?

MS: There was a nice lady leading what would now be called a briefcase NGO (nongovernmental organization). There she was, with very few members.

RJ: This was a Kenyan woman?

MS: Yes.

RJ: Do you remember her name? You must remember her name.

MS: Jemimah Gechaga. She was the first African woman in Legco, the Legislative Council. Did you know her husband? He was a big businessman, even in colonial days. Her organization barely existed. I think there were two members. Then I happened to meet Gordon Hagberg of the Institute of International Education, who put me to work with the airlifts—Tom Mboya's airlifts of Kenyan students to American colleges.

RJ: Of course.

MS: So I volunteered, or I think they paid me a little, to help screen the students. That was a wonderful experience.

RJ: You didn't get involved with Maendeleo ya Wanawake?

MS: Yes I did. I don't remember just who introduced me to Maendeleo. Phoebe Asiyo was president then. She's still a friend. She stayed here once a few years ago with all of her children—a nice reunion. Thanks to Phoebe, I then worked with Maendeleo ya Wanawake.

RJ: I didn't actually get her name.

MS: Phoebe Asiyo. She later headed the women's prison. She's been a member of parliament for South Nyanza. She's been in and out of parliament. She was once defeated by President [Daniel Arab] Moi's friends. But when she got back in again, and she is now very active in a new political party. When I met Phoebe, she decided that the best thing I could do if I was going to work with Kenyan women was to go and stay with different people around the

country. I did that, and it was an interesting experience. People like Grace Ogot, the poet, whom you know—I stayed in Kisumu with her for a while. Then I visited Angela Heman Gethi in Embu, near Mt. Kenya.

Along the way someone said, "You must meet Margaret Kenyatta," the daughter of Jomo, and Margaret Kenyatta came to the door of my flat. She came to my door early one morning. I had had guests the night before, and the kitchen was piled with dirty dishes. I wasn't even ready to greet a visitor. She got a ride and she came. So Margaret did my dishes while I got ready to meet with her, the future president's daughter. Her father was still in detention then, of course.

RJ: This was the year or so before Kenyan independence?

MS: Yes, well it was two years before independence. I went in July 1961, and their independence was the end of 1963.

RJ: Yes, December 1963.

MS: That's right. I completed my two years in July 1961, and their independence was the end of 1963.

MS: After the first year, when LeMoyne sent me my contract to sign, I sent it back with a nice letter and thanked everybody very much. Much later, in 1978, they kindly gave me an honorary degree and made me a member of their Board of Trustees.

RJ: Which is nice.

MS: I got involved with Margaret, who had devised this scheme of having Kenya women's seminars, bringing all the women's organizations together to talk about what would be women's roles in their new country.

RJ: Post-independence.

MS: And that story we tell in here.

RJ: In *African Women and Development: A History*, your book with Mary Tadesse.

MS: Published by Zed Books in London, 1995. It's in many university libraries, I know. Kenya was where I learned something that would come up much later, time and again: there were roots of the global women's movement in Africa. Each region—Asia, Africa, Latin America—had its own roots of what would become the global women's movement. Yet some people say that the global women's movement came from western women. Well, now this was happening very early on. Margaret said, "Look, when we were under colonialism, we couldn't go as African women to meet women from other African countries. But now we can, or we will be able to do so."

The women were beginning to think of Africa as a whole, and they were beginning to think of women as working side by side with men in their independent countries and wanting to define what their roles would be. So I worked with Margaret and leaders of all the women's organizations in Kenya to plan Kenya Women's Seminars. Then this expanded to be East African Women's Seminars, including women from Tanganyika and Uganda and Zanzibar as well. The seminars formed the basis of what would become a women's movement in Africa.

RJ: Now women at the time surely were somewhat involved with the independence movement. As I say somewhat, I am really meaning to a greater or lesser extent depending on which country and so forth.

MS: Well let me say to a great extent. I don't know if you have seen a book called *Tanu Women*, which centers on Bibi Titi Mohammed and her role with the independence movement with Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. That book turns around everybody's ideas of women just being supporters. Bibi Titi was guiding and working with Nyerere very closely, and mobilizing

people, particularly the Islamic communities. She was a nightclub singer before. I don't know if you knew her.

RJ: I've never met her.

MS: The *Tanu Women* book will transform your idea of what these independence movements were all about. And certainly women were part of the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya before independence there.

RJ: Particularly when the men were locked up, the women were—

MS: Very much involved. They provided shelter to freedom fighters, smuggled guns, acted as spies. Many were raped, beaten, murdered, detained.

RJ: Punished, but relatively few of them surely put into detention as such—relatively few women.

MS: Let me look that up and see exactly how many.

RJ: But just for the record, I'm not totally clear how you went from arriving in Kenya to this series, this trip around the country, staying with various groups—how that became somewhat more institutionalized into a particular set of activities.

MS: Right, it came through Maendeleo ya Wanawake, because Phoebe Asiyo, as I said, was president of Maendeleo ya Wanawake at the time.

RJ: So you started then working as the main institution for Maendeleo.

MS: Maendeleo was, as you know, the largest organization. Its formation had been encouraged by the colonialists in the 1950s, supposedly to distract women from the nationalist movements—keep them away from Mau-Mau. But nonetheless, it was the main women's organization after independence. So it was key. However, there were other women's organizations with international connections.

RJ: I remember the Associated Country Women of the World.

MS: Yes. And there were professional women's organizations coming up, affiliating internationally. There were also, of course, church organizations established in colonial times. All of them came together when Margaret Kenyatta worked with Phoebe Asiyo and others, who said, "Let's organize Kenya Women's Seminars." They pulled me into working with them.

RJ: So you were organizing the seminars.

MS: With the secretary, Sarah Otieno, and a British gal, Catherine Bell, who was the wife of a diplomat there, who was excellent. She had been an office manager in her day. She was just very fine. All of the seminars have reports that tell you what women's expectations were and what they wanted to do after independence—their priorities. We began to tie women in with the UN then. Margaret (Molly) Bruce, who headed the women's office at the United Nations headquarters came out to speak. You've probably interviewed Molly Bruce. Nobody has?

RJ: No.

MS: Oh heavens. Her office backstopped the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for years. She's very active in the UNA/USA (United Nations Association of the United States of America).

RJ: Molly.

MS: She's British, married to an American, and lives here now. She's retired. She was president of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) for a while.

RJ: This would still be 1963, just before independence?

MS: Yes. Then I went to Tanzania for another year, all of 1964. We continued the East African seminars at the time.

RJ: Why were you thinking of going to Tanzania?

MS: This was thanks to my connection with the Women's Africa Committee (WAC) and to meeting Tanzanian women at the seminars. I think WAC also had the connection with Margaret Bruce and the Commission on the Status of Women, because they worked with the UN. That relationship allowed me to bring their resources to the women of Kenya and East Africa, and they persuaded the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to finance my year in Tanzania.

RJ: At the time, Kenyatta and a number of other African politicians—I remember myself, in the U.S. where I was at the time, the inspiration of Mwalimu Nyerere. Apart from the women's groups and the Maendeleo, how were you interacting, how were you excited by the visions of African independence?

MS: Very much so. After we held the East African Women's Seminars, the men came to us. Remember Kiano? What was his English name? Julius [Nyerere]. His Kikuyu name was Gikonyo. He became a minister in the first government. He, Tom Mboya, Mwai Kibaki, and others decided that Africans should come together, men and women both, and have a seminar on what they would call, "The Kenya We Want." So we did that just before independence; it must have been early 1963. Our same little team organized it. We had a broader committee bringing men into it as well as women, and that became a very important vehicle for people like Tom Mboya and Arap Moi and various others. Those who would be leaders very shortly spent a week on the subject of "the Kenya We Want."

It was a fascinating thing because it gave the opportunity for people really to speak out. And I think they were very realistic. Besides having a Mercedes in every garage, which is what everybody expects at independence time for a country, they were very realistic. They were plotting and planning what would happen for their future country in various fields—someone in

health, someone in education, et cetera. The whole gamut was covered, and that was a very exciting moment.

RJ: Did you get involved in any of the more development strategy debates of the time—what should be development goals?

MS: That's what the "Kenya We Want" convention was really about.

RJ: I was really, I suppose, meaning yourself. Perhaps I should put it in terms of what you remember about the nature of the debates.

MS: I was particularly involved with education, of both men and women, to prepare people for the kinds of involvement they would have and how they would function in different capacities in the future. Rural development was stressed, including the position of women in the countryside. Masai women, all kinds of women, and men, came to these seminars and were able to participate, thanks to interpretation.

RJ: And by that, you're meaning not KiSwahili, but—

MS: KiSwahili and several local languages. But no, I was not involved in field work until I got down to Tanzania in 1964 and later with the village settlements there in 1966-1967.

RJ: Ujaama.

MS: No, before Ujaama. Before the Ujaama villages, there were some experimental village settlements.

RJ: I see.

MS: I left Kenya just before independence, but came back—

RJ: Just before Kenyan independence to go to Tanzania.

MS: Yes, I left Kenya and came back to the U.S. and got ready to go off to Tanzania to spend a year, then returned to East Africa in time for Kenya's independence ceremonies, and

went on down to Dar es Salaam after that. It was somewhere in there, I believe, that John Kennedy was shot. Wasn't it 1963?

RJ: Yes, it was 1964, I think, was it not, because December 1963 was independence. I remember driving to Uganda. I was at that time based in Makerere, and I remember hearing the broadcast of the arrival of the VC-10 with the Duke of Edinburgh on it and him walking down the steps. And there was Jomo Kenyatta pinning an uhuru badge on the Duke of Edinburgh's lapel. I remember saying to Allison, my wife, "If I had said five years ago," when I had been working in Kenya myself, "that in five year's time Kenyatta would be out of jail pinning an uhuru badge on the Duke of Edinburgh, people would have screamed that you are just mad." But we need to check when the assassination of Kennedy was.

MS: It was the end of 1963. I remember I was in a shop buying some cloth to make something to wear at Kenya's independence. When the news came, I hurried to the TV sales department to watch the terrible event.

RJ: Perhaps you could tell me, Peg, a bit more about Tanzania. How long were you in Tanzania?

MS: I was there all of 1964, working with Umoja wa Wanawake (UWT). That was the year of the army revolt. Then I went back in 1966/1967 representing Syracuse University, to work with the village settlement program that was sponsored by the Ford Foundation. I returned again in 1970/1971 to complete my Ph.D. First, shall I go back and say something about my 1964 work with Umoja wa Wanawake? They were just getting organized. They were terribly impressive. For example, at the time of the army revolt—as you remember, the British came in—despite the fears many people had, the women came to take me to a meeting.

RJ: The British came in to support Nyerere.

MS: Oh yes. Umoja wa Wanawake was the national women's organization affiliated with the political party, Tanu. It was headed by the famous Bibi Titi Mohamed, whom I mentioned before in relation to the book called *Tanu Women.* I assisted them with planning seminars, training seminars. The Umoja wa Wanawake members at that point were mostly women who were veterans of the independence movement. They were women with very little education, but an enormous amount of organizational experience, and a lot of goodwill and a lot of interest in building their nation. There was the question: where do women move now? They were sustaining the national economy, of course, through their work in agriculture, in small business and trade. UWT asked, "How can we help them to move forward?"

We planned training courses in community development and worked on the possibility of credit schemes even then, in 1964. In fact, Mama Maria Nyerere got the first—a symbolic loan to raise chickens. UWT was highly political—

RJ: That sounds a rather more specific agenda of action to meet women's needs than seemed to be so in Kenya?

MS: Kenya was before independence, and therefore the thrust of what I was doing was to set up opportunities for women to express themselves about their future. And then, as I said, for the "Kenya We Want" convention, for men and women to express themselves about the future of their country. When I went to Tanzania in 1964, and they had been independent since 1962, the hard job of making the country go forward economically, politically, and in every way was there. So it was anticipation at the time I was in Kenya and reality by the time I got to Tanzania.

We wrote handbooks in Tanzania. I went around the country with Sarah Nyirenda, who was executive-secretary of Umoja wa Wanawake, to discuss with the women what they wanted.

They, of course, wanted to earn money to support themselves and their children. I think if there is one thing that will ring in my ears forever it is, "We need a regular income for ourselves and our children." You would hear that and you would hear that. You would hear that in Kenya and you would hear that in Tanganyika.

In these days, in my book *Women in African Economies: From Burning Sun to Boardroom* about Uganda, it's even more true; women not only feed the family, they also pay the school fees nowadays. So they have become more and more responsible for the future labor force, if you will.

RJ: How responsive was Nyerere himself at the time, because he was such a visionary leader and such an international figure in spelling out a whole new approach for Africa and not quite yet with Ujaamaa defined.

MS: It was coming up in the 1960s.

RJ: It was coming up, but on the women's issues, was he—

MS: He was very strong on the women's issues. And he wanted Mama Maria, his wife, to be kind of a patron of UWT. He was very, very supportive, and we had meetings at State House. So there was not a moment when he didn't support the women. Whether or not—and I say this partly because I know his personal assistant Joan Wicken well—he and the government really knew, in the concrete, what to do about his support is another question.

RJ: Were you having meetings at the time with Joan Wicken at all?

MS: Oh yes, but on a personal basis, not as part of her job. Her job didn't bring her into Umoja wa Wanawake kinds of activities at all.

RJ: But you didn't talk about women's activities and Umoja wa Wanawake with her at that time?

MS: Oh I'm sure I must have because it was what my life was at that time. And we were meeting with the government community development people, and people form the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), the NGOs, and so forth. There were whole groups who would come together to meet—women from various backgrounds—to plot and plan the series of seminars and training courses. So I must have talked with her about it, but it in a personal way rather than—

RJ: Officially, yes.

MS: And it wasn't her business to deal with organizations. Hers was directed to the president and supporting his work.

RJ: Did you have much link with the university, the burgeoning University of Dar es Salaam at that time?

MS: In 1964 I taught an evening course. In 1966/1967 I did research. And then 1970/1971, of course, I completed my Ph.D.

RJ: Universities can be very responsive and understanding, and they can be extremely academic and unconcerned apparently with immediate programs or practicalities. How did you find—

MS: I did some teaching at the Institute of Adult Education.

RJ: In Arusha, is this?

MS: No in Dar es Salaam. They had a big building, just in the back of the city then. Something else is there now, but I taught urban sociology for them in my spare time. And I went back—in fact, I did my dissertation research for my Ph.D. in 1966/1967, when I was working for Syracuse University, on adult learning, on the social aspects of adult learning. So I had connections at that time mainly with the adult education side of the university. I did that year,

1964, with Umoja wa Wanawake and then I finished my time there, came back to Syracuse University, and then the next thing I knew they wanted me to return to Dar es Salaam and be the liaison person with graduate students who were doing Ph.D. dissertations on village settlements—the preceders of Ujaamaa villages. And if we had really gotten the word over about the village settlements as clearly as we should have, there might not have been Ujaamaa villages of the type that came about later.

