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

JUAN SOMAVÍA

BY

THOMAS G. WEISS

Geneva, 2 October 2001

Transcribed by Ron Nerio

THOMAS G. WEISS: This is the beginning of tape number one, Tom Weiss overlooking Lac Léman in Geneva with Juan Somavía on the 2nd of October, 2001. I wondered whether we could start at the beginning. In some of the things that you have written, you have talked about religion, values, and especially your own upbringing. I wondered whether you could try to weave these together and tell me how they really influenced your own interest in international cooperation and multilateralism. How did these early years actually contribute to making you the person you are today?

JUAN SOMAVÍA: I think that the value issue comes to you by just looking at things. You don't do this consciously when you are young. You just absorb. In my case, my father was a diplomat. So to begin with, I was born in Britain in the middle of the Blitz and then moved to Chile, the Dominican Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and then Ecuador. That was my schooling. So my schooling is both my formal schooling and the fact that I moved around the world. My upbringing gave me a natural linkage with the world.

Probably the most important benefit of that upbringing is that you get to know there are differences. You can't just look at the world through your own eyes. There are other people looking at the same thing with other eyes. So the notion there are going to be different ways of looking at the same issue is probably very much a part of my own upbringing—in an accidental way, if you will, because of the type of life I led. That, of course, leads later on to a much greater understanding of multiculturalism and, further on, as you reflect on these things, to the need for respect for the other. The conclusion at the end of it all—different views, multiculturalism, respect for the other—is that you have no option but dialogue. You don't find solutions that are imposed by force. Looking at the problem the way others see it is also a very fundamental way of finding a solution.

TGW: Do you remember any confrontations of cultures in this schooling?

JS: In some of the places, I was living with my parents and sometimes I was in boarding school. I think one of the things that you learn from boarding school is to adapt, particularly if you are a foreigner. So more than confrontation, it was about adaptation. It is the same thing I was saying before, but in a more particular setting. The question of trying to integrate, for any human being, is fundamental.

For example, I was in a boarding school when my father was counsel to Antwerp. The boarding school was French-speaking, but because the children were all from Antwerp, their language was not French. So when we had a break and we went out for fifteen minutes between classes, they spoke their own language. They didn't speak French. Inevitably, I had to begin to learn their language if I wanted to be a kid and play around with them.

That experience is just one example of the tendency to adapt and integrate. When you travel a lot you are a foreigner. You have a natural tendency to try to understand each new context because you want to integrate. Consequently, in your youth the likelihood of a very strong clash of cultures is diminished by that factor. No, I don't have memories of confrontation; I had rather the opposite experience as we moved between Europe, the United States, and Latin America.

TGW: During this variety of schooling experiences, did the United Nations come up as a topic in the curriculum? Was it anything that either in your schooling or in your university years was a preoccupation amongst you or your colleagues?

JS: Very little. I went to school from kindergarten in 1946, and I went to university in 1958. So no, the UN was not something that I remember very strongly on the horizon. It emerged sometimes in conversations at home, but not really. I don't think it was very much part of the world I was moving in. But—by talking, you begin to remember things—one single thing that shocked me relates to the time when my dad was counsel in New Orleans, and I went to school there. We are talking about the period from 1953 to 1956 when they were beginning to move away from segregation but it was still a segregated society. I remember that I took a streetcar to go home. The streetcar would stop right in front of the high school. I remember the anguish—the streetcar separated white people from black people. They were separated by a little thing that sort of moved forward and backwards. So from here onward it was white, and from here backward it was black people. The thing could be moved. And there were a couple of old black ladies sitting, and I got in with a twelve or thirteen-year-old kid who picked up the thing and put it in back of them and asked them to stand up. These women actually did.

I remember running off the streetcar. That was something that shook me. I didn't put any cultural interpretation on it; it was more just a human reaction. How could people be treated this way? That was probably one of the strongest feelings of injustice—yes, you have to listen to the other, respect the other, understand the other, but there are limits. There are limits that have to do with certain basic values that you hold, and which ought to be universal.

TGW: Why did you end up studying law and development? What led you to that?

JS: It wasn't the result of any particular thing. I reacted instinctively, not so much rationally. But once I did study law I felt really comfortable with it. It is a way of organizing your thinking. Law does give you a structure to approach issues. A couple of years into law, I liked it and I felt comfortable with it. But there wasn't any driving force behind the notion of studying law. Very much in the back of my mind the issues of justice might have been present, but I wasn't really conscious that since I was small I knew I wanted to be a lawyer for this and that reason.

Given the options of studying economics or law—the sort of liberal profession that you have to choose in the context of my own upbringing—law seemed to be the one that interested me most. But on the other hand, it wasn't a sort of a driving desire. Now having gotten into it, I like it very much. It helps provide your basic grounding to look at things in terms of justice.

TGW: What did you imagine doing as a career? Did you have in mind the civil service, the academy, all of the above?

JS: My whole career has happened to me. Nothing has been planned. I had a natural tendency for public service, let's say. It was easier to me to think about what to do in public service than in business. The atmosphere in the house and things like that were more linked to public service, although both my father in his early days, and my grandfather, had been in business. My grandfather was a rather important business person. So the business issues were in the family. But no, naturally so I tended to think about public service.

TGW: In spite of the fact that you were wandering around the planet as a very young person, what made you feel distinctly Latin American?

JS: The university—it is the university period that gives you the identity, I think. I acquired this sort of world experience, if you want, by traveling with my parents. At the same time, I sort of nationalized myself by studying law in Chile and then working afterwards for some time in Chile. So in fact I was in Chile from 1957 to 1964, and that is the moment which defined me. I am very Latin American, very strongly so. It comes from there. I also lived in Ecuador and in the Dominican Republic when I was very small. Having also lived in a couple of Latin American countries, the notion of the region was not alien.

I became a Latin Americanist right away in terms of my studies and interests. The object of my attention, if you want, became very quickly Latin America. In university, I remember that, with a friend of mine—I think it was in the fourth year of law—there was a seminar where we presented together a paper on social issues in Latin America. We came out on top and won the first prize. I wrote my thesis on the Treaty of Montevideo, which was the first effort of regional integration.

But I was Latin American from a very strong Chilean root. I have often asked myself how is it that after having moved around so much in those really formative years, I wound up having such a strong Chilean and Latin American identity. But that's the way it happened. It is very strong, and was complemented later on by a strong developing country identity that came through the period I studied in Paris. I sort of met the Third World there and realized the differences we had but also how much we had in common with countries that were so far away, and up to then not in my line of vision.

TGW: Why was that? In some senses, Latin America, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, had been independent for 130 years. It bore no resemblance in terms of either levels of economic or educational development as the countries that were still in fact colonies in the late 1950s. What was it that made you share anything with these other students?

JS: I think there are at least two avenues into that question. One is that you relate to people. You relate to individual human beings. You discover that race, religion, and these things that have been always used to separate us do not matter. You relate to that particular human being and you find common reactions, common ways of thinking. You laugh at the same time. You like the same jokes. Music is something that brings people together, globally. So it is not difficult for it to happen as a person if you have your eyes open. By that time, of course, your education may have given you preconceptions. Mine didn't.

It was not only traveling, but also the values instilled in my own home. So I was an open person vis-à-vis difference. Consequently, then, there was a shared political interest around the issue of independence. I came into contact with strong cultures and with strong realities. You are talking to somebody from Asia, and it is a reality that there are very strong cultures present there, whenever colonization ended. In the case of Africa, there was very strong, instinctive energy there which I appreciated enormously. So the result was that I had a lot of friends.

I was living in the Cité Universitaire, and there you have—at that time it was about 5,000 students—half of them were French, half of them were foreigners. So the personal contact and a respect for the other was not difficult. On the other hand, if you took a look at why we were there, why we were studying, what were the issues in the period from 1964 to 1966—the independence movement in Africa was going on, but still there were an enormous number of problems. And I was living in France, which had gone through the Vietnam experience in Dien Bien Phu and then through the Algerian experience. So these societal issues were also very much present in the place where I was studying.

We tended to see that we had similar problems, that we came from countries that were inserted in a world in which the rules of the game were stacked in favor of some and not others. Relatively speaking, Latin America was better off, but only relatively speaking. So then you realize that the issues are similar, that the problems are similar. For some, decolonization was just happening. For us, it has taken a long time. But our societies were still extremely unjust. The international system was not favoring what might be our interests. We had common causes, and that came out clearly by just talking about the things that we cared for as young people. We had more common causes coming from developing countries than might have been the case with people coming from developed countries.

TGW: What do you recall of the first rumblings of what would later become the Third World, the South, the Global South, or developing countries—that period between Bandung in 1956, and then the first Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in 1961 where Latin America becomes involved, and then the beginnings of UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) from 1962 to 1964? Do you recall how this motion appeared, and whether it made sense, and to what extent you thought this constellation, which made visceral sense in the universe, but whether it also made intellectual, economic, and negotiating sense?

JS: It definitely made sense in terms of people organizing themselves to defend their interests. So it was part of the scenario. And as I say, living in France it was very much a part even of the local scenario because of the Vietnam situation and the Algerian situation from which they were just beginning to come out. This was a country that had lived through the problems of giving up on colonialism. So these were very real issues. They were right there, present, and consequently the initiatives you mention made sense because countries were saying, "We have to get together to see that our voices are heard, our interests are respected, and work for what we believe should happen—have others understand that changes are necessary." So from that perspective, it made sense.

In terms of the instrumentality of it, I probably was not sufficiently aware of the way the systems and the multilateral organizations work to say that the instrumentality that came out of Bandung was very important. But I think that the whole process in that period—decolonization plus organization—was an important moment, and we felt it. It was very difficult to know where it was going and what the impact was going to be. But it was perceived as important, as a reaction, as something that reflected something that we, as Third World students, were actually feeling. So it is connected with a part of you, although from a political point of view you didn't really know what it was going to mean.

TGW: So there was an excitement related to this, even if you didn't see—

JS: There was an excitement, but I don't want to overstate it. There was an excitement of coming from very different regions, being together, being able to communicate and to understand each other, to have strong personal relationships across cultures, and to understand that there was a common agenda there.