RJ: That's a very interesting statement, and I was about to ask you something like that. It was as clear as that that the sort of enforced part of Ujaamaa village was not only wrong by way of enforcement, but it was really pressuring people to act in ways that didn't make sense.

MS: One, if you will, sort of communal village was Upper Kitete. Did you know Upper Kitete?

RJ: No.

MS: Gary Thomas, who teaches at Ithaca College now, was there doing his dissertation. I can't remember where all the other village settlements were, but they were scattered around the country. I think it was a World Bank backing of money, as I recall, to assist the village settlements, and it was Ford Foundation that sponsored our research. The one communal settlement, Upper Kitete, was where Gary, a sociologist, lived. He looked at the division of labor and how people worked, and concluded that they just weren't made for communal work. The Tanzanian peasant was not a communal worker; she was an extended family worker, and it was very clear then.

Who was the person in the Ministry of Lands and Settlements who went on to be governor of the bank? Cleopas Msuya. Did you know him? Cleopas Msuya was the person to whom we presented all our information. And what happened once he got the findings of the

university research—what he did with it in terms of how influential he could be, because he was just a young civil servant at the time, I don't know.

RJ: He was totally convinced by what you and Gary Thomas were saying?

MS: I think he saw what was happening. But the power of an idea, of Ujaamaa villages, was bigger than life. It became bigger than life after the Arusha Declaration. So therefore, it must have been difficult for him to bring that evidence to bear on the plans for the future. Or maybe he was moved to another ministry. I don't know, because I was only there in 1966/1967. It would have been very difficult to plan Ujaamaa villages with that kind of experience behind you. These particular village settlements got all the prizes as Ujaamaa villages later because they had more experience and more investment. They had a pretty strong investment in those, as compared to the Ujaamaa villages later.

RJ: Well, perhaps is this the moment to ask how you went from Tanzania to Addis?

MS: OK. While I was in Tanzania in 1966/1967, working with Syracuse and the settlement program, I decided to start research for my own Ph.D. I would have graduated from Makerere, except that it was decided to split up the three universities before I finished my dissertation. As a result, I was inherited by the University of Dar es Salaam.

RJ: Working in Tanzania, but at that time the Ph.D. programs were formally under Makerere in Uganda.

MS: Makarere gave the Ph.D.s for the three East African universities. When the three split, when the East African countries split, I was inherited, so I became the first person ever to get a Ph.D. from the University of Dar es Salaam.

RJ: Really?

MS: The only first person. There were three of us that year, 1971, but I was the first to go up and accept my degree. After completing my research, I came back and worked at Syracuse University a bit longer, then returned to Dar to have a few months of residence and to finish. It was at that time that I read a communication from Addis Ababa asking if I would be interviewed for a possible job. The Swedes had given some money for two posts—SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). Those posts were there, and they had heard about me.

The contact was Jimmy Riby-Williams of Ghana. I had been interviewed by him after I left Nairobi in 1963 actually. Neither one of us later could figure out why I didn't take the job then, but I didn't. When he came to Dar and I had the interview with him, he said, "I wondered if that was going to be you." So that's how I happened to get that job. It was because somebody from ECA had wandered past an office at the UN, at headquarters here, saying, "We need a woman who really would be good for a Swedish post." My friend, who was sitting in the office, said, "I've got the person for you. She's out in Dar es Salaam."

RJ: Who was this?

MS: Jane Weidlund. Jane did all the work to create the UN Volunteers. When they were created, of course Jane being a woman and an American, didn't get the job as director. I forget who was the first head of the UN Volunteers, but she's the one who did all the work.

RJ: Now surely Aida Gindy (Egypt) had already been in ECA for a while. Is that right?

MS: Oh yes, Aida was there. In fact, it was Aida who got me to ECA for the first interview. It must have been in 1963 when I left Kenya. She had been out with Terry Spens (UK) doing research in, I believe, Uganda. We met in Nairobi. Aida still talks about this. She said, "You come through Addis Ababa because we want you to work with ECA." She was

working there, then. That's why I visited the first time. As I say, why I didn't take the job none of us could remember. Aida was the first contact I had with ECA. Riby-Williams came when she was still there. They knew each very well through the UN Commission on Social Development.

RJ: So you get offered the job and you accept. So you then go to work in ECA. Which year is this?

MS: In 1971. SIDA had given money to ECA to establish two posts that would be assigned to follow up resolutions of the commission about women and to create a program that would in fact assist the implementation of those resolutions, because there had been many meetings. Let me just look at a few of them for you. ECA had women on their agenda from the very beginning. In 1960/1961, they had "Role of Women in Community Development" and "Role of Women in Urban Development." In 1964/1965, they spoke of the need for a study of population growth and the role of women in development. This was much before anybody was talking about women in development. In 1967, "Participation of Women in National Social and Economic Development" was a regional meeting. In 1968/1969, they did studies on participation of women in national development.

So there were all of these meetings sponsored by ECA, either alone or with UN headquarters, that focused on women. So we had to—"we" was me for a long time because we didn't get a second person for a while—to take those recommendations and turn them into a program. I went there in 1971. Ester Boserup had written her "bible" on *The Role of Women in Economic Development.*

RJ: 1970.

MS: First published in 1970. That had come out. This was when we began to gather information. I had a research assistant who was assigned to dig into all of the library materials and produce country studies for every country. It ran the scope of education—

RJ: In Addis Ababa, in the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

MS: In ECA, that's right. That's how we started. In order to plan a program, I assigned this gal to go to the library and find all the information from reports of ministries of education, of health, and so forth, and bring together all the data she could possibly bring together for all countries of Africa. As you know, that was not an easy job at the time. While she did that, I studied the resolutions. And we came up with a five-year program for women that was then built into the ECA's program of work. The five-year program was 1972 to 1976. That came to New York when Aida Gindy and others—have you interviewed Aida?

RJ: No, but I have got the interview of Aida that was undertaken by an American in the college that she attended in the Midwest.

MS: Anyway, Aida, Molly Bruce, and others planned—I believe it was 1972—the very first headquarters expert group meeting anywhere on women and economic development. It was chaired by noted economist and Nobel laureate, Sir Arthur Lewis, and the expert was Ester Boserup who had gone around and done research and presented a paper. ECA's five year program was attached as an addendum to the meeting papers. So ECA was already beginning to have an impact. We wrote for the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. We were beginning to help put women on the world's agenda and certainly to make order out of all that was done in ECA. I asked one of my former colleagues from those days what she thought were the major influences of the Women's Program—which later, in 1975, became the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) at ECA. She said "measuring women's unpaid work

contributions, women and workloads, women in agriculture in Africa." We had data in all those areas; it was at the time the only work being done on a regional basis. It just wasn't done. We were also promoting national machinery—women's commissions and bureaus in government that would guide national policies.

I guess I had the instinct not only for economic and social justice, but also for institutionalizing, so that there would be a long life for whatever was being done. The national commissions were governmentally established commissions and women's bureaus to do the same kind of thing we were doing at Addis—bring together information to propose policies and create development programs involving women as well as men.

By 1974, we published a document called the Database on Women and Population Factors. That was done for a meeting that prepared for the UN's first global women's conference in Mexico City (World Conference of the International Women's Year). All of this made ECA the queen, if you will, for a regional approach to the issues of women. For example, the ASG (assistant secretary-general) for the Centre for Social Development, Helvi Sepila of Finland, later said ECA had the lead in all of the regions toward the achievement of equal rights for men and women as set forth in the UN Charter. In 1983, she said, "Among the regions of the world, Africa had the most advanced regional structures in respect of formulating and administering women's programs in the form of the African Training and Research Centre for Women and the Africa regional coordinating committee.

RJ: Who was saying this?

MS: The assistant secretary-general for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Helvi Sepila from Finland was the first woman to be an ASG. Can you believe it? Adebayo Adedeji, who was the executive-secretary of ECA after Robert Gardiner left

in 1975, said the question to be asked was what type of integration for women was envisaged, because all along African women were traditionally involved in the process of development. They played an even greater role than men, for example, in trade and agriculture. It was observed that the integration of women really meant their integration in the planning of development, which is pretty good for Mr. Adedeji to say.

RJ: I was going to say, actually—

MS: He is the least likely.

RJ: Well, I was taking part yesterday in the present commentary on the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

MS: I hate the acronym.

RJ: Well, you have to pronounce it "n'pad," not "kneepad," but it's still pretty bad. But they were saying there that we must ensure the full integration of women in development. And I think I did comment saying I think that's not quite the issue. And it's certainly not expressed correctly.

MS: That's right. The article in the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* was "Women in National Development in African Countries: Some Profound Contradictions."

RJ: Can you give the reference there, if you have it.

MS: It's the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Volume 6, no. 2, 1972—a special edition on African women.

RJ: Let me just pause at that point. Who were some of the leaders, in addition to yourself, intellectually in the Addis Ababa office? Let's start with Ester Boserup when she came to participate in this meeting with Arthur Lewis. Were you impressed?

MS: That was a global meeting. That was here at UN headquarters. That was a global meeting that Margaret Bruce and Aida Gindy and company put together. Gloria Scott is another name at that period. She is Jamaican. She went on to take a position as focal point for women in development at the World Bank. But in Addis, Robert Gardiner himself was very pro. Can I speak about him now, or do you want me to wait?

RJ: Why not speak about him right now?

MS: I went in 1971. In 1972/1973, a women's program was established within ECA. Then four of us took itinerant training courses around Africa, to various countries, and women kept saying, "We want a center for women, a training center of our own." Remembering that I had studied all these resolutions, I knew that this was not a new thought. But it was time to do something about it. So when our team went back, we spoke with Robert Gardiner. Remember how he used to look over his glasses, this tiny little man behind a huge desk, and he said, "Just bring me the plans for the African Training and Research Centre for Women."

There was Jean Ritchie of Scotland, of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)—she's a superb character—Asmeret Hagos of Ethiopia, and Janet Asare of Ghana. We were the team who went around. Jean and Jeanette Asare had been very much involved in training and community development. Asmeret was very good on communications and methodologies.

I think, Richard, one important thing about the women's center in Addis, the African Training and Research Centre for Women that was formally established on the 31st of March 1975, was that it was the first really interagency center that the UN had.

RJ: Anywhere.

MS: Until UNAIDS (Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS) came along, because we had staff from FAO, from ILO (International Labour Organization). ITDG (International

Technology Development Group of the UK) gave us Marilyn Carr. We had money from the Ford Foundation. UNICEF sent us people. It was a truly interagency center, which meant that more than just being us who were staff—the original staff—we had access to inputs from all those agencies. So you ask who were the planners, who were the inspirers of this. We were a team. We were about sixteen before I left in 1978, and they made it possible to create the African Training and Research Centre for Women. We had a component on rural development. Jean Ritchie and Suzanne Prosper, from Mauritius, from FAO brought the resources of FAO. People came from FAO to help to design that. You had a program on employment—ILO came in. We had an Indian woman from ILO and the resources of ILO come to assist.

So it was possible to design the center using the resources of the UN system, which I think was a fantastic thing and a fantastic opportunity. That's when, for example, we did the paper that really everybody should be looking at, called "The Database for Discussion of the Interrelations Between the Integration of Women in Development, Their Situation, and Population Factors (1974)." It was the first ever paper to have annexes with all the data that could be found from every country in Africa about women. And that "Database" paper became quite famous in the UN because it was the first.

RJ: Again, from any region.

MS: Oh yes. No other region did anything for women at that stage—nothing that I know of. The paper also made a big hit with UN headquarters people, with the people at the Mexico City conference and others. What was making ECA a leader in this was that the concepts were very different from any at the UN or any others at the time, because we were talking about women as part of the active labor force. We were talking about involving women as mothers, because UNICEF did that. We were talking about involving women in the national planning

process. So we had a whole scope which you had not had before, to any extent. You would know better than I if ILO had done much on women by then.

I remember sitting up in the old Tudor Hotel on 42nd Street reading your Nairobi report that brought the informal sector to the world's attention and making comments on it for Ulla Olin of UNDP.

RJ: Ulla Olin was a member. She did the population chapter.

MS: OK. So she gave it to me. I came here and I sat up in the old Tudor Hotel, in those tiny rooms you had to walk outside to turn around in they were so small.

RJ: But my memory is that the Kenya report, because this was 1972, did have by Dorothy Remy a section not just on the informal sector, but I suppose we were calling it "women's roles." Does that ring a bell in that?

MS: It must have.

RJ: But the point I was going to ask you—you say you assembled this material with data from lots of countries in Africa. Now that is, to me, interesting because I remember the Ghana census of the early 1960s, I think, which still was using those definitions in which most women were not in the labor force—not participants.

MS: Family workers, unpaid family workers.

RJ: Or whatever, but the actual form of the statistics excluded patently, obviously, a large number of women. So do you remember any issues on how you got more relevant data? Was it from sociological studies? Was it from statistics? Was it from other surveys?

MS: Yes, we got it wherever we could get it. For example, ECA had sponsored in the 1960s studies on revolving credit funds. There had been a lot of studies. Any data Ester Boserup had done in a small way, we tried to assemble however we could. There were the

official government documents that ECA had—the government and ministerial reports. But there were also innumerable bits and pieces of autobiographical and other studies.

Here's an example of what we did. When ILO asked us to contribute to their full employment study in Ethiopia, my colleague and I closed our shop, practically, and we went to where all the old anthropology studies were. Every anthropologist has a section on what men and women do in the household, right? So we would dig out that kind of information. Then we would check it out with contemporary people by asking, "Is this what happens in your mother's home in the countryside?" So we had to do a lot of digging. But it was a broad scope of things. That paper is at the Princeton University Public Policy Papers archives, where I have placed all of my ATRCW and UNIFEM documents.

RJ: Tell me a little more about Ester Boserup and your memories of the time. Here she was, I think, based in Copenhagen, but assembling her wonderful book as you say. Did you feel, "Oh, this is fascinating?" This was someone working on exactly the same as you were, or did she seem to be ahead in some respects, or behind?

MS: She did it before we did, and she assembled that information when she was—was working with Gunnar Mydral. She brought together that information as they went around Asia and Africa. Wherever she found a study, she'd take it home. So what she put together was pretty much whatever she could find.

RJ: The state of the art at the time.

MS: I think that Mary Tadesse and I have some of that in our book, *African Women and Development: A History*, that is the story of ECA's work with women over thirty years. Boserup produced her book as a side issue. As you know, she was an agricultural economist with the Myrdal team. Wasn't it Myrdal who wrote about Asia?

RJ: *The Asian Drama*.

MS: She was on that team, I believe.

RJ: I had forgotten that.

RJ: When Arthur Lewis was chairing the 1972 meeting in New York, did you get the feeling again that this was a highly sensitive economist, very much encouraging this focus on women?

MS: Oh yes. At that time, he was president of the Caribbean Development Bank. Wasn't he president? I believe. It was during his Caribbean Development Bank period. So to have him was a veritable coup on the part of the UN.

RJ: But I tend not to think of him as someone who was very gender-sensitive in his own writings.