TGW: I am interested in what kind of learning goes on across cultures and time. And I was wondering, since you were interested in regional integration in the Americas—your thesis at law school and then you are in Paris after the Treaty of Rome begins to make a difference—whether you saw parallels, and whether there was a kind of learning that went on in looking at Europe and in looking at Latin America across these two experiences.

JS: There is no doubt that I was profoundly interested in learning and understanding and studying the European common market. The Treaty of Rome was in 1957, so this whole experiment was just getting going. The French-German reconciliation—how is it that after centuries and centuries of going at it, and three major wars in around seventy years, these two nations say, "We have got to stop. This just can't go on this way." So observing the European experience, I think, was very important.

It is also significant that I chose to study in France, not in an American university, which became the norm later on. At that time still, you had a certain balance—for people from Latin America, some went to Europe, some went to the United States. Today it has become completely unbalanced. Most go to the United States. Clearly I was interested in Europe. So Europe and the European experience was an attraction in intellectual and analytical terms, and probably because of the importance that I attached to economic integration. I knew the Treaty of Montevideo, in fact, had been inspired by the process of European integration. That part was very important—the whole understanding of how it happened, not only the instruments, but also the political processes and the reconciliation between these two big countries, the role of leaders.

If you observe Europe at that time [Konrad] Adenauer and [Charles] de Gaulle, of course, stand out, and you understand so much better the role of leadership in society, and the important role that it plays, for good or for bad, because you could say the same thing about [Adolph] Hitler or [Benito] Mussolini. So leadership does not necessarily go in a positive direction. But again, it was interesting to observe. It was an enriching experience, with the eyes that I had, to take a look at what Europe was doing. I had a certain admiration, also, for the capacity to overcome all of these historical differences.

TGW: Which books do you recall were most influential at that time?

JS: I think that, traditionally, I have been much more influenced by looking at what is going on, by the reality of things, than any particular book—or by people, by individuals through their own testament of what they have done, or how they have done it, than any particular book. And my own intellectual development comes through looking at the problems, looking at the issues, looking at the realities that are surrounding me, and how it is that I react to them. Now, you don't do that in a vacuum, of course. To begin with, you need some sort of a value structure to look at things. And I have had it. But not in a conscious way, which made me say, "Well, here I am, standing with my value structure, seeing what is going on in the world." It simply permeates the way I look at things.

Of course, as every young person, I read a lot. But if I had to tell you that reading one book or another actually changed my thinking I would be wrong. I think basically it is absorbing, looking at problems, trying to understand. Understanding is very much a part of what has driven me, and thinking about how do you deal with problems. What are the solutions? So that is what I think has wound up shaping me—going through very different experiences.

An interesting experience in Paris was with the professor with whom I was doing my thesis, who was Celso Furtado. He had come from a situation which I myself would eventually live years later. He had to leave Brazil because of the coup d'état and became a professor in Paris. Talking to him helped me understand something that was unthinkable for a Chilean. One of the things that we prided ourselves on was that we had such a stable institutional system. And although in the rest of the region there had been so many coups d'état and military interventions, and all sorts of discontinuity in democracy, and sometimes not even democracy for long periods of time, in Chile we didn't. So we had this image of ourselves as being the orderly institutional country in the region. Talking to Furtado about all the things that began to happen after the Brazilian coup, and with the coup in Chile, we sort of came into the same realm as the others. But his experience was interesting, as was of course his knowledge of the development issues, and the roots of the problems.

So in terms of influencing thinking, without referring to anyone in particular, I was brought up in the context of *la teoría de la dependencia* (dependency theory) that developed in Latin America—the notion that you had a center and a periphery, and that the terms of exchange played a very important role. We were getting the raw end of the deal given the way the international system was set up, the *división internacional del trabajo*—I don't know how you say that in English.

TGW: It's a Marxist concept so we don't! Actually, it is "international division of labor."

JS: So all those things, of course, were part of my analytical framework, without myself being driven by it. It was part of the scenario, and it was what I used to interpret things. This means, again, that in terms of the backgrounds—because you were asking for a book, but in the end you are asking, "What are the ideas that shaped you"—that is an important one which expressed itself in different ways in the work of ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America). That is probably the first more structural contact, with the UN world, which came during my university years, when I started thinking about Latin America, the future, regional integration, et cetera.

Then the Economic Commission for Latin America, I think, played a very key role in the region in terms of thinking, in terms of how we interpret our realities. I think that the generation of the 1950s, and the 1960s, and part of the 1970s was strongly influenced by the thinking coming out of ECLA and of Raúl Prebisch. So that is probably the first more analytical institutional contact with the UN. Here was a source of thinking that helped me understand when I was always trying to look at things, understand them, touch them, reach them. You have a set of concepts and notions here that can help you look at that.

TGW: Were you more aware of ECLA and Prebisch and *dependencia* in Santiago, or actually in Paris?

JS: No, no, in Santiago. In Santiago because it was there to begin with, so it was a reality. So I arrived in Paris with something that I had already acquired.

TGW: I was also wondering whether some of the big early events of the Cold War impinged upon or entered into your thinking—maybe Hungary at the end of high school, but certainly Berlin and the Cuban missile crisis. Was the East-West confrontation, the possibility of world war, something that influenced your thinking or was discussed by students in either Santiago or Paris?