MS: No, he wouldn't have been. But certainly at that meeting, whether Boserup had converted him or what, I'm not at all sure. But at that meeting he was certainly a very good chairperson and very interested. He certainly wasn't falling asleep on the job.

RJ: No, he was too big a man.

MS: But again, it's this gap. Many men are willing to support ideas, but their grasp of strategies in the practical order is not strong. They conceptually know that this is something that has to happen, but in the practical order how do you put it into your writings? I think Amartya Sen does better nowadays. Incidentally, he wrote *Development as Freedom*, and then Devaki Jain gave me his book on India. Now he's talking about freedom *and* wellbeing. President Nyerere of Tanzania defined development in the early 1960s as "development of people for their greater freedom and wellbeing." I don't know if Sen knows.

RJ: It's an interesting point.

MS: It's a very interesting point. I wonder if he read Nyerere. If he ever does, he'll find that out some day.

RJ: He probably is somewhat aware. He's a great person for going back. He loves going back to Aristotle for the basic ideas of development, quite apart from the eighteenth and nineteenth century normal economists—great economists, I perhaps might say. Sticking if you might, to men, do you remember any other men internationally at the time in the UN or in ECA, in addition to Robert Gardiner, who were encouraging, perhaps insightful, perhaps contributing more actively to this?

MS: Oh yes. There was Jimmy Riby-Williams, also from Ghana, who was the head of the social development division under Gardiner. Jimmy was really the stronger person on substance. He would edit our papers. He was a great person for spending time because he understood, I think. I think Gardiner did too. Can I tell you a little story about Gardiner?

RJ: Of course.

MS: He created the women's center, as I said, in 1975. It was his last official act before his retirement, before he flew back to Ghana. We had a celebration at my place, and he said, "I want to tell all of you my story." So we all gathered around, and he told his story. He said, "My father died when I was a little tiny guy. My mother first started a bakery. Then she got into cars." And he told how once she took one of her cars to a mechanic and asked him about the carburetor. He said, "Madam, how do you know anything about carburetors?" He said, "She is the reason I went to Cambridge University." He was saying to us, "Do you think I am afraid of women taking over? I wouldn't be here if some women didn't take over." There was Riby-Williams and Gardiner, and now the current executive-secretary of ECA, who has multiplied the

number of staff of the Women's Centre, and made women the centerpiece of ECA's fortieth anniversary celebration.

RJ: KY Amoako?

MS: Yes. He is doubling the staff of the women's center from regular UN posts—not extra-budgetary, and thus not permanent, ones.

RJ: Impressive.

MS: He is one who sees. He's not intimidated. He just says, "These are our people. We've got to make them all do things." So he's not seeing women as victims. But he's seeing them as producers of national wealth in the labor force, as peacemakers, as essential to Africa's development.

RJ: And efficiency required more opportunities consciously.

MS: Efficiency is a human development concern too.

RJ: Very good.

MS: But it's interesting that they should all happen to come from Ghana. I asked my Ghanaian friends, "What is it that mothers tell their sons there?"

RJ: Well, I'm thinking of the former minister of health in Nigeria, actually, who was minister in the late 1980s, who had also a very strong mother. He talked, I think, about his mother driving a car—but I may be misremembering this—before the Second World War. But he and his, I think, two brothers date their leadership, and to some extent their radicalism, from the pioneering role of their mother. Now there must be many other cases. Coming to the ideas, and the ideas that were growing out of your database, is that a clear case in your view of UN leadership with ideas?

MS: Oh yes. I think that the global women's movement would be lost or at least much weaker without the UN. I see the UN as—what should I say? How did I put it here? It was a few women strategically placed in the UN. I have more and more respect for leadership in that sense, of what a few strategically placed people can do by cooperating. You had two or three here at UN headquarters. You had our small group out in Addis. You had a few key people in FAO, ILO, and other agencies who made the UN the guardian and advocate of the global women's movement. I think women captured the UN and made it their own vehicle for their movement to make sure that their movement was going to go ahead. In many ways, the UN was far ahead, say, in its definitions of "development as a concept and a movement whose long-range goal is the wellbeing of society, the community of men, women, and children."

RJ: Where's that quote from?

MS: It's written in Mary's and my book, *African Women and Development: A History*. It comes out of ECA, as I recall. In the beginning we put it together from ECA's earlier work. But you have a different concept of women and development coming out of ECA—different from western concepts. You have Gloria Scott here at UN headquarters. When the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade was being formulated—it would have been 1969 for the 1970s, I believe—it's Gloria who put in the phrase, "integration of women in development"; it was the first time that appeared globally. She says she rues the day because it—the "integration" part—became a phrase nobody wanted to hear anymore. Now they call it "mainstreaming" and it's the same thing. Perhaps it's a nicer word.

Yes, the UN was very much ahead. There were all of the ECA meetings, for example, that I mentioned in the 1960s coming long before Americans had any such concepts. You didn't have the Percy Amendment until 1973. You didn't get concepts coming up. The Swedes were

ahead in some ways because Inga Thorssen, who ought to appear in the history of women, was the one who persuaded SIDA to create the posts for women at ECA.

RJ: I see, that's very interesting to me. I tend to think of Inga Thorssen for her leadership on disarmament and development.

MS: But Inga is the reason I had a job. I know her very well through that.

RJ: She was the one who pressed SIDA to create the two posts.

MS: But she had also pressed SIDA to ensure that in their development assistance, women would be considered. That was in the middle of the 1960s. That was long before, almost a decade before, the Americans got around to having a Percy Amendment. So I say, with the exception of Sweden, the UN was very much in the forefront of the global women and development movement, unless you have information otherwise.

RJ: No, I don't. But I hope Devaki, when she's got her volume, she will have more evidence of this total issue.

MS: She may have some trouble with it because she wasn't close to the UN all the time. If I can begin to show this picture—after the independence movements, UN commissions such as the Commission on the Status of Women suddenly began to have more members from developing countries. CSW had six developing country members in 1960 and nineteen members from developing countries in 1969.

RJ: Let me just pause there, because when you were speaking a minute ago, I was thinking in my mind of the commission of women, which was surely a part of the UN from the earliest days.

MS: The Commission on the Status of Women broke off from the human rights commission. The Commission on the Status of Women was founded right after.

RJ: So what is the significance? What were they doing at the time, and how does that relate to these experiences you are describing in the 1960s, or indeed the 1970s?

MS: They started off being very legal-minded because they came from human rights. So they were very legal-minded. But as women from developing countries joined, the agenda turned toward development. I thought you probably interviewed Margaret Bruce already, so I didn't stress the CSW. At the same time, you have disillusion with modernization theories that made GNP (gross national product) and trade and industry primary. New ideas came in the 1970s—basic needs, employment, et cetera. And you also had clear and convincing evidence of women's key contributions to development through agriculture, trade, and family wellbeing. That was a key thing. ECA helped make these points much bigger and broader than they had been.

Then you had the rebirth of the women's movement in the West, in the late 1960s, that made it possible to have program and project funds. As the Commission on the Status of Women moved a bit away from the purely legal side towards development, they began to take an interest in development. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) started off as a declaration, in the 1960s.

RJ: And that was a first step, as you see it, in the broadening of concerns away from the legal, and perhaps the equal pay for equal work sort of legalities in an industrial setting, to a richer perception of the different situations of women in different developing countries—rural areas and so forth.

MS: Yes. Then you began to have a little bit of money coming from the commission, from its secretariat, for seminars. For example, I mentioned that the ECA sponsored seminars during the 1960s. Some of them were sponsored by ECA itself, and some of them were

headquarters money through the secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is now the Division for the Advancement of Women. So yes, CSW had an influence. You had the Annie Jiaggies of this world—Justice Annie Jiaggie of Ghana—and such people working in the CSW and exchanging ideas. The idea of what is horribly called "national machineries"—national commissions on women and women's bureaus—came from there. At ECA, we got money from the U.S. in 1972 to support traveling training seminars to assist countries to decide on appropriate governmental support of women.

RJ: When you think back, did you mostly receive practical support from these groups such as CSW when you were in Africa? Or did they attempt to give you ideas—why don't you do more on rights, or why don't you do more on X, Y, or Z?

MS: There was quite a bit of exchange with the UN headquarters people.

RJ: Did they try and encourage you to move in particular directions? Did they try and discourage you in any ways?

MS: I don't think so. I think they were just glad if we were trying to implement some of their programs as well as the ones that were coming out of Africa. The resolutions that we were studying in order to create a program in Africa—that came from African women—were our primary guides.

RJ: But if ECA was ahead of the other regional commissions, are you aware of the members, say, in the Commission for the Status of Women hearing of what you were doing, and then saying, "Well, why isn't ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), or why isn't ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) doing the same?" Are you aware of the Commission for the Status of Women acting as a mobilizing force within the UN system?

MS: I can't say yes to that. As far as influencing the UN system, I think they were—because they were a commission under ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) and because they were composed of national governments more concerned with national governance than with the system at that time. But I could be wrong. I would have to go back and read their minutes and see what they say.

RJ: Let me ask you—because we're going to have to close in about five minutes with this tape—do you, in thinking back at ECA, does it seem to you more generally as an exciting place at the time, exciting intellectually?

MS: Oh yes, very. When we had an evaluation of the women's program by donors, and women and men from the African member states, their conclusion was that this women's center was doing so much more than the rest of ECA. Except we were drawing on the rest of ECA and drawing them into our work. We produced, for example, a paper on women and the NIEO (New International Economic Order). I know you're an NIEO fan.

RJ: I'm a fan of a lot of things at the UN. How very interesting.

MS: 1977.

RJ: Yes, very good.

MS: We tried to identify the portion of the gross domestic product which can be attributed to women, among other things. So we were co-opting other parts of ECA. The agriculture fellow, Ali El Tom, was a very good friend. He was a Sudanese, and he gave us a lot of input. So did Booker, from the UK, who headed statistics. So we were getting inputs from within the commission, and it was an exciting kind of place to be then.

RJ: Now this may reflect your character, but I don't hear, in any of your account, real opposition, that you had to battle against people in ECA, either jealousy, if some donors were

coming and saying, "This is the best part of ECA,"—there're always people who are behind the scenes whispering evil words—or there may be indeed people who felt that this is far too western feminist or this is far too—

MS: Too revolutionary.

RJ: Too revolutionary for women. Do you remember that sort of thing?

MS: Oh yes, we had staff, some of the senior staff of ECA, who were negative about our work. Riby-Williams and Gardiner had to keep them tamed. That was an important issue, an important question of leadership, because the support they gave to the women's center allowed us to do our substantive work very freely while they fought the internal battles. When Gardiner left and Adedeji came in, he was convinced by some senior staff that it would be the right thing to send this women's center out of ECA, and out of the UN, and to a member state. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

RJ: He was convinced of that?

MS: Yes.

RJ: And so what happened?

MS: What member state was going to get it?

RJ: I have no idea.

MS: Nigeria.

RJ: Oh Nigeria, yes. But he didn't do that, though, did he?

MS: No, no. You asked if we had obstacles. We mobilized. We had a woman lawyer on our staff—Nelly Okello from Kenya. Nelly was marvelous, great. Nelly took up the issue. Oh, we all did. Part of the reason we had this external evaluation was this question of moving the women's center out of the UN because we wanted to hear from the donors and the women in

the region and the men in the region. They fanned out and visited countries where we had worked. We wanted them to say what should happen to this center in the future. They were the ones who helped to do that. In addition, Nelly discovered that the OAU (Organization of African Unity) was going to establish a women's center. So in the end, our victory in keeping the center within ECA was that ECA as a UN agency shouldn't compete with a political organ like the OAU.

Yes, we had controversies indeed. But we were very, very careful in the vocabulary we used. We never used any of the women's lib vocabulary. We always spoke of women in agriculture or women in trade. We always used Africa's own kinds of vocabulary. And at that time, it was difficult because what was drifting back from the U.S. and in the western press was all the extremist feminism.

RJ: How many of the sixteen or so in the women's group were African women?

MS: Most of them. I think in here we have the list, I hope, of the original staff. We had a Ghanaian. We had Niger. My deputy was Tanzanian. I think it's easier to name the few Europeans—Jean Ritchie, Marilyn Carr, and me, and later on Nancy Hafkin. We were the only Europeans. Here is the list—U.S.A, Tanzania, Kenya, Haiti, Niger, U.S.A, Great Britain, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Great Britain, Ethiopia, Uganda, India, Egypt, France, Ghana, Tanzania, Tunisia, Congo, Mali, Burundi. You want any more?

RJ: Very good.

MS: This was the first crowd.

RJ: Well, let me say thank you, Peg, very much for this. We made a good start and tomorrow, if we may, we'll continue with another tape.

RJ: Good morning, Peg Snyder. This is Richard Jolly interviewing Peg Snyder at 10:00 A.M. on March 29th, 2002. This is the second tape. So I think yesterday we reached more or less the end of your work in ECA. But before you left ECA, you came temporarily to New York to be involved with setting up the first world women's conference in Mexico City. Am I right on that?

MS: Not quite right, no. I was at the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is the mother of the International Women's Year conference in Mexico City and all the other conferences. I attended as the ECA representative for those meetings, but I did not come to headquarters to work on the conference. It is interesting thinking back because, at the time, a lot of organizations—funds and bilaterals and such—didn't know women in Africa who could attend that conference. So they would ask us. They knew there was a women's center that had just been created before the 1975 conference, so they would ask us to nominate people. As a result, ECA had a glorious delegation there. We were able to nominate women from the different parts of the continent because we were working out in the field and we knew them. But I did attend the Mexico meeting. Our main delegate from ECA at the intergovernmental conference was Riby-Williams, but I was there also.

We also—I and a couple of others—attended a meeting organized by the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) and UNDP ahead of the Mexico City International Women's Year conference. That was where one of the ideas and an institution that followed up the Mexico conference was born. I just mentioned to you Esther Ocloo, an entrepreneur from Ghana. Esther was at this meeting on rural women, and we were talking about rural women's need for finances and investment. Esther finally got very impatient. She said,

"What we need—we need to have a bank for women." And somebody else shouted out, "Yes, a women's world bank." Somebody else said, "Let's go do it." I was one of the somebodies.

A group of us retreated to our hotel room and started writing resolutions. One was Virginia Saurwein, who was the NGO person in the United Nations. She knew all about UN resolutions, so she was the major drafter. We put together a resolution on women and credit. It was the first ever in the UN. We then went to some key delegates in the Africa region—Annie Jiaggie from Ghana. I forget who from Kenya. Also Lucille Mair of Jamaica and Leticia Shahani of the Philippines were among delegates who were overjoyed to sponsor this resolution. That was the basis for Women's World Banking, which you may know.

RJ: Of course.

MS: We worked on the idea when we came back after the conference and after the resolution went through the GA (General Assembly) here in New York. We formed the Committee to Organize Women's World Banking in New York. I went back to ECA and one of our staff did a survey of banks and cooperatives as to how much women were able to borrow from formal banks and cooperatives and credit unions. All of this information came together to be Women's World Banking.