JS: Yes. It was part of the scenery, no doubt. It was part of the scenery, particularly the missile crisis. That brought us the reality, and it was happening there in our own region. So the implications and the drama of the mismanagement of that episode was strongly part of it. You see, together with the *dependencia* theory, which I mentioned, you had to think that this is the period in Latin America in which you have the Cuban revolution. It had an enormous impact on the thinking of the rest of the region.

So in a certain sense, you have the Prebisch thinking which you could probably call social-democratic in terms of working in the system and finding a way of making capitalism more just, injecting some social justice into the workings of the system. And you had a radical critique of that saying, "No, you have to change it. You have to change it all around." And there were spaces in between. So it was a period of enormous analytical and intellectual ferment in Latin America, and with conservative forces defending themselves.

What happened is that dialogue became more and more difficult. People were sort of camped in ideological positions, which has always been something that I feel uncomfortable with. You know, "Here I am with my vision, and this is my truth. And my truth is *the* truth." We went through that in Latin America in that period. It was, "the revolution and nothing else," or "we have to work within the system and nothing else." And the possibility of combining, of thinking in a much more integrated way, of picking up from one or the other, that truly was not there.

So you had an enormous difficulty with dialogue. So you had a lot of ideological confrontation going on in the time in which I was educating myself. But this went on throughout the 1960s.

TGW: At the beginning of the 1960s, this would have been while you were in Santiago?

JS: Yes, all the events that you mentioned are processed in that context. So yes, they were there, but they were all interpreted in the environment of a very strong ideological struggle that had to do with what we wanted to do with our societies.

TGW: What about the Alliance for Progress and the First Development Decade? Did development begin to appear as a topic or a big subject on your own personal radar screen?

JS: I think that for many of us [John F.] Kennedy was an inspiring figure. He gave the feeling of a new generation that not only was bringing fresh air into the United States, but also the possibility of fresh air into the world. I mention the possibility, because subsequently it became very much the same thing. And I think that one of the things that stimulated us in the region was the possibility of the Alliance for Progress. There is no doubt about it. And the Peace Corps—these things linked up with the desire to find solutions beyond the purely ideological confrontation and the view that if you get the system right then everything is going to work.

So I think there was a moment there. But it didn't last that long. The Alliance for Progress was interesting for four or six or eight years, and then it sort of disappeared from the scene. But it was a moment of hope.

TGW: How did you become interested in trade? Was this also serendipity, or not?

JS: Totally accidentally. Well, accidental in one part, but not in another. It was the result of my interest in integration. So once I accepted the idea that we had to organize Latin

America, that we had to work together, that we had to create the common market, that we had to develop the institutions, et cetera—my natural tendency was to look at what we were doing in the region. This coincided with the Treaty of Montevideo and the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA).

Once this was signed—it was signed in February 1960, I think—every country set up its national office. By 1961, I began working there. I was the third or the fourth *fonctionnaire* of the Chilean Latin American Free Trade Association office. Essentially this was a free trade zone. So the essence of what LAFTA was about was trade negotiations. I believed in regional integration and the form of regional integration was a trading system. So I wound up beginning my career in trade. That part was a logical consequence.

The second part, which was working in GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade), was totally accidental, because I was in Paris. You mentioned the first UNCTAD. I decided to write my thesis on the general scheme of preferences that had been proposed by Prebisch in the first UNCTAD and Furtado was my professor. So I came to Geneva—there wasn't much in Paris—so I came to Geneva and there wasn't much at UNCTAD, either, because it was just beginning. There was Prebisch's speech, a couple of documents on the idea, a resolution. But the concept hadn't begun to be developed further.

Somebody said, "Look, why don't you go to the GATT? They have been dealing with the UK imperial preferences and *la zone franche française*." There was an exception in Article 24 of the GATT rules for regional integration processes, which of course I knew about because of my work on integration. And I went to GATT and it was full of data, information, and history on how you make systems of preference work, which are not applied to everybody. So I spent about a week talking to a lot of people. At the end of the week, the person who had sort of organized this, who was the hiring person, offered me a job. That's the way it happened.

I went back to Furtado and I said, "I am really tempted by this, but I want to finish my thesis. What would you advise me?" And the advice was quite extraordinary, I must say. He said, "You are a person of action. You want to make things happen. It's so evident. So my suggestion is to take it. You are going to learn a lot. You are in your formative stage and you are going to learn a lot." Then I said, "Yes."

I was being taken in because the Kennedy Round was being reactivated after a couple of years of being dead in the water. They needed support on that, and I had experience with trading between developing countries. That's the origin of why I ended up getting there. I said, "Look, after the Kennedy Round is over, I will write a thesis on the Kennedy Round just like that." He said, "I don't think so. I think that you will never write your thesis, but you will never need a thesis." Those were his exact words, and they were very prescient. In fact, I never wrote the thesis and I never needed it as a presentation card.

The second thing he said is, "Don't stay too long—a couple of years, two or three years. You're going to learn enormously. But at a young age these international organizations tend to suck you in." It was particularly so at that time, in which working for an international organization, relative to other options, was a very good option, in terms of income and other things.

Later on I discovered, because of my father-in-law, who was also a good friend of his, that Celso Furtado, who became who he is, applied to work at ECLA. He didn't get the job, and the person who did the personnel report said that he was not really very intellectually strong.