RJ: You did the survey where?

MS: From Addis.

RJ: Of African banks.

MS: Of African banks, yes, back in Addis. Then when I came back here, finally in 1978, of course I became very active in the Committee to Organize. But we kept working on that even from Addis. The New York group would send their notes. There were four people particularly

who put it together, three of them here—Virginia Saurwein, Caroline Pezzullo, and Michaela Walsh—and me over there. We finally did put it together.

Women realized, I think, that they were creating a movement at Mexico City and that this movement, to ensure its long-range life, needed institutions that would carry it forward. So it wasn't only Women's World Banking, but the International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC) that functions out of 777 UN Plaza here in New York was also born in Mexico City out of what was the NGO forum at the government conference. So you had the IWTC and Women's World Banking. On the UN side, you had the idea of INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) and what would become UNIFEM (UN Fund for Women), which was originally called the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. We eventually changed its name because nobody could get the original one straight.

Within the conference itself, I found very interesting differences in the approaches that were brought from the North and the South. You remember that, in the North, it was the height of "women's lib." Especially because it was held in Mexico, there were a lot of American women there. So you had feminist approaches—seeking equality for men and women in the workplace and the family. In the South, you had a post-independence concern that they had political independence but economic independence was yet to come. So the New International Economic Order was being discussed at the UN.

You also had a rising concern about apartheid. Women from the South would say, "Look, how are we going to help women if the whole society is suppressed—men and women both—by apartheid? None of us can get the education or anything else we need." And you had concern for the Israeli-Palestinian issue. As I mentioned, the first time that "Zionism is racism" was put into a UN document was at the Mexico City conference. So you had, coming from the

South and from the G-77 (Group of 77), and from the women, a broad sense that global issues are women's issues, that women's issues couldn't just be confined to men versus women, or men and women. It was men versus women for mainstream feminists at that stage of the early revival of the western women's movement.

I should qualify and say very carefully that women's lib was not the same in the African-American community. There was another rising kind of feminism in the African-American community that was more society-oriented. But on the whole, the big thrust that made the headlines was "women's lib." At the conference you had those two different positions.

RJ: On the northern, perhaps American, side was there almost a reaction against these Third World women who wanted to, quote, politicize issues?

MS: Oh yes.

RJ: How did that work? Did you think that that had a negative side on attitudes, say, to the UN, as well as in North America and perhaps in Europe?

MS: Oh yes, very definitely. As you know, the Palestinian-Israeli, the Middle East issue had been very much alive in this country and at the UN. Finally, a resolution of the dilemma was found: the Plan of Action was very practical-oriented, about food and water availability, and other things that are everyday concerns for women from developing countries as well as women from the West. There could be a lot of agreement. It was agreed that women should be involved in politics and that women should be doing non-controversial things. That was the Plan of Action and the political, quote unquote, issues were fended off into what was called the Declaration of Mexico, so that everybody could agree to the Plan of Action.

RJ: Was it a consensus document in the end, the declaration?

MS: I'm not sure. I can't tell you. I would suspect the declaration was put in the background and just left there because many of the resolutions were not brought to headquarters. The Plan of Action was the main concern, but I would have to go back to the voting record to tell you that for sure. That's over in the UN's Dag Hammarskjöld Library, of course.

RJ: Perhaps you might look ahead from that period and tell us how these concerns, and the different concerns between North and South evolved through Copenhagen, Nairobi, and indeed through to Beijing.

MS: As you would guess, here at the UN, those issues simmered and flared for the five years between Mexico and the Copenhagen 1980 conference (World Conference of the UN Decade for Women). What people had fended off wasn't really fended off at all. Copenhagen became very confrontational over apartheid and over the Palestinian issue; the fires really flared there. But by the time you got to Nairobi in 1985, which was ten years after Mexico—five years after Copenhagen—the end of the Decade for Women conference, consensus was possible. For one thing, western women had experienced the economic downturn, so they knew it got in the way of the advancement of women in their countries. They also had a chance, meeting in a developing country, to go out in the countryside and meet women who were carrying water and using new technologies for water and planting trees—building their nation tree by tree, so to speak. That changed their attitudes. And women from the South had more experience and thought more about male-female relationships, so they were more willing to talk about violence against women and other equality issues.

You began to have a merger there, and a very happy one. Nairobi, I think, was a delightful conference, perhaps the best of all. Delegates had a very difficult time drafting a Platform of Action. Of course, such are always drafted ahead of time. There were very many

sticky issues. That being said, all came to peaceable fruition at Nairobi in the middle of the night.

Then in Beijing, you had a church picnic kind of atmosphere, with a huge NGO forum and a huge government conference. There the real confrontational issues were brought by the religious fundamentalists—all shapes, sizes, nationalities, religions. The fundamentalists could come together and raise issues about women's bodies, and so forth, that other women thought they had resolved by that time. So it's been an interesting roller-coaster ride. Now there is talk about another conference in 2005, or later.

RJ: Let me ask some general questions about the evolution of both ideas, but also of global impact. Perhaps we'll start with the global impact. Do you see these conferences, in a sense, as creating the global women's movement?

MS: Oh yes—well, making a large contribution to the global women's movement. The UN has just put out a CD-ROM on the United Nations and the international women's movement—"Women Go Global," it's called. I was an advisor on it. It's been in the works for two or three years. When you look at it, and even if you haven't been at all these conferences, you can visualize the evolution so that you do have now a global women's movement. Of course, we should not neglect the seeds of the movement that were planted way back in the nineteenth century by international women's organizations. The global women's movement didn't come out of the blue, nor did it come just from the independence movements or the women's liberation movement. There were many streams that converged.

The influence of the global conferences can be seen in the strong women's movement in Uganda—one of the best in Africa. It arose in part because Ugandan women got themselves to

the Nairobi 1985 conference, met women from all over the world, listened to their stories and said to one another: "We will do more!"

One of my concerns is that we must document the roots of the global women's movement that came from Africa, Asia, Latin America, so that it may be seen much more clearly. Too often, probably because of communications, people think—and even Third World women think—that the women's movement came out of the West. But if you go back in the history in Africa, women were holding the seminars I talked about yesterday in East Africa long before Betty Freidan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*. I have a chart of those streams in a book you so kindly mentioned, *Transforming Development: Women, Poverty, and Politics* (1985), the history of UNIFEM's first fifteen years. You see in the timelines what was going on. That chart could be expanded much more—in the 1950s and 1960s in Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as in Europe and the U.S.

The richness of the global conferences arose from all those sources but have not shown that fact clearly because you've had more and more consensus. That's good, but you don't see how the roots of the global movement come from so many different places.

RJ: You've had consensus in part formally agreed at the women's conferences. You've had, of course, global communications and what you described in another publication as the growing global awareness of the 1970s. You have international education of which people more and more from the developing countries, particularly perhaps from Africa in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s started doing graduate studies, at least in the North. Can you, with this mixture of interactions and influences, identify what you would say were the particular UN contributions to this?

MS: You have to start, as we said yesterday, with the Commission on the Status of Women that broke off from the human rights commission very, very early in the UN's history. Women were coming together through the auspices of the UN. You would not have had an International Women's Year conference at Mexico City if that idea had not been brought—by an NGO, interestingly—through the Commission on the Status of Women, which then adopted it and passed it through ECOSOC and the General Assembly. So the UN has played a very important role, as convener, I think, not just of the global conferences, but through other forums as well.

RJ: Which was the NGO that planted the idea of the women's conference?

MS: It was the Finnish branch of the Women's International Democratic Federation. Devaki has that, and you'll find that in here as well, I believe.

RJ: In the CD-ROM.

MS: Yes, that's correct. One forum is the Commission on the Status of Women, and then it's back-stopping UN Secretariat office, which is now called the Division for the Advancement of Women, which carried ideas forward. And you have now also another instrument—that Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. That is backstopped by the Division for the Advancement of Women also. The hearings take place here at the UN. And individual women as well as countries can bring cases and questions to it. So the UN has created other instruments than the global conferences. In addition, the UN created UNIFEM to help countries and NGOs finance activities to empower women and INSTRAW to promote research and training.

All of the UN system organizations have been pressured—largely by the opportunities the UN gives—to consider women in all the work they do, whether it's UNESCO, ILO, the

World Bank, IMF. Everybody has to pay more attention. And the UN organizations, in turn, pressure—and are pressured by—governments. How well they do it is another question, and how much is rhetoric and how much is field activity is also another question. But there has been progress. So without the central function of the UN and its family, I don't think you would have had such a strong international women's movement.

We talked about this when the CD-ROM was coming up, whether they would call this the "United Nations and the Global Women's Movement" or the "United Nations and the International Women's Movement." We opted for international so that people wouldn't say that the UN was trying to take credit for the whole thing. So the international way to view the UN's functions seemed to be the right way to state it. By virtue of its membership, the UN is intergovernmental—international rather than global.

RJ: Given the skepticism of many in the United States in the last decade or two towards the UN, do you find this echoed in the women's movement in the United States—that they find it difficult to see the UN as having played a critical role? Or do they indeed see this as a rather impressive exception, that this is one of the things which the UN has done which surely has been good? Which position do you find?

MS: Let me just say—and I expect to be criticized by my American sisters—I think that American women have not played a strong role in the United Nations in backstopping or fostering the women's movement. The American women's movement has focused nationally, rather than internationally. You had, for example, the Mexico City conference before you had a conference in Houston, Texas, of Americans. In Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, regional conferences preceded the global ones.

RJ: Houston was after Mexico.

MS: Houston was afterwards, so you were following instead of leading the pack, if you will. I don't think that's atypical. I'm not sure it's atypical. I think it's more typical. You had some very outstanding women—Eleanor Roosevelt and her entourage. And many women who represent NGOs are very strong, and most of them here at UNHQ are American women.

RJ: Bella Abzug, surely.

MS: Bella knew when the parade was going down the street, and Bella would get out front. She saw the parade coming. Forgive me, I knew Bella all too well. She's been here a lot, or she was. I was one of those who introduced her to UN culture and procedures, then worked with her on some things, then opted out.

RJ: Who were some of the other American women who played a leading role?

MS: A name you wouldn't know is Pat Hutar. She was the chief American delegate to the Mexico City conference. By the way, she had to wrest that leadership out of the hands of some man the Americans were going to send as chief delegate. Pat afterwards was a very, very strong supporter of the UN. She was a real godmother of UNIFEM and got the [Richard] Nixon administration, curiously, to be its biggest contributor at the very first pledging conference. So you had people like her.

There's Virginia Allen, who was president of the International Council of Women. She was an ambassador. She was there for all kinds of things. She was very supportive. People like Millie Robbins Leet, who runs Trickle-Up. Millie has always been a strong UN supporter. Somebody named Carol Leimas—always a strong supporter—and Norma Levitt. Some of the women in the Jewish community have been really very, very wonderfully strong supporters of the UN over the years. I can't tell you about the Eleanor Roosevelt time because I wasn't active

here—I was in Kenya—at that time, but I'm sure there are plenty of others. Charlotte Bunche, who leads today's "Women's Rights are Human Rights" movement, should be listed.

RJ: What about the former representative to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, or later—

MS: Madeleine Albright.

RJ: Did they at least adopt a mildly supportive role to women and gender issues in the UN?

MS: Albright was a stronger supporter than Jeane Kirkpatrick. Jeane Kirkpatrick was a supporter, I believe, but I'm now speaking from the responsibilities I had with UNIFEM. On one occasion, she strongly supported UNIFEM for us when we were over in the delegates' dining room, but something happened to her when she crossed the street back to the U.S. mission. She feared taking a strong position. She said, "Our position about UNIFEM is to have no position." Coming from the background I come from, I said, "That is Jesuitry." She came from another Jesuit college, Georgetown University. She shifted with the winds.

I think Madeleine Albright was stronger. She would have a group of women ambassadors get together. She was very supportive in those ways. And in fact, Wangari Maathai told me a week or two ago that she has been asked by Madeleine Albright to be on a committee that Madeleine is forming even now, of women globally to work for women. So I think she is the stronger of the two women ambassadors.

RJ: Let me move from the people of politics to perhaps the evolution of ideas from Mexico through to the present, because our history is an intellectual history. There are at least three strands I see. There is the movement from the emphasis on women in development, WID, to GAD—Gender and Development. And there is also the whole set of ideas of feminism—what at times, in your own history, *Transforming Development: Women, Poverty, and Politics,* you

talk about as, quote, theoretical feminism. Perhaps you would say a word on how you see the evolution and interaction of these strands of thinking, and which ones you think have been positive and which have been driven by what sort of issues and concerns. Which have had the most effect?

MS: Well, what should we start with—women in development?

RJ: Yes.

MS: OK, that came into the international vocabulary in 1969, although CSW used forms of it and ECA already had it in its program of work. I think I mentioned Gloria Scott, who later went to the World Bank as their gender person. She put "integration of women in development" into the international development strategy for the Second Development Decade. It lasted quite a while. In Addis, we didn't talk about women *in* development; we talked about women *and* development, which is a distinction that keeps from using the acronym WID. I think the Americans claim the acronym, and well they might.

From where I was sitting—as I mentioned to you as we talked about earlier—we were doing gender things. I mean, you can't do a division of agricultural labor and just talk about women. That doesn't work. We always used the male-female gender division of labor. So gender wasn't something new, although the word itself was new. Now there is a controversy over this, as I'm sure you know. Gender was introduced by some American scholars in the 1970s or 1980s and got into the vocabulary somehow. It's criticized.

Let me give you that example of my time as a Fulbright scholar at Makerere University, which you know very well, in 1995/1996. There was talk of changing the name of the Department of Women's Studies to the Department of Gender Studies. We discussed it. I took votes in my class. We had a straw vote, and I had to break the vote because it was fifty/fifty.

But they ended up with Department of Women and Gender Studies. Why? Because they felt that if they lost the word "women," and had to speak only about both men and women in relation to each other, the low income women, the poor women that we really wanted to talk about and wanted to get a flow of resources to and help empower themselves, would disappear in this mix. They would be gone. So we would keep both. They were being pressured, I think, by the university administration to do more with gender and to drop the term women, but they wouldn't drop it. So they did a nice compromise—women and gender. That, to me, is an answer to your question.

Yes, gender is the big idea now, but whether it solves the problem—I don't think it does. I tend to come down on the very same thing—use gender when gender is the word to use, and use women when women is the word to use. It's like the question of whether we have separate projects for women or integrated projects for women and men. You should have what the situation calls for. You have a dual stream. You do one sometimes and one the other, and you need both. So the same with the terms gender and women. You use the term that fits the situation that you're talking about.

RJ: This seems to me to reflect what I feel, as an outsider, or as an observer of your contributions over many years, to be your own position on many of these issues—very operational, ultimately pragmatic, and wanting to apply the test, "What works in this situation or the other?" Is that a fair description?

MS: I think it's a fair description, but it's based on concepts. The concept of gender is a socially generated division between men and women. It's conceptually based. But I don't think we should just force one concept or another concept on a situation. There is too much of that in academia. If you say operational, I guess that comes from my having been operational for so

long, both at ECA and with UNIFEM—a total of nearly two decades. What's the distinction that is made—practical and strategic interests.