TGW: That's wonderful. How perfectly preposterous!

JS: That's wonderful, yes. So he said, "Look, go ahead. You are going to learn a lot. Don't worry about the thesis, it's not going to be important. Don't stay too long." These were three very important pieces of advice that I got from him. That's the way I wound up here in GATT. So that's my trade route. So I do come from the trading system. Now it's probably pretty good to begin, if you are going to have an international life, to begin with trade. That's real, triple-underlined. Nobody who is writing a trade resolution fools around with words. There are real interests at play. That's probably why you see the most difficulty in getting the interests of the weaker players recognized.

At that time, if you look at it globally, it was the only real global process. Later on, the financial pillar was put on the same footing and it became a guiding factor in the way the world economy was organized. But it wasn't so in the middle of the 1960s. The true international element, as it was called at that time, was trade, the trade rules. And looking at an institution that was so obviously managed in the interests of developed countries—unabashedly managed in the interests of the developed world—was a very, very fantastic learning experience, even though by that time we had added Chapter 4, which is the chapter on development, to the GATT rules. And it was very much a process that was handled by the secretariat, also. That's another interesting part of it. So it was a strong learning experience, I must say.

TGW: Earlier you said, "The rules are stacked against certain countries." Certainly my own understanding of the creation and growth of UNCTAD was as kind of a balance. How did the GATT secretariat look at UNCTAD?

JS: I think that at the beginning, they felt worried. And at that time the whole thing was just coming into being. So it wasn't clear where it was going to go. But the developed world ensured that UNCTAD would never be a negotiating place. So once that became clear, within the GATT secretariat the worries subsided. The actual decision-making would continue to take place in GATT. Through UNCTAD, studies, research, analyses, and proposals to move forward could be taken, but no negotiation.

When negotiation moved into the UNCTAD space, for instance around commodities, it was also stopped. And even the ones that were agreed to were stopped in their implementation. The notion that you could negotiate things in UNCTAD was simply not something that was going to be acceptable to the developed world. The developing countries did not have enough strength to make it happen.

TGW: Was the insertion of developing country concerns—you mentioned Chapter 4 in the Kennedy Round—a kind of a response to UNCTAD?

JS: It was a response, yes. But it was in the Articles of Agreement of the GATT. You added a Chapter 4 that had to do with development, but it was an add-on. So Chapter 4 of the GATT was part of the Articles of Agreement, but it wasn't in the culture of the house. Let's put it that way. Consequently, I could see by the way the Kennedy round was managed the real marginalization of the developing countries, simply by the way it was done.

TGW: We no longer have a GATT. We now have a World Trade Organization (WTO). But at the time, what kinds of relationships existed between the GATT and the UN? I am particularly interested in what kinds of exchange of ideas. When things came in ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), the General Assembly, UNCTAD, ECLA, and throughout the UN system, how did these get into GATT? And what did GATT do? Did anything that was coming up in GATT go back to the UN?

JS: There was a very, very weak institutional link that has been cut now by WTO, which has no linkage to the UN. The GATT was ICITO—I am remembering crazy things. ICITO is the International Conference on—I don't know. There was a very weak linkage with the UN.

TGW: A dotted line in textbooks?

JS: There was a dotted line towards the UN. Now that dotted line is no longer there, although when we meet as ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination) as heads of agencies, the head of WTO is there. But it was very, very weak. I must say it was very much on its own at the time. Remember that the origin of this is the Havana conference (UN Conference on Trade and Employment). And the Havana Conference was on trade and employment. So it went much beyond trade and also had to do with the whole notion that you have to create a world in which employment was a very important foundation of stability.

But when the Havana Charter came to the U.S. Congress, they only approved the negotiating instrument, which is the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the GATT. The much more integrated notion was left aside. That is probably one of the major mistakes of the immediate post-war period, of not having had sort of an overarching view of the linkage between the trading system and national development, in which of course employment is at the heart of things, as seen by people.

So they only agreed to the negotiating mechanism. And in the absence of a broader vision, the linkage with the UN was inevitably very, very weak. But that's the way it was wanted. So you create the United Nations, and you are weakening it at the same time. You create it, and you develop the Bretton Woods institutions. So you say, "We have created the UN, but economic decision-making is taken out of your hands right away. So the Economic and Social Council is there on paper, but we want this to be controlled. So we set up the Fund

(International Monetary Fund) and the Bank (World Bank) as banks, and the GATT as a tightly-held secretariat."

Supachai [Panitchpakdi], who is now going to be the director-general of the World Trade Organization, is the first person coming from a developing country to head a trade instrument. I am, by the way, the first person to come from a developing country to head the ILO (International Labour Organization). So you created the UN and you weakened it exactly in the same motion. You said, "You are about politics, and humanitarian and social issues."

TGW: And you listened to Furtado. You seemed to have gone back to Santiago in 1968 without your thesis.

JS: I listened to him very much, exactly.

TGW: What led you back?

JS: As I say, nothing has been planned and everything has been accidental in my life. It has happened.

TGW: My wife asked me once about my life. I said it was existentially absurd. I didn't lay out a plan to move here either, to the Graduate Center or to this project. An opportunity either arose—

JS: Things happen to you, which is probably the best way. You learn so much more. You are so much more open. You are much more flexible. The history of that is very interesting, because another person who was influential in developing my thinking was a professor I had at the university called Gabriel Valdes. He was professor of economic policy, of *la política económica*.

TGW: International political economy.

JS: Yes, but in a law school. So it was truly the political economy of the whole thing. He is a fascinating person, so he was a very good professor also. We became close, and he was my professor on my thesis. This is a very good story because you have two professors, and the biggest grade is seven in the Chilean university. The other professor put a seven to my thesis, and he put a six. I went to see him, and I complained about the six. I said, "I think that my thesis really measures a seven." He said, "It is a damn good thesis, but there are a number of places in which it is disorganized." I said, "Okay, you are the professor."

Some years later, I came to work with him. He was pretty disorganized himself. So I remember one afternoon I said, "Look, there is something that I have to get off of my chest. You did not give me a seven because you said it was disorganized. Look at these last few days."

So there was a link with him. He became foreign minister in Chile. One of the things he did was to put very young people around him, which is a very strong break with tradition in the foreign office, which on the contrary traditionally privileges seniority—with the legal structure of the foreign office in Chile, there was the minister, and then you had a political advisor, an economic advisor, and a legal advisor, who had the rank of ambassadors. He offered me the chance to be his economic advisor.

So suddenly, I saw myself catapulted. I was all set to have a career in GATT because I had come in as a P-1. I think an important aspect of your learning process is the people you work with. I had two very important people in GATT whom I drew a lot from. One was the chief of my division, the general division, who was Ralph Heinke. He was the Norwegian ambassador. He later on became ambassador to OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and he died young. He didn't know too much about the GATT but had a great political instinct. He had a very, very good flair for negotiation.

Then there was Mr. Guiseppe Maggio, who had been there since the first day, who knew everything you could ever know about the GATT and the trading system and the whole thing. He was extremely generous, and I spent a lot of time with him, just sitting down at the end of the day saying, "How about this? How about that? Tell me about this and the other thing."

Six months into my P-1, Heinke said, "You had a P-1/P-2 post. I am going to say that you should become a P-2." He wrote the most fantastic letter about my qualities. Particularly if I wanted to become an international civil servant, it is a fantastic thing. I got my P-2. So I was making my career in GATT, and suddenly I get this offer to become the economic advisor to the foreign minister of Chile with the rank of ambassador. That's life.

In between, I had met my wife here in Geneva, a Chilean who was living in Paris. We decided to get married. We got married, and we left for Chile newly-married. That's the way it happened. I was just offered something that was not at all within the realm of anything I had been thinking about. It catapulted me into another type of responsibility, a much more political responsibility. I was twenty-seven at the time.

TGW: A meteoric rise here. It's a good thing you didn't stay at the UN. You would probably be a P-3 now, or something close.

JS: But it was the same. It was very interesting. The two presidencies of Eduardo Frei Montalva and Salvador Allende Gossens, were full of people in their thirties. It was a moment of generational *recambio*. So ministers were also in the early thirties—it was across the board, two new generations coming in.

TGW: But your own portfolio remained multilateral, as opposed to bilateral. Why? You were interested in it?

JS: Yes, exactly. And it was the area that Valdes wanted me to cover. You also had a *director económico* in the front office, which was an institutional place. He was very much world-oriented, and he saw there was a weakness in this area as soon as he got in there. Having already been minister for four years now, he had a much more precise idea of what he wanted. He felt that the type of support he needed on the multilateral side was lacking. That's what he wanted me to work on.

TGW: But "multilateral" meaning "within the region," or "UN affairs?"

JS: UN affairs also. The region and UN. So I went to the Second Committee (of the General Assembly). I was the representative of Chile to the Second Committee. So I got to know the UN right away. But we were very active in Latin America, so I tended to do things more in the Latin American realm. It was more of a political priority than our UN work at that time.

TGW: Then in 1970—is this still part of the foreign ministry when you moved to the Latin American Free Trade Association?

JS: That's very interesting. We had signed the Treaty of Montevideo in 1960, as I said before. But there was a moment in which it was felt that there were some common interests between countries of a smaller size, and the whole idea of creating the Andean Group. It started from Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and later Venezuela joined in. It was a very strong initiative headed by Colombia and Chile. So within the general Latin American free trade area, the idea was to create a unit that was prepared to move forward faster.

I participated in the negotiation of all of that. Then, in fact, it was created. And a secretariat was created in Lima. All of this was done from the office I had previously worked in. From 1961 to 1964, I worked in the Chilean office of the Latin American Free Trade

Association. That was the negotiating instrument that produced the Andean Group. And when the Andean Group secretariat was established, a number of people working in Santiago that had been linked to the negotiation of the Andean Group left for Lima to be part of the secretariat, including the head of LAFTA. It later became LAFTA and the Andean Group affairs.

This is an independent body, depending on the foreign minister. So it is in the budget of the foreign minister, with its own budget. So it is autonomous in that sense, in terms of appointments and things like that. But it is ascribed to the foreign minister.