RJ: You could say the most practical force is a good theory.

MS: That's nice. That's very good.

RJ: It's a rather self-serving view which academics rather like, but surely there is some truth in this—that ideas generated in the university, and you yourself have been in university worlds at different stages throughout your whole career, those ideas do grab peoples' minds.

MS: Absolutely. And they generate controversy and that's a good thing. They generate intellectual controversy, and that I think is important. If you just take an idea and go with it and don't question, it goes off on the wrong track sometimes. So just the generation of discussion and controversy that these ideas create—and yes, I believe strongly that ideas are powerful, powerful things, very powerful. But academic feminism can tend to go off on its own, away from the realities of situations it was originally intended to address. For example, American feminism is criticized for failing to embrace issues of race and poverty. Economics has faced this problem as it became more quantified. There are dangers.

RJ: But you have written skeptically about "theoretical feminism." Perhaps you would elaborate.

MS: Yes. Well, I think there are almost as many feminisms as there are people—not quite as many as that, but there are many feminisms. The more radical feminists—the bra-burning type of radical feminists—do a service: somebody has to be out there ahead and be shot at so that the others can move up. I respect that position more as I think about it. Yes, they should be out there. That doesn't mean that I have to do what they say. But it does mean that I can move forward more, and people will say, "Oh, she's very conservative." She's very

conservative, but I moved ten feet towards the twelve. So there's a function there for radical feminism, as there is in any other—any radical movement has a function in society, in the progression of a movement.

I think, again, back to Kampala. One woman there, Miria Matembe, is a member of parliament. Miria can say anything. I mean, she's really very outspoken. I brought this question up with some of my academic colleagues and I said, "What do you think of Miria?" They replied: "Miria says the things we're all thinking but don't dare say, so we like her."

RJ: Let me, before we leave the intellectual, academic presentation of these issues—can you think of particular books or particular academics in the developing countries or in the industrial countries that you feel have written books that have made a difference?

MS: Well of course, Boserup—the Bible or Koran, or whatever it is—who had an especially important influence on western women, and thus on the flow of foreign aid to include women. Then there is the movement of Third World women that created that small book that made such a big impact.

RJ: Not DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)?

MS: DAWN, yes. The book is *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives,* by Gita Sen and Karen Grown (1987). Those people made an enormous impact, I think. Those two have been the most important for women and development.

MS: After that, as the movement progresses, you get more diversity and more specialization, as in any kind of human situation. So you get much more diversity of the kinds of books that make impact. There's a book called *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in*

Sub-Saharan Africa—it is edited by an African-American woman, Gwendolyn Mikell—that I happen to be looking at today that has made a difference.

RJ: What about UN documents or reports that you feel stand out? After all, there must have been hundreds even on the women and gender issues.

MS: Yes. I think *The World's Women*, that came out first in 1990, then at Beijing in 1995, has been a very, very important document. It has been the UN's best seller. Joann Vanek of the UN statistics department conceived it and suffered through getting it out.

And the Division for the Advancement of Women puts out, every five years, their report that makes a difference for those who are anywhere near the UN. Then you have to get down to things like the International Women's Tribune Center's publications that are circulated out in English, Spanish, and French, at very much the field level. The leaders of local women's groups are their audience. Of course, now a lot of that is going into the electronics field, so there is a Women's Tribune Center electronic publication every so often. UNIFEM's new "State of" publications—the first on macroeconomics and the second on women and peace—are a promising new series. When I wrote a bibliographic essay[1] for *Choice*—the academic magazine, I was deeply impressed by the new history books that bring women into history.

RJ: Let me come back to a document that you yourself had a hand in quite early on, when I think you were still in the Economic Commission for Africa—this document, *the New International Economic Order: What Roles for Women?,* which came out in 1977. I find it very interesting because it talks about the early phases of globalization. It refers to the 1970s as being the global consciousness era, following the era of nationalism after the Second World War, and the pre-colonial and colonial era. But this focuses on women. It certainly focuses on inequality. And you have some interesting calculations for Lesotho on the share of women's contribution in

production in the Lesotho economy, and indeed end up showing that women account for about 43 percent of the sources of production in Lesotho at that time. Perhaps you would say something about this document. Was this a source in relation to bringing the gender and women's dimension into the New International Economic Order debate?

MS: Yes, it was definitely the first because I know it was mentioned by the first woman under-secretary of the UN, Lucille Mair, as being notable as the "first ever." It was another one of ECA's firsts. It was actually written for a conference, a regional conference that came up in 1977 in Noukchott, Mauritania, and it was discussed there. All those regional meetings you hope will bring discussion back to the countries. The NIEO document has been part of the buildup of concern for a greater recognition of women in the economy. That has, of course, been my personal obsession almost, if you will.

The illiterate woman in the countryside is a key economic agent in her country, but we don't see her as that. In my most recent book, *Women in African Economies: From Burning Sun to Board Room*—you know what burning sun is, *Jua kali.*[2]

RJ: Oh, *Jua kali.*

MS: Yes, "burning sun" was our translation of it—we wanted to situate women entrepreneurs who work in the informal sector—out of doors in the hot sun. But in that one, again, you're looking at the enormous contributions of women to the economy. We had farmers interviewed by the dean of social sciences at Makerere. They calculated, on the basis of the local market, what food they produced for feeding the family was worth. They would make various comments—"I'd be very rich if I said it." One woman said, "What my food is valued at is more

[1] (February, 2000).
[2] *Jua* – sun, *kali* – fierce.

than my husband's salary as a policeman and mine as a teacher put together. It's multiple times more."

This whole issue of women in the economy I don't think is yet understood, I'm sorry to say, Richard. I know you're an economist and you've been sympathetic about it. But I don't think people have really grasped that women democratize the economy. If you gave real support to women, you have helped more than half of the farmers and merchants and entrepreneurs of your country. Wow! And also, of course, they not only democratize it, but what we haven't looked at enough, in our concern for employment, is how income is invested. In study after study—in my Uganda study, for example, "Women in African Economies," we learn once again what has been shown in study after study, that women invest their income in the next generation. They invest it in food. They invest it in health services. They invest it more and more in school fees in Africa.

If you say you want to raise incomes and you want to raise the national wealth, and you don't say, "Well, who expends what and how?," you will fail. We got so angry about this in Uganda. My colleague, Grace Bantebya, who now heads the women and gender studies, and I heard that Ravi Kumar, the World Bank economist for Africa at the time, was in Kampala, so we said, "He has to be staying in the Sheraton Hotel, so we'll go see him." Sure enough, he was at the Sheraton Hotel, and sure enough he was quite willing to see us. He writes beautifully. He represents one of the two World Banks that I see. He's the intellectual World Bank that does wonderful studies, and then there's the other World Bank that goes around the world doing quite different things. You have two UNs, and I have two World Banks, and have had for a long time.

We said to Kumar, "The household studies are still using that old unified household concept. So you don't know where the money comes from and which spouse—if there are two

spouses—produces it. It's fairly likely to be at least half women, but you have this male head-of-household and only breadwinner concept." He said, "Oh no, no, no, we don't have it anymore." We said, "In Uganda today, they're using that concept in their household studies that you're paying for, Revi." He told us to send him our proposal to devise a different model, and we did, and he passed it on to somebody. So it went, but I doubt if anything happened. This kind of dichotomy still persists, and it inhibits development.

RJ: Perhaps I should ask you just to comment on the *Human Development Report 1995* on gender and human development. Did you feel that was an important step forward?

MS: Oh yes, in terms of quantification, which you know was my obsession with the New International Economic Order and other documentation in the 1970s, trying always to put concepts into measurable terms so that you can grasp realities.

RJ: GEM (gender empowerment measure) and GDI, the gender development index.

MS: Yes, these were real steps forward. I wonder do you know to what extent they're used now? Are they still moving forward?

RJ: Oh yes, they are published regularly. Indeed, a point you make on trying to integrate gender and indeed income inequality within HDI (human development index) itself—there have been, at least at the inequality issue, some attempts at that. But there are technical complications. I think the way that the human development team would comment would be, "You need to HDI with GDI and with GEM, in order to get the gender perspective on the economy."

MS: But you need to do it for people and not leave it and say, "Now you go ahead and now you can do this."

RJ: I think some of the subsequent reports—but let me come back to your own early calculations, for Lesotho for example. One issue—there you broke down recorded production,

agricultural industry, services, and so forth, for Lesotho, between the female and the male contribution. Of course, one of the issues is a lot of contribution of women, and some contribution of men, to the total of everything produced in an economy is not measured at all. Did you juggle with that and say, "It's just too complicated?"

MS: Yes. I tell you, we did that with the ECA head of statistics at the time, Booker. We spent a lot of time with him, trying to see what would pass and how far we could go on this. So therefore, going back to, say, the labor input—and yes, there's more labor input even—but he seemed to think—

MS: It would have been 1975/1976. He was extremely helpful. We went as far as he thought the traffic would bear with statisticians at the time. A couple of years ago I got going on this again. Now that Joann Vanek is retired from statistics, I think I'll see if she wants to go at it. She knows I like this subject. And I've tried to go at it again with a French statistician who works with WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), Jacques Charmes. He was being helpful, and then I got busy editing a book and lost it again.

RJ: Let us continue. I think we reached the point you should tell me about the origins of UNIFEM, your own roles. I know you've written the book, *Transforming Women*.

MS: *Transforming Development*.

RJ: Sorry.

MS: *Women, Poverty, and Politics* is the subtitle.

RJ: Where you put, indeed, the history of UNIFEM. So that will be part of the record. I don't think you feel you should repeat it all, but I think you might underline some of the highlights.

MS: Let us do a quickie on the origin of UNIFEM. It was a child of the Mexico City conference, where the idea was put forth by the British delegate and the Shah of Iran's sister. They each pledged some money. Then it was decided at the conference that if there were any funds remaining from sponsoring the conference—as you know, that's always done by extra-budgetary funds—would go into the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women. It was to help countries with low resources to carry out the plan of action. It was directed to rural and poor urban women, as the British delegate said at the conference in Mexico. I suspect the speech was written by one Theresa Spens, whom I met for the first time there.

Let me clarify the name. It was originally called the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (VFDW). It wasn't until 1984—the GA resolution in 1984, which moved the fund administratively to UNDP—which also said, "Give the fund a new name." We called it the United Nations Development Fund for Women, with a pronounceable acronym, UNIFEM. FEM worked in English, French, and Spanish, so you couldn't get much better than that.

In the book, as you say, in the first third I talk about global poverty and the politics of development—the obstacles we faced and how we developed systems to make use of the fund and ensure it'=s good use. The second part is called "Women at Work in the World." It's divided into economic empowerment, social justice, and political participation. I was lucky to have Ford and Rockefeller Foundation grants, so I first went to Princeton University for a year, then went around the world and interviewed people at projects. Activities I selected were off the books and out of the minds of UNIFEM, so they were long abandoned in terms of financial support. So I could be fairly objective. I wanted to do it because people say, "When the donor

goes away, the project goes away. It vanishes." I wanted to see if that was true of us. So that's where the book's origin comes.

When you talk about UNIFEM, you have to say that if ECA helped make development a women's issue in the 1970s, that UNIFEM was very instrumental in operationalizing that idea, that development *is* a women's issue. First of all, within the United Nations system—I won't start with the obstacles. I'll start with some of the things it did. When I got to headquarters from ECA in 1978—let's see, the idea came up in 1975. The resolution was at the end of 1976. In 1977, from Addis Ababa, we were saying to headquarters, "Here are some activities you can finance." No response. The intergovernmental consultative committee to the fund, one from each region of the world—so it was five members—saw that nothing much was happening. They decided that the fund should have someone paid from its own resources who would love it 100 percent and have no other responsibilities. They wanted somebody who had experience in the regions or at country level. In those days, if you remember, in the later 1970s, regional commissions were quite respectable. And there was the decentralization trend. Later on, the centralization trend resumed, but those were the days when the regional commissions were very popular. So I came from a regional commission, from ECA, which by that time had a very nice reputation in the global women's movement.

RJ: How did you actually come to be chosen?

MS: I was told by members of the committee—Lucille Mair, whose name you'll recognize; Leticia Shahani; Theresa Spens. At least those three traced me around New York when I was here for—I guess it must have been a meeting of the GA, representing ECA in 1977. They said, "We want to pay somebody from the resources of VFDW, but we won't do it unless we can have somebody experienced. We want you to do this and shall recommend you to the

secretariat." So that's how it happened. It took me a few days to decide, because the delegate from Iran wanted me to be hired to head INSTRAW, which was at the time scheduled to be located in Tehran.

It was time for me to leave ECA, because we had appointed a woman from the region, Mary Tedesse, to head the women's center. So VFDW came at a good time for me.
But when I came, I found that I was in a secretariat that had very little field operation orientation.

RJ: The secretariat was in the UN proper at that time?

MS: In the UN proper because the Mexico conference had been run by the UN proper. So the remaining monies were there, but the United Nations was not intended to be operational, as you know. It made for some interesting days and years. Since we didn't have a lot of help from the UN secretariat staff—excepting Richard Duncan of the Social Development Division—trying to figure out how we were going to make this fund operational, we decided with the consultative committee, appointed by the General Assembly, that working with the regional commissions made a lot of sense.

OK, ECA already had a program going, but the other regional commissions—zilch, nothing. So we gave block grants—and we had to give them to ECA as well—of $100,000 per commission. And we gave two posts, at senior level, P-5 posts—except to ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for West Africa), which had unused posts.

RJ: In addition to the $100,000.

MS: Yes. Two posts for two years each. Then we said, "When those two years are up, you must absorb those posts from your regular budget." It took five years and many General Assemblies to push the regional commissions. But we helped to build a framework within regional commission for operational activities with women. Then I went to each region. I would

go once a year and sit down with the officers appointed, and we would work things out. Thoraya Obaid would tell you—we'd sit down and we'd sketch out field activities. Then I would go back to headquarters and wait for them to come in the mail. That's how we got started in the beginning, working with the regional commission people on what they saw as their needs in their region. It was beneficial to everybody.

Let me just read you a couple of quotes of what the regional commission people said. Here comes ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). This is the senior women's program officer there: "Over the years, among the scant resources available for development programs for women, the largest contribution has come from the voluntary fund for women." Here comes CEPAL (*Comisión Económica para América Latina*): "UNIFEM started the women issue in our region. We never would have survived without UNIFEM. It was the first to open the way. Now it is legal to speak about women"—quote unquote legal—"but when we started in the 1970s, UNIFEM was absolutely essential." So that's the kind of reaction you got.

RJ: This is which page?

MS: Page 31. Our committee took very seriously the continuation of those programs, and they worked very hard with their respective regional groups in the General Assembly every year on resolutions pressing the executive-secretaries of the regional commissions to make those posts permanent. And no more excuses—"We're tired of your excuses, gentlemen. Push, push, push." So it did work, and they're there today.