Valdes said something quite interesting. There were a lot of names, former ministers, this and that, who were being mentioned. It was a relatively important post, particularly in that context because they had just been successful in creating the Andean Group. It was known as a highly-competent technical team. Within the public service, you have always a central bank as a very good team. These were known as top trade negotiations people who are very good, and who knew their stuff, and who are even a little bit arrogant about it. So it was not just a question of appointing anybody there.

Valdes consulted the people and said, "I am thinking about these three of four names as part of the process. Who would you like to have?" I was, in fact, selected by them. There were a number of others names there of ministers and foreign ministers. So again, I wound up heading this organization that dealt with trade negotiations in the Latin American context by suggestion of the people working there. I moved towards the end of the Frei period. And I was confirmed in that post by Allende.

You have to think of all of these very tense moments in terms of Chilean politics and the strong ideological differences which were permeating the society. We moved from six years of a Christian-Democratic government to the three years of a democratically elected socialist government. And Allende confirmed me in that post. The interesting thing is that I was, in political terms, neither a Christian-democrat, nor member of any party of the coalition. I had been an independent. I later joined a party in the struggle against Augusto Pinochet, but I was independent in a highly polarized ideological scenario. So there was a respect for my choice, in which you almost had to be here or there.

People know that I was on the progressive side of things, and that it was my own thinking. I hadn't gotten there through my political contacts. That has also been an important part of my own development, that I had been able to be myself. It is not the handling of the political relations that has made me do whatever I have been doing. I have been able to affirm a certain personal identity. But this was a very important moment, because it was almost crazy not to play by the rules of the game, which required you to choose sides in those times of ideological tensions. I said, "No. This is what I am. Everybody knows this. I want to stick to my independence and my autonomy." And I was respected for that in the end, although it was not easy. In a highly polarized ideological scenario, it is not an easy thing to do. It is so much easier to simply just—

TGW: Be on the winning side? It is always better. This is the end of tape one.

TGW: This is the beginning of tape number two, Tom Weiss and Juan Somavía in Geneva on 2 October. Latin American Free Trade Association—this was a lofty goal, but it never got off the ground really, did it?

JS: No. We couldn't change the structure of our foreign trade. We traded amongst ourselves. When this whole thing began, between 8 and 10 percent of the external trade of the region was within the region, just to give you an idea, as compared to 40 percent for Europe when the Treaty of Rome was signed. So you began from very different levels. I don't know what the figure is today, but it is probably around twenty percent, something like that. So it never became the basis for development. And we couldn't change the nature of our external linkages, which were very strongly linked to the U.S. and Europe and then to the emergence of Asia also.

So obviously the situation is much, much better than it was in the 1960s, in the sense that there is much more trade. And we are talking percentage-wise, so that in real terms that 20 percent is much, much bigger in volume terms than the 10 percent of the 1960s. So the trade is much more visible. It is there. But it didn't become the foundation of economic development, as we thought it might, following the European experience.

But the main issue was that the point of departure was so distant. When you have as a point of departure 40 percent, it is not difficult to build on that to make your own internal market the key element. When you begin from something less than 10 percent, the structural changes are very major. It became a stimulus. It was useful. But it did not make the structural change that we were looking for.

On the other hand, an interesting thing is that the region became much more Latin American in terms of its outlook and its initiatives. So one thing was the treaty instruments. The other thing, both for LAFTA and the Andean Group, was the enormous number of initiatives that developed on their own. So you have the Andean Group Chamber of Commerce. You have linkages between the universities, a lot of new investment across borders, a number of things that were not treaty-determined. They were not the result of negotiations, but actually happened because you created not only the economic space, but also the political objective.

So in the end, if I have to look back, the central idea, which was to reinforce a Latin American identity, led to the creation of instruments that moved in that direction. Both LAFTA and the Andean Group did so, but it was not enough to change the economic structure of the region. Yet, it very much helped to develop a sense of common political objectives and to generate much more interaction between civil society, business, the academic world, city-to-city agreements. So there were many positive outcomes. Then came MERCOSUR (*Mercado Común del Sur*), which tried to do for Argentina and Brazil what the Treaty of Rome had done for France and Germany. But it was, in a certain sense, very different.

So the region is *de facto* much more integrated today, which was the general objective, although much less through treaty objectives and much more through all sorts of initiatives coming out of open societies. One also has to remember that in this whole process, there was a counter force to integration, which was the existence of military regimes. Military regimes by definition distrust their neighbors for the very simple reason that—and this has to do with the South American peace commissions and other things that they did after—for the very simple reason that the justification for the armies is the eventual military attack from your neighbors. So there is an inbred interest in ensuring that you keep that sentiment alive, because otherwise there is no reason to have armies. Consequently, the reason for your defense spending is that you might be invaded.

The whole notion of integration was supposed to move and meld and progressively weave countries into a much stronger entity, but the military mind ran completely counter to that. So from 1964, with the coup in Brazil, to the time we got rid of Pinochet in 1990, you have a good twenty-five years with different types of military regimes in South America not really wanting to take the notion of integration to its outer limits. So it was an important political challenge to bring it back.

Of course for many of us, the struggle for integration then became the struggle for democracy. Are we going to go on fighting for integration between military regimes? The push factor was weakened because we had to change the axis of our advocacy and mobilization, and the pull factor was increased because we had military regimes that did not trust each other. It was a double whammy on regional integration.

TGW: Before moving to the peace commissions, there was just one aspect of LAFTA that I wished to pursue. In some of the preparatory work, you began some consultations with what I suppose in ILO terms would be business and trade unions, in order to open up the discussion. What led you to think about bringing in more groups?

JS: I must say it began when I was appointed to head the regional integrational efforts through the LAFTA and the Andean Group secretariats in Chile. The situation was that business was consulted and labor was not. So there was a lot of consultation with the business sector and not with the trade unions. And I raised the issue right away with Valdes. I said, "Look, the first thing that I want to do is—." And he was really very much for it. So very early on, I invited the trade unions who, politically speaking, were in the opposition to the government at the time. Trade unions were mainly left-leaning and consequently would be with the Allende government.

It implied that you wanted to listen to the voices of the opposition, so it wasn't an uncontroversial move. But I told him, "You can't just go on continuing to do this." So from my point of view, it was a matter of getting a balance in the national opinions into the picture.

TGW: So you weren't preparing your interview for the ILO at this time?

JS: That was in 1968 or 1970. And it worked very well, I must say. This is the origin of the very good relations I have always had with the trade unions, as with the business sectors in

Chile—not during the dictatorship period, because I was out of the country for a period of time. But as soon as I came back, I re-established those linkages which I think are absolutely key.

I truly believe in dialogue. All of my experience up to the moment of this conversation tells me that the key to negotiating on a trade issue with another country is understanding the other person's problem. There is no way you can negotiate, and get to something that sticks, and reach a solution that people can take back and present, unless you understand, and unless you explain your position. So a negotiation among equals is inevitably a negotiation in which you have to understand the other, because then you get your imagination going. You may be fixed on one solution, saying, "This is what I want." But then if you understand the other, you say, "With his problem, he doesn't have a problem with sixty percent of what I want to do. He has a problem with the other forty percent. So how can I make my proposal such that I take away his problem, but still pursue the objective I am looking at?"

Now you can't do this in every single thing. There are moments in which the interests objectively clash. That is why you have package deals—you get what you wanted here, but you aren't going to get it there, et cetera. But on an issue itself, if you decide to negotiate, there is a lot you can do on the issue itself. The balance is very important.

But the message of all of this is the same one: dialogue, talk, listen, be creative about solutions, find ways of connecting peoples' interests. Don't take a negative position, a position that can't evolve, that can't change. So it is very much in terms of my own thinking, which is also about attitude. I think that attitude and approach are as important as the ideas that you are promoting. How is it that you make things happen, versus whether it is the right thing to do?

TGW: Where were you when the coup took place in 1973?

JS: I was in New York. The background is this. I said that I got married in 1968. My marriage is not only important because of the marriage itself, but because I married the daughter of Hernán Santa Cruz. Hernán Santa Cruz was our first ambassador to the UN. He is the author of the Economic Commission for Latin America and of the first technical cooperation program in the UN. He was president of the Economic and Social Council. It was an extraordinary thing that I wound up being his successor—again, another accident of history.

But, back then, when he was fully active, and I was beginning, it meant that our conversations, our interactions—he with his knowledge of the whole multilateral system, and I with all the energy of getting going, but already with big responsibilities—were a very important part of my own education and my own formation. Why do I say this? Because one of the things we got going at the time when he was ambassador of Chile here in Geneva, and I was dealing with these issues in the Andean Group, was to have a common treatment with foreign investments. So I was very much involved in all the issues that have to do with foreign investment.

We proposed that the UN should study multinational enterprises. Something called the Group of Eminent Persons on Multinational Enterprises was created as a result of the Chilean proposal. He was the negotiator here, and I was providing the background information at home. So this group of eminent persons was created. I was appointed to become a member, given that it had been a Chilean initiative, and I was then appointed to be the *rapporteur*. We were having the first meeting of the commission in New York. It started work a couple of days before the coup took place. Do you know when? On the 11th of September. Can you imagine? On the 11th of September 28 years ago, there was a coup d'etat in Chile in which Allende died, which had the indirect support of the United States.

TGW: I didn't realize that.

JS: It's an incredible coincidence. Of course those of us who believe that there is something other than just pure rationality don't think it's a coincidence. Or it's one of those coincidences that, in the end, makes you think. So it has happened for some reason. It didn't just accidentally happen. But that's another story.

TGW: How did you feel, actually, when this coup took place? As you mentioned earlier, your conversation with Celso Furtado—

JS: It was unthinkable. Although, of course, in the preceding year you could see the tension, the extreme ideological polarization of the country, which, on the one hand, impeded Allende from doing what he wanted to do. And he had always been very reasonable, though he had extreme people in his coalition. On the other hand, it impeded the Christian Democrats, who were in the opposition, from joining forces on many of the things that Allende wanted to do, which were perfectly reasonable, and almost a continuation of things that Frei had done.

So you could sense it. You could sense that something was in the air. But you always hope against reality that these things never happen, precisely because they had never happened. And in fact, the coup was done rapidly because Allende was going to call for a national plebiscite, given this division of the country. He was going to announce the plebiscite in a few days, so the coup had to be accelerated.

So your world changes. You are Chilean. You have this identity. You are proud of the institutional history of your country. You have had responsibilities early on. You