RJ: Now either that was open opposition or just extreme neglect of the women's issues by leadership within the regional commissions at the time.

MS: I think they just didn't give it high priority. As much as Enrique Iglesias, whom I respect enormously, who was at CEPAL at the time, as much as he was very supportive of the women's issue, in bureaucracies there are always people who stand in the way of what the boss says, or in some cases, the boss stands in his own way of regularizing those posts. So it took quite a while.

RJ: And considering that from every region, delegates had gone with commitment and excitement to the Mexico conference, and then some of this is after Copenhagen—is this? Or is this all before Copenhagen?

MS: It began in 1978 and continued after Copenhagen in 1980.

MS: Oh yes.

RJ: So it's after Mexico. But it seems to suggest that even though delegates came back from Mexico enthused with a plan of action and a declaration, somehow they didn't press the regional commissions in order to take this action until the UNIFEM support came from the General Assembly.

MS: I think so, Richard. For most regions—I had mentioned to you that in Africa there had been regional conferences through the 1960s and into the 1970s. The various donors—the Swedes, the Germans, and others—had been persuaded, if you will, to assist. But in the other regions you didn't have those meetings of women, so women didn't meet each other. And they didn't know the UN. So it's not surprising to me at all that they didn't think of pressuring regional commissions because they probably didn't even know what they were in most cases. There hadn't been that much activity. As Daw Aye says here, the Burmese from ESCAP—there were scant resources to do anything for women.

RJ: Let me just ask you about the donor side. The Scandinavians surely were strong supporters. Who were the other supporters among the aid donors?

MS: Of UNIFEM, you mean?

RJ: Yes, UNIFEM and women's issues in general.

MS: The Scandinavians and the Netherlands were always good. Britain was good with its initial pledge, for UNIFEM especially. The Italians have come up quite well. The Germans took a long time to wake up. America was very supportive in the beginning, but later stressed its own AID (Agency for International Development). Maureen Reagan, the president's daughter, who was a delegate to the CSW, used to sit in the General Assembly, and she would talk in the women's discussion about the wonders of what AID was doing, and never a word that UNIFEM was doing anything, or any other UN agency. It was always the wonders of AID.

RJ: USAID did provide support to UNIFEM?

MS: No, it's wasn't USAID, it was the Congress that voted on the appropriation. The USAID came in for a couple of years when we had a congressional flap that I will explain to you, but ordinarily the Congress would legislate the money. In the foreign aid budget, multilateral money was earmarked for UNDP (UN Development Programme) or UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), and so forth—UNIFEM was in there. And the U.S., as I entioned, was the biggest donor in the beginning, but then never really moved forward commensurate with what it should have done later. The Scandinavians and the Dutch were the best friends of all women, I think. They have always been and continue to be extremely supportive. I don't know what magic they work. It's like what Ghanaian women do to their sons to make them supportive of the women's movement. There must be some Scandinavian and Dutch women who do something very special to get their countries to be so generous.

UNIFEM also influenced other UN system organizations, like ILO, for example. There is the history of women and/or gender in the ILO. You know that volume, *Social Justice for Women: The ILO and Women*, by Carol Riegelman-Lubin and Anne Winslow. When I read it through, I was surprised and I smiled more than a little bit because many of the projects they mentioned as ILO projects are UNIFEM-funded. I recognized the names because I was the only staff person paid from the fund for the first four or five years, so I knew them all. So I was very surprised. One of the co-authors I confronted with that reality said, "They *were* UNIFEM?"

We helped finance projects for the UN agencies to try to catalyze activity. And also, once we assisted—UNIFEM would pick out an NGO or group to assist—then the attention of the UN family would be drawn to that activity because there was a UN family contribution. For example, the Green Belt Movement in Kenya—we gave them their first big grant in 1980, a little over $100,000. After that, they were able to get money from UNEP (UN Environment Programme) with headquarters under their nose in Kenya and various other organizations in the UN system. So UNIFEM was a catalyst in many ways and also was an innovator. An example of innovation is sericulture (silkworm) project in India, where 2,500 women were assisted. That had some bounces in the beginning that were visible when children's levels of nutrition declined. After an Indian woman evaluated it, it turned around so that the project was mainly run by the women's groups and adopted inter-cropping of mulberry trees with food crops, et cetera. That system worked so well that the World Bank came around to see what we were doing. They introduced the same system in their sericulture projects, so that affected 70,000 people rather than just a few.[3]

Those were some ways that UNIFEM was a catalyst and innovator. But also, UNIFEM helped to transform the UN development cooperation system in a couple of other ways I'd like to

mention. For example, when I was in Swaziland reviewing training an activity there, I sat down with the women in the countryside and their extension worker and said, "What are your greatest needs? Where are you at now? You've had this training. You're shoemakers. You're doing this or that or the other thing. What is it now that you need, or is there a need?" They said, "The banks won't lend us money, but we would like to have a credit fund of some kind that we could borrow from." A renewable financial resource was what they were talking about, a revolving loan fund. This was 1979. I must have been out there in 1978.

I came back to headquarters and said to the UNDP finance officers, after we had approved the project through our system having experts review it and so forth, "We need to give these women a revolving credit fund." The finance fellows said, "Aha, you can't do that, madam. That's not possible. In the UN, we give experts, we give land rovers, and you can write them all off the books at the end of the project. If you give a revolving loan fund, you're not supposed to be able to write it off. How are you going to do that? We can't do that." I said, "We'll have to do that because this is where women are and this is what they need. If we're going to talk about assisting the world's women, we must give them this credit fund." We studied the rules and regulations, and finally found a way to give it. I smiled not long ago when I saw something in one of the small newspapers that fly around the UN, that UNDP had introduced revolving credit funds in 1979. I said, "Oh, ho, ho, after a lot of negotiating they did."

At that same time, Mohammed Yunus was coming up in Bangladesh. He and his friends started giving loans in 1976, but not under the name Grameen. He was in my office when I was first there. He was interested because we gave revolving credit funds—a lot of them.

RJ: To him.

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[3] (See *Transforming Development: Women, Poverty, and Politics*, pp. 128-135)

MS: No, no, no. They were the components in many UNIFEM-assisted activities after Swaziland—a revolving credit fund. UNIFEM, called VFDW then, started micro-credit from 1979.

RJ: What is to me interesting is that this grew out of a request from Swaziland. My experience had been that Mohammed Yunus, I think, in 1976 had developed the micro-credit systems in Bangladesh, and they had spread a little bit in Asia. But it was always said, "Oh, we find it difficult to get a system that works with micro-credit revolving funds in Africa." So when you say Swaziland—did they work pretty well in Swaziland?

MS: Yes, they did. That's in my evaluation in *Transforming Development*. And when I went back in 1994, I was to visit several countries. I visited Swaziland. I wanted to see the first of the revolving credit funds that we gave that were community-managed. The resrep (UNDP resident representative) told me that not only did it work, but more importantly, it had leveraged banks and other financial institutions so that it was possible for women to borrow from banks now. The revolving credit fund had created a bit of a revolution in terms of credit for women, which is of course what we wanted. That was one transformation in the UN system of development assistance, and a national credit system too!

The other innovation in UNDP-related funds was with nongovernmental organizations. There again, our United Nations friends in finance in UNDP said, "Oh, you can't give to NGOs. We're an intergovernmental organization, we give to governments." We said, "Well, that's very nice. But that fact is, if we're going to reach women, they're not being reached by governments except for maternal and child health, and formal schooling. Governments aren't reaching them well enough. We can reach them directly because when people are outside the mainstream, they band together to get what they need. That's called a nongovernmental organization, and that is

what is needed." So again, as with the revolving loan funds, we had to find a terminology within UNDP financial regulations that would work. And it did finally. It worked.

By 1985, half of the activities that we financed were executed by NGOs. UNICEF had Noted Projects, and I'm told in the 1970s they would put the names of projects into their agreements with governments, but that was different.

RJ: No, I think Noted Project was really a supplementary to core funds. But I think we were using core funds for NGO support, certainly in 1982 when I joined.

MS: Oh, 1982. OK, but this was 1979 that we institutionalized support of NGOs through the UNDP system. UNFPA (UN Population Fund) financed international NGOs then. We know that. They would finance an international NGO which would then conduct a project in a country.

RJ: It is an interesting point. Let's check. What I'm hearing is that you were pioneering not only in the UN system, but very much within UNDP, and getting the financial boys at the UN system to find ways to do these things.

MS: That's right. Another contribution of UNIFEM to the UN system—and this is, I think, almost the last thing I should mention—is experienced staff. I mentioned that in 1984, because we were in the UN proper and it wasn't set up for technical cooperation, the fund was moved to autonomous association with UNDP. Part of our agreement with UNDP is that UNIFEM staff could transfer to UNDP. When you have a small fund and a few staff, they need to have some elbow room and to transfer in their career to other areas. So UNIFEM has fed the system with a lot of country representatives and fed other organizations with people who have been trained in project development and in assuring that both women and men are involved in planning and get benefits from activities.

RJ: Was your own experience in ECA of enormous value for this?

MS: Oh yes, and my experience in Africa before I joined ECA. I would say I was brought up, in development concerns, by African women. That's what Devaki said to me the other day.

RJ: Tell us a little bit more of the opposition. You've talked about the bureaucratic opposition.

MS: When UNIFEM—VFDW then—was in the UN system, we were in the Department of International Economics, whose under-secretary was Jean Ripert. Remember him? It was at that time they moved the Branch for the Advancement of Women—as it was called then—over to Vienna to fill up the Vienna International Centre which the Austrians had build and needed to have filled up. UNIFEM had one staff person and a secretary. Maybe we had a general service finance person by then too. The Austrians were pushing that UNIFEM also go, and so was Mr. J. J. Ripert. He insisted.

RJ: And [Kurt] Waldheim at that time was still Secretary-General?

MS: Yes, he was, curiously enough. But Ripert was pushing very hard. I remember Theresa Spens, who was then on the committee, went to see him once to try to change his mind. It wasn't easy to do. There were all kinds of ruses put up—an evaluation of our work, and arguments that it really didn't need to be in New York. We were busy counting permanent missions in New York and Vienna, and saying that the poor countries weren't represented in Vienna, and they wanted to look in on us so we had to be here and also be tied with the other funds and programs such as UNDP and UNICEF, whose resources were used for transferring money to the field, to appraise requests, et cetera. But years later, when I was retired, and J.J. Ripert was retired, he became a consultant to the UN. We met right down here on the corner of

49th Street and 1st Avenue, and he said, "Ms. Snyder, you should not have let that fund continue. That fund was supposed to be for the decade for women. It was not supposed to be a permanent fund."

Then I understood a lot of things about him, and his staff, and what they were trying to do. If the fund had gone to Vienna, out of the view of the user countries and the donor countries, it could have just been a little fund for the Branch for the Advancement of Women to use—not a development cooperation fund. That was one of our big bureaucratic obstacles, and we had a long fight.

RJ: What about political opposition, perhaps from developing countries? You said you funded the Green Belt, Wangari Maathai's organization. Did the Kenyan government ever try and put any pressure against such support?

MS: No. We had a little phrase that said, "government has no objection," which a UN resident representative could get in a very informal way. But also remember, this was the late 1970s. The Kenyan government and Professor Maathai didn't meet head-to-head until the 1980s. So she was very acceptable as president of the National Council of Women then. They had a lovely little tree-planting project for women, so there was no problem—until she started planting ideas about democracy and development.

No, we didn't have objections from developing countries. We did get involved at the famous 1980 Copenhagen conference—not until after, and then there was pressure put on the U.S. government to punish the UN for consideration of the Palestinian issue as a women's issue by ceasing contributions to UNIFEM.

RJ: Because of the Mexican conference having passed the anti-Zionist resolution in Mexico.

MS: It was mainly about the confrontations over whether the situation of Palestinian women belonged on the agenda at Copenhagen.

RJ: But why was it taken out on UNIFEM, as opposed to the Division for the Advancement of Women?

MS: Well, exactly—or USAID. UNIFEM gave no money to that conference. USAID gave some $40,000 or so to that conference. It was because the UN, with its many autonomous organizations, isn't understood, I think. As you know, what the secretariat does has little direct relation to what a fund is doing.

RJ: This is what I know from UNICEF.

MS: I had lunch with the fellow from B'nai Brith, the Israeli support group, after a couple of years—he wouldn't see me for a couple of years. And when I had lunch with him, he had no idea whatsoever of the structure of the UN as regards women, and yet he's the person who's making all the decisions about what people should be for and what they should be against, unfortunately. So we got caught up—guilt by association. That's when I became great friends with some of the women who became our strong supporters, trying to clear the air and let the truth be seen and bring back the U.S. contribution to UNIFEM.

RJ: Is your experience that the solidarity among women, and indeed people concerned with women and gender issues, can sometimes bridge political gaps?

MS: Oh yes, I think so. I think so, Richard.

RJ: Other examples?

MS: Another example would be on the peace issue. You get bridgings by women. There must be other issues in the UN proper that I'm not thinking of at the moment. But certainly on the peace issue. I'm very close friends with some of those women who came to our

defense, because they were of the same religious orientation, so they could speak face-to-face with those who made UNIFEM a scapegoat. They were supporting us because they knew the fund, they knew what we were doing. And curiously, whenever we financed any activities in the Middle East, we were careful always to do them with UNICEF. So I said to this fellow a couple of years later, "Why didn't you punish UNICEF? They were financing the same activities[4] in the Middle East." A small fund for the poorest women doesn't have many defenses. It's pretty fragile and vulnerable.

RJ: Let me ask you another question about the women's alliances bridging gaps. I would presume that was not so in the bad old days of the Cold War—that women in Eastern Europe, women in the former Soviet Union, were not quite of a position in their own countries, or perhaps of a mindset internationally, to see much wish to bridge gaps. Am I right or am I wrong on this?

MS: They would have wished to in many cases. First of all, as far as working within the UN here, there were very few women, almost no women on Eastern European country delegations. But there would be occasionally—there was one East German woman who was very nice, whom I got to know a bit. But they were quite powerless at home, in terms of changing that. They would have, I think. The few that were around who learned about UNIFEM, for example, were very sympathetic. But even though the East Europeans talked a lot about their massive women's organizations, the women weren't able to do anything to persuade their governments to give even symbolic contributions to women's activities through the UN.

RJ: The ideology of the Soviet socialist bloc at the time was, as I think you've said, so strong in terms of "we have women's equality" that it was only after the fall of the Cold War that the truth and the realities began to emerge.

[4] See page 50 in *Transforming Development*.

MS: Except that we experienced it all during the Cold War. I knew that. You only had to look in the Third Committee of the GA, which was the committee in which there are women if they are anywhere, as you know—the social issues. Seldom did you see women from the Soviet bloc.

RJ: Can you remember any case in which women's representatives somehow spoke out at that time from the Soviet bloc with a glimpse of what you were already realizing was the reality of the situation?

MS: They spoke out—

RJ: Publicly in the Third Committee or elsewhere?

MS: And criticized their countries? Oh heavens, no. Almost nobody criticizes their country in the UN.

RJ: I wasn't so much meaning direct criticism, but by implication saying, "We have a lot of problems."

MS: I don't think so. I think the few who were privileged to get there gave the speech that was expected. But as I say, you could write any country's speech before hand about a given subject with which you were familiar, because you knew that all countries are heavenly when it comes to speaking up in the General Assembly. That's what the UN is about, to some extent—defending ourselves.

RJ: But there's a lot of truth in that. It's obviously more nuanced than, perhaps, you're presenting. But if there is this enormous tendency in the UN to cast a favorable light on one's own situation back home, how come the women's conferences, in Mexico and Copenhagen and Nairobi and so forth, have been different? Or were they different?

MS: I think in the public speaking—it's one thing to negotiate a plan of action or a

resolution, because you don't name particular countries in those. But it's another thing to speak on behalf of your country about your country. And when you're speaking, you can talk about other countries, and say, "In many countries of the world, we still have a lot to do." You can be supportive of issues, but you don't usually, in my experience anyway, attack your own country in giving a speech. You might, if you were secure enough, say, "We have a lot more to do," or something. But I don't think Americans would usually go and say, "We have a bigger unemployment rate among black Americans than white Americans." I haven't heard that in the GA, have you?

RJ: I think this is an interesting dimension of what the UN, and indeed the professional parts of the UN, in preparing reports can do. By producing international reports, they can state the situation of women or children or whatever in different parts of the world, and bring out these differences in a way that does not somehow point the finger directly at total political failure, but directs very specific attention to enormous problems, and indeed egregious failures of human rights. It's partly how it's done, in my experience.

MS: Can you give an example?

RJ: You mentioned before *The World's Women*, a publication where you have lined up the contrasting situation of girls in schools, maternal mortality rates, all these issues. Those reports serve as a focus for, I think, very operational discussion in many ways without quite pointing the finger. In my own experience—and perhaps I should turn it back to you in UNIFEM—at country level, if you're not hitting the headlines, criticizing a country in discussion with ministers or civil servants or other people in the country, you can be working alongside others to direct attention to major failures in the country. You can establish a partnership that is tackling major issues—

MS: In your own country. Yes, I think that's true. The secretariat plays very important roles in presenting papers on key subjects. And when you come to something like CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the reports that countries send in are self-criticizing. But that isn't the General Assembly speech. It's a different forum.

RJ: Tell us a bit about CEDAW. That was passed—what, after the fund was started, do you see that as having been a major step forward?

MS: Oh yes. The Americans haven't yet endorsed it, or even the convention on children. We don't sign those conventions, so I can't use my own country as an example. But when I was in Uganda, I found that just putting the reports together based on the convention, and the outline they had to follow, and all, was very, very helpful to the women of the country themselves. Putting it together brought out both strengths and weaknesses. Then somebody representing governments had to come to the UN and defend it. The report gave women the opportunity to bring up a lot of information which they would then be able to use locally, which if CEDAW didn't exist you might or might not have. Recently, NGOs prepare "shadow reports" to criticize what their governments say! I think it's been a real boon in terms of a straightforward criticism of one's own country. I think it's been an important instrument, and it certainly is appreciated by women of the world.

And now, of course, individual women can bring cases. They have an optional protocol that allows an individual woman to bring something to the committee. That's a big breakthrough. It's like in the human rights commission—very important, it seems to me.

Can I mention one other thing on obstacles that we faced—just a quickie? With UNDP, when we moved from the UN to autonomous association with UNDP I breathed a great sigh of

relief that at last, we were out of the organization where we didn't quite fit. Now we were with a development organization.

RJ: Which year was this?

MS: 1984, the end of 1984. It was done purposely before the 1985 conference so that UNIFEM wouldn't become a political football at the conference. We would go there knowing where we were and where the future lay. Before the GA vote, we had briefings with the regional groups. We had briefings with all members of the GA. UNDP was present, all stakeholders were present, and answered questions about what this autonomous association would mean—that UNIFEM would make use of UNDP's services, but that the fund wouldn't be placed down in the hierarchy of UNDP. The ink wasn't dry on the GA resolution (39/125) when the associate administrator announced that we would now join the Bureau for Special Activities. That's where UNIFEM would be located.

RJ: This was Arthur Brown.

MS: That was Arthur. This was way down in the hierarchy where they stuffed the Sahelian Fund and various other small funds. That wasn't the intention of the resolution. It was also not the intention that governments had had at all these briefing sessions. But that was Arthur's idea of where women belonged.

RJ: Let me not try and fathom Arthur Brown's thinking, but ask you a question in relation indeed to a general donor view of the whole of the UN system—so fragmented. Remember the Jackson report of 1969/1970 (*Study of the Capacity of the UN Development System*)? Everything, all money, should be under UNDP, and that was still going two or three years ago with the Maurice Strong reform. Now I know from my UNICEF experience how we fought to the death against that. But might Arthur Brown not have been reacting, with a lot of

hidden or even open support from donors—UNDP should control all funds, and therefore UNIFEM should be within it's hierarchy, not really autonomous?

MS: Yes. And for a bureaucrat, that's much neater. There is nothing "hanging out" of the bureaucratic pyramid. It's all nice and smooth. Arthur was a brilliant man and a consummate bureaucrat—well-trained by the British colonialists, I must say, one of the best. He was a superb person. But he's the one, may I add, who when we were talking about the African investment plan and the participatory action plan for Latin America and the Caribbean said, "You're not supposed to conceptualize." Now that didn't have anything to do with donors. That had to do with what he thought a women's fund should be. It should just behave and do things as told.

RJ: Sorry to raise another example. It was 1982 when the donors said to UNICEF, "Jim Grant, UNICEF is not supposed to have a brain. What's all this idea of creating a think tank component?"

MS: Oh sure, it's the same thing. But Arthur had difficulty accepting women as colleagues, really.

RJ: Really?

MS: I think so. His male colleagues told me that. I think that was his one bureaucratic failure. He couldn't see women as colleagues in a joint enterprise. That's not just UNIFEM's experience; others have had similar problems. Anyway, we had that to buck for about four years. But our consultative committee again took a very strong position. They brought in the legal department. The legal people had helped draft that resolution. Noeleen Heyzer will tell you to this day that it's the best resolution ever written. It's kept her from being swallowed up. Have you interviewed Noeleen?

RJ: Not yet, but we are preparing to.

MS: Ask her about that resolution because it has kept UNIFEM from being just digested down into the bureaucracy. And when you consider the problems we had with supporting the NGOs and credit funds, you can imagine that you couldn't fight that anymore if you were down the bureaucracy. You would just do what you were told, and you could forget about being innovative and experimental and catalytic and all the things UNIFEM is supposed to be.

RJ: Let me ask you indeed about UNIFEM today, because your history runs, I think, to 1995. Perhaps you might give us your overview of whether the institution that you were the first director of has evolved as you had hoped, and indeed how you think it might continue to evolve.

MS: This is where leadership comes in in the UN. UNIFEM has changed with the times, and if it didn't change it would die. A fund or any institution has to live within its times. They've added issues like peace and violence against women. They've retained the economic emphasis and expanded it with a focus on trade. So sure, it has changed. I'm sure if I were running it now, and I had all the money Noeleen has, I might engage the same issues. Somebody asked your question after a speech I gave recently. I said, "Well, maybe if I had all the money Noeleen has, I would do the same. I don't know." I'm just pleased that UNIFEM is there and strong.

When you look at INSTRAW, it never was financially strong. Now it's practically nonexistent. So I'm just pleased that UNIFEM has retained and multiplied its strength. And it's still being innovative and catalytic. The Security Council resolution on peace is an example. UNIFEM took the lead in having that happen.

RJ: Tell us a word or two more about that.

MS: Let me say I'd leave that to UNIFEM—to Noeleen—to talk more about it. But I think the resolution on considering women in the struggle for the peace that the UN pursues so avidly, and considering them as partners in the process of making the peace during and after war makes enormous sense. Coming from the strongest body in the UN, the Security Council, the resolution is especially useful. So I'm very proud of my colleagues for having done that. OK, are resolutions always implemented? Of course not, but they do spur progress towards goals. I'm working with some others on editing a small book entitled, *To Be Seen, To Be Heard, to Be Counted: Liberian Women's Pursuit of Peace, 1859-1997*. Many women and men were interviewed by Liberian journalists.

RJ: In Liberia.

MS: In Liberia, yes. One of the women said, "What is women's role in peacemaking to me? When there was fighting, the men would say, 'Let's go kill them.' And the women would say, 'Let's go talk to the boys.'" If there's one thing on which most women in the world agree—and I've seen this written with a sound basis—it's that peace is far preferable to fighting each other. I think the Security Council resolution is a terribly important initiative for the UN's pursuit of world peace. It may be Noeleen's biggest initiative when all is said and done, and people look back and evaluate. I'm pretty proud that the organization I helped to establish is in that arena.

RJ: Do you, looking back, see other areas where women over the years of the UN have done a lot for peace? I'm personally conscious of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which you actually said was the one that proposed the Mexico conference.

MS: I qualified that because I'm not sure.[5]

RJ: Were you conscious in other areas where women were taking initiatives for peace, for the resolution of conflict?

MS: In every contemporary conflict, many women work for peace. Just recently, there was a case in the newspaper. Somewhere tucked in the middle of the *New York Times*, there was a little sentence that said, "Women from both sides"—it was where Hindus and Muslims fought in India, I think—"women from both sides got out together and stopped the fighting. They lined up across the streets, joined hands, and stopped the fighting." That didn't get headlines, but I'm sure that happens, most recently from reading all these wonderful stories of what women did in Liberia, for example. Women brought the heads of the factions together for four days of consciousness-raising. Is there peace now in Liberia? No. But given more strength, I'm sure women could do more.

RJ: Why do you think women, in particular, have played, or are more sensitive to play this sort of role?

MS: Because it's their boys, and sometimes girls too, who are out there killing each other. Their food supplies are disrupted. Schools are closed.

RJ: Something very deep.

MS: Oh yes. Somehow women always seem to end up, as I said, paying more and more school fees and taking care of children and elders. In many, if not most, societies, women do much more for the children than men do. In many societies, men will walk away. You've been sensitized to it, so you wouldn't want your child killed either. But in some societies where life and death are everyday happenings, men take a much more cavalier attitude toward war, it seems

[5] Late: It was the Women's International Democratic Federation, not WILPF.

to me. Peacemaking is a natural issue for women, who have to feed people and know that after crisis—whether it's a war or an earthquake—you have to find food for tomorrow.

RJ: Let me come back to UNIFEM for one last question. Do you see any paths not taken by UNIFEM—if you wish, either in your time or more recently?

MS: In terms of substantive areas? When I was writing the UNIFEM history book, *Transforming Development*, I sat with the resrep in Peru, and he said, "You know, if UNIFEM had more resources, you would be able to leverage much more government policy, because let's face it, when you can contribute financially to something, you can have a voice in the larger activity, and you could do much more." I have always felt that we could have done much more in the realm of policy, and women themselves could have done more in their countries, if we had had more resources. You could say, "I'm going to match this contribution of X or of the government. We want to have not just a "women's component," if it is a women's component. We want to have a voice in the whole project or activity."

Jacqueline Kizerbo, from Burkina Faso, did that for us in West Africa by attending donor roundtables, where the donors sat together and kind of divided up the pie and said, "We'll finance this or that." Jacqueline, most often the only woman at the roundtable, would encourage much more consideration of women. OK, if she had had more money to contribute within that, she might have been able to have a bigger voice. She was successful in many ways. She went to a number of roundtables. It was an interesting experiment. On the policy side also, we sought to support women's voices in sub-regional groups of countries such as SADC (Southern African Development Community), where we offered to finance posts for regional women in secretariats and seminars for women to discuss policy issues like food security. That is another area where I wish more could have been done.

RJ: Have you ever thought, suppose UNIFEM had the same billion dollars a year as UNICEF?

MS: That would be lovely.

RJ: Perhaps you could make the case, if I may inject my own opinion, that a billion dollars of donor money put through UNIFEM rather than through the World Bank would multiply human welfare and sensitivity to human development issues ten times or a hundred times.

MS: Who's going to be able to make that case? I think the voice is going to have to be a man's voice.

RJ: This history project—a future orientated history.

MS: I would agree with you. Noeleen could go now or I could or whoever, and we would say what all of the voices over the years have said, "Women are central to countries' economies." People don't get it. A study by A. Hill and E. King, in 1995, entitled, "Women's Education and Economic Wellbeing," that the World Bank loves to quote, I now see referenced to the World Bank. It came out first in *Feminist Economics*,[6] but they're not credited. The World Bank is because they quoted from it. This is "countries in which the ratio of female to male enrollment in primary and secondary education is less than 0.75 can expect levels of GNP that are roughly 25 percent lower" than those with a different ratio.

That kind of funding is proven again and again. But it doesn't resonate. The World Bank picks it up, but it's put into a document about women, and that has an audience of women. So how do you have that voice in the larger arena? I think it is likely to have to be a man's voice—backed up by the women of the world, mind you.

[6] Vol. 1, no. 25.

The women's movement has made a lot of progress in my time, these last forty years. It's extraordinary the progress that it made. I think one of our faults is, if I may just make a little point here, is that we tend to say that women have gone backward in the last few years since Beijing in terms of the numbers of poor. Well, we have to look through the lens of the global economy and say, "Everybody's gone backward in poor countries," because of the widening gap between rich and poor, instead of just fingering women. So we women are partly to blame for saying, "We've gone backward. Why have we gone backward? We haven't been effective." The world hasn't been effective!

RJ: Well, let's just dwell on that—the progress of women over the twentieth century, over the last fifty years. Have you any other comments to make? You've said it is actually enormous. Is there is any sense, if I may ask you personally, where you really feel it's so much more than you expected in the 1950s and 1960s?

MS: You mean the progress? Oh yes. Just take staffing in the UN. How many women were at the director level—D-1? I wasn't one of the first, but there weren't very many above a D-1 when I got to a D-1 in 1987. That was only fifteen years ago. Now there are many more. So it surged a lot under Kofi [Annan], I think. It has been helpful to have Kofi there. But just in that arena, there will be backsliding as there was in 2001, when only one of eleven USGs (under-secretary-generals) and one of ten ASGs appointed were women. When you have sufficient number, a critical mass of 40 percent, when the balance can begin to tip a bit. And of course, the first women you have are often, in many places, the Maggie Thatchers of this world, aren't they? They're tougher than the men and not feminists. So it takes a while before you get that significant percentage to tip the scale.

RJ: Perhaps we should talk a little bit more about the UN as a whole. You've said you've seen real progress. Have you seen, also within the UN, not merely more women in senior positions and leadership positions, but in general a greater gender sensitivity to development issues?

MS: Oh yes, there's a lot more. But there's still a long row to hoe. For example, recently—and you may ask Noeleen about this. She's been asked to be the senior gender advisor for UNDP. I think back to Ulla Olin. It's twenty-five years or more since UNDP had Ulla, with her own internal system of regional bureaus each having a gender person. And if UNDP now has to go outside to get someone to be able to help them with gender twenty-five years later, then I think we haven't succeeded as far as we wish we had.

But then again, I think the UN as a whole has lost some of its conceptual leadership. I think you make that point to some extent, don't you? The UN is no longer the major center of gravity of thinking about development. The Bretton Woods organizations have captured much of the leadership—because they have the power.

RJ: I'm not sure I'd go along with that. I think the UN still—of course, I think in terms of the *Human Development Report*, but I think that some of the women's reports—you've mentioned *The World's Women*, but some of the work on gender and trade which Diane Elson has done, and I think partly that the opposition of orthodoxy is so unimaginative, emanating from the Washington consensus, that the competition to come up with new ideas in the UN is perhaps not as difficult as it ought to be.

But perhaps we should, at least for the last five minutes—why did you leave UNIFEM?

MS: Because I had a birthday. I had a sixtieth.

RJ: Really?

MS: I guess it's sixty-two now, is it? But you leave right after your birthday.

RJ: Were you very sad to leave, or did you feel that actually you had had a good run and it was time?

MS: Yes, and eleven years is a lot, considering the amount of energy expended on wearing down the bureaucracy. When I look back at it, in ECA we had much more support from above. We had strong support from Gardiner and Riby, as I said to you. In UNIFEM, we had our J.J. Riperts and our Arthur Browns, who were constantly, even if sometimes not consciously, trying to wear away our progress. So you had less chance to be innovative in terms of substantive innovation, because the bureaucracy comes down on you and pressures you. At least I made sure that the UNIFEM executive post became a D-2, so that my successor started as a D-2. Moving the leadership up a bit, to a political level, gives the incumbent more clout.

RJ: Let me ask you a little bit personally, looking back—and let me say with double praise—you have been in so many pioneering places in the UN that that must give you pleasure. And from the point of view of the history of the UN, you are now three volumes—

MS: Well, the third volume is not a history of the UN. It's about businesswomen in Uganda.[7] So two volumes.

RJ: Two volumes is very important because, as we know from the UN history project, most parts of the UN have not put down in any systematic way their history. And it's desperately needed from the point of view of documenting global governance. But coming back, if I may be personal, about yourself, you must feel a certain pleasure that you've seen a lot and been in on the ground floor on a lot of innovations.

MS: I guess I was born at the right time, even if I was born in the Great Depression, Richard. The external environment makes a difference. I was born at a time when I could go to

Kenya just before independence and be involved in development issues. And when the rest of the women's movement was coming up, and the transformation of development was coming up from being simply community development to far broader things. The UN itself was in a process of transformation in relation to the developing world. So I've been very lucky to have lives at this time and had the right background and the right team. I'm a team person. In Addis, we had super teams, as I mentioned to you. In UNIFEM, I had Banke Akerele from Liberia. You couldn't manufacture the ideal person and come up with a Banke. She was terrific. And a nice, young Japanese fellow, Kyonako, who started off as a junior professional.

I've been very, very fortunate in the teams that I've been able to put together. Thelma Awori—are you interviewing Thelma?

RJ: We haven't got those plans at the moment, but I know Thelma of course.

MS: Anyway, Thelma might be someone whom you might consider. Having those kinds of people, one is well-blessed.

RJ: Do you think you might write your own more personal memoirs?

MS: Some people ask me that. I don't know. I've written a chapter. Devaki also has a chapter in the book that Irene Tinker and Arvonne Fraser are putting out. It's policy-oriented—how you were able to influence policy through the women and development movement. That book is coming out of CUNY (The City University of New York), the Feminist Press. It's with the publisher now. I don't know when it's going to be out—maybe 2003.

RJ: What would you like to see for the UN, for internationalism in the next two or three decades?

MS: How many minutes did you say we had? How many days? I would like to see the UN as the world's key democratic organization, different from the Bretton Woods organizations.

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[7] *Women in African Economies: From Burning Sun to Boardroom*, Fountain Publishers, 2000.

I wouldn't want to say return the UN to power, but let it grasp a new power in the age of globalization. I think it's too bad that the idea of an Economic Security Council or something similar hasn't happened. I think it's too bad that the Bretton Woods people have stolen the conceptualization—research and other functions—because they've had the money to do it, but not the political will for implementation. As I say, there are two World Banks and I love the one that produces the research documents. A lot of them are very good. But I think it's too bad that has happened. I'd like to see an Arthur Andersen kind of function there—remove the research and publication side from the World Bank and let them just do their financing, but most of all bring the Bretton Woods organizations back under the democratic United Nations umbrella. I'd like to see that. Do you think that's going to happen? It would be terrific if it could happen because the UN has a better capacity since its environment is more appropriate for that.

And I'd like to see Kofi live a very long time. I found my first contract at ECA, and I turned over the back. I said, "I wonder who signed this?" Kofi Annan. He was leaving ECA when I was coming, in 1971. Anyway, those are some of the things that I'd like to see. I'd like to see the UN get a better grasp on the underlying issues of globalization, on the economic issues of globalization, and the social issues. I don't think the UN has spoken out particularly well, so of course it's criticized. A friend phoned yesterday. He'd been at the Brazil social seminar than ran parallel to the Davos meeting here. We talked about that for a long time. He teaches at Columbia. He said, "Those people don't like the United Nations very much because the United Nations hasn't really spoken out."

RJ: This is the NGO world that does not like the UN very much.

MS: It's the group that met in Brazil.

RJ: In Porto Alegre.

MS: Yes. I said, "Well, what about the development side of the UN?" He said, "I have to give a talk soon. I will try that." But I agree with him. We haven't, at the UN, spoken out enough. You did *Development With a Human Face*, but there hasn't been all that much of late. And the UN proper hasn't dealt with it. Now maybe that's because we're an intergovernmental agency, and governments aren't going to like it, but surely there are ways of expressing new ideas.

RJ: Well and in part, because as you said, with UNIFEM, an Arthur Brown said, "Look, you're not supposed to conceptualize." When they said to UNICEF, "You're not supposed to have a brain," it's an attempt, I believe, to control the UN coming up with alternatives. And of course, there's a failure of leadership often within the UN.

RJ: This is tape three of Peg Snyder being interviewed by Richard Jolly on the 29th of March, 2002. Peg, let us turn to some of the overview issues. Were there particular points you were going to make about Brad Morse and others in the UN?

MS: Yes. Brad is one of my heroes. We moved to association with the UNDP when he was still there, shortly before he left. But he said something at the Nairobi conference when he gave a speech about women in 1985. He said, "To ignore the economic activity of women is both morally indefensible and economically absurd." I just love that quote. I've used it again and again. It gets picked up by others as well. I think he had a way of capturing issues—very committed to women himself, but then, alas, he didn't concern himself with the day-to-day UNDP administration.

RJ: When you look at other administrators—not only in UNDP but administrators with a small "a" at the UN—are you conscious of leadership and personal commitment as being very critical values?

MS: Absolutely, particularly in an organization like the UN. The commitment side is terribly important, it seems to me, because unless you're committed to the values of the UN, the UN isn't going to go anywhere under your leadership. So very definitely.

RJ: Do you think the academic world recognizes this enough?

MS: Certain people in the academic world do. I'm a seminar associate at Columbia University, now, so I'm up there—it's my way to keep up on Africa, because you get to go to any of the lectures and participate in the international studies program, and the African studies program. And I give lectures myself sometimes. They have a good relationship in many ways by having graduate students assist with evaluations for the UN. That, to me, is very important for both the students and for the future of the UN.

That's not high-level expertise, which is another issue. It seems to me that there's a lot that academia and the UN can share, depending again the academics having sufficient background and the right kind of expertise. The kinds of things that you did for Sussex University, or ILO in Nairobi, when you invented the informal sector, could be very exciting and mutually beneficial. Those kinds of missions, it seems to me, are still important and useful. I don't know to what extent they are done now. I don't see too much of that. Do you see much of it?

RJ: I think there's very little, but I agree. This is going to turn into a conversation and I'm supposed to be interviewing you. I personally believe that so many of the issues being debated at the global level not only become real if taken to the country level, but if you explore them at the country level, then you get real inspiration for how the debate at the global level should change and be made more relevant. I suspect I see that in your own—

MS: Oh yes. I was so enriched by—I lived fifteen years in Africa. But going back to Uganda as a mature person and Fulbright scholar a few years ago was unbelievably enriching.

RJ: Makerere University in Uganda had had a terrible fifteen years.

MS: Oh yes, the whole country.

RJ: And the whole country too. But 1995, I think, when you were in Uganda was when Makerere was beginning to come back, but still a lot of struggle—still very poor.

MS: And it still is struggling in many ways. A colleague of mine is working with ICTs (Information Communication Technologies)—the Ford and Rockefeller and Carnegie project. She is finding that struggle, but they are coming back.

RJ: What differences did you find in the student world—perhaps the graduate student and professorial world—in the mid-1990s compared with Tanzania and the University of Dar es Salaam in the late 1960s.

MS: Late 1960s and early 1970s. Of course, the University of Dar es Salaam in the late 1960s was in the midst of the socialist revolution. Not many were local socialists—there were a lot of imported socialists. So that was a very different atmosphere. Of course, now with Makerere, the biggest department is the business school. I suppose it's subsidized.

RJ: It's profit-making is my understanding. Each department is allowed to spend what it can make from fees and other activities.

MS: That's right. And they have their own new buildings. They were almost becoming a university in themselves.

RJ: What impact does that have on gender issues? Is gender a profitable line for the universities?

MS: With the Scandinavians. The Department of Women and Gender Studies has a beautiful new building—thank you, Norway—a several-story building. They will be able to rent out part of it to other departments. So business is moving onward with gender. But there are going to be, I'm sure, departments that will need subsidization for a very long time. It's a very different atmosphere now. The atmosphere in Dar es Salaam in the 1960s was nearly revolutionary, as you probably remember, with the kinds of people who were there.

RJ: Very much political activists on the left—lots of very distinguished people from other countries. And, of course, there was Nyerere's own pragmatic, but still committed—

MS: The Arusha Declaration was still a very important issue then. But I'm disappointed, in a way, with any possible relationships between the UN and women's studies in this country, because U.S. women's studies is not very international. The women's studies departments are not very international, and I think that's too bad. Where you get a combination of, say, African studies and women's studies it can be very lively. Aili Tripp at the University of Wisconsin is an example. I'm going there next year to be a visiting scholar for a little bit. Where you get this combination of a strong women's studies and strong African studies or strong Asian studies, then you have possibilities for cooperation with the UN. For example, UNIFEM using Diane Elson is a case in point; her skills as an economist merge with UNIFEM's interests.

RJ: I think, if I may ask you a few questions about the United States as an American citizen who for all your professional life has been so much involved internationally—what does one do in this country, the United States that played such a role in founding the UN, Eleanor Roosevelt, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so many wonderful things—

MS: And the same with UNIFEM. The United States was the first big donor, you know—the biggest donor in the beginning.

RJ: And yet how, in this globalization world, does one somehow break through to the next generation of people in the United States, for them to see the United States as such an integral part of the world rather than different and—what is the word—exceptionalist in so many ways? Might the women's movement in the States change to suddenly have a global view and a global view built on equality of people?

MS: I would like to hope so, Richard, but I'm not sure the women's scene is going to be much different than the American scene in general. That being said, surveys show that Americans are much more supportive of the UN than the present administration is or the Congress is. And if this administration will come around to maybe some harsh realities about international interdependence and that going alone is impractical and can backfire. Perhaps you read this past week's *New Yorker* about the new global order, how we, the U.S., will impose our view on the rest of the world, and we will fix everything. Maybe in the Middle East, there's reason to hope the vice president has became a little bit more aware that you can't just plow ahead. You have to take into account what other nations are saying. If people could begin to see that. There are instruments; for example, there is the Model UN. Do you know that one?

RJ: Of course.

MS: That sort of thing, I think we have to keep that up. I think that people like myself, who are members of AFICS, the Association of Former International Civil Servants, could do a lot more for the UN. We were talking about that at a recent AFICS luncheon. Barbara Crossette spoke, and people were complaining that: "Well, you phone up the UN to get an answer to your question and you don't even get an answer. You don't even get a chance to hear the question put forward." AFICS people could be used in that situation and others much more to enliven the concern for the UN in this country. I think that much more could be done.

There is an openness among young people, and like your family the children are all over the world—and the same is true of families here—but the UN can fit into that picture. That being said, my grandnieces and grandnephews are studying about the UN in their schools, in primary and secondary. So there's a lot more going on, but it doesn't yet affect policy. And why don't the UN Association and the Former International Civil Servants and other resources, such as the new UN Foundation, and other groups work more closely together?

RJ: They don't connect. Yesterday we talked a lot about your early involvement with the church. Do you see the church—either churches in general, or perhaps the Catholic Church—as playing a leadership role in many of these issues of internationalism?

MS: If they get over their current problems. Yes, the Bishops conference here, as in Uganda and Kenya and other countries, have made strong statements, and they've mattered. They made statements on the economy, on politics, on honesty and transparency in government. But these things could be done much more than they're done now, I think. A friend of mine, a Jewish woman, is a leader in the global ecumenical movement. She loves to show me her picture with the pope. Those ecumenical people have done a lot and could do a lot more. I think there's room for churches to take more leadership because they tend to be international for one thing. They tend to be global over a long time.

Now we're getting Nigerian priests. In my parish, we have an Indian. We had a Nigerian not long ago. My friends keep telling me they have Ugandan priests. So the missionary idea is working in reverse.

RJ: In New York City, you've got Ghanaian priests and—

MS: But of course, the church—or at least the Catholic Church—in Africa is much more conservative than here. So you're not going to get a broad vision of the world, I don't think, out of these people coming on the reverse missionary programs. A grave concern for the women's movement is religious fundamentalism—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, other—and its attempts to deprive women of their many achievements. The fundamentalists were very visible at Beijing in 1995 and their influence here at the UN is multiplying.

RJ: Are there any final points you'd like to make?

MS: Maybe to sum up, I think the women's revolution has made women a force, has made development a women's issue, and made the UN the guardian and advocate of their global movement. What will happen now depends very much on what happens to the United Nations. The women's movement is strong enough now to survive on its own. But I would like to see the United Nations itself have a new kind of strength in the face of globalization, and not just have to do peacekeeping and cleaning up the mess that bombing makes for societies, but have a very forthright positive role.

Part of that issue depends on more public relations about the peace that is actually kept, thanks to UN development activities among others, but we don't hear it because it didn't break into war. More public relations from the UN would be very much in order, but I understand the Americans have been there and said public relations needs to be cut back.

RJ: That's a somewhat sad note on which to end, but not within the whole positive context of the progress you've described. So thank you very much, Peg Snyder, for this wonderful interview.

MS: Well thank you, Richard Jolly. It's been a pleasure having this chance to talk with you.

RJ: Thank you.

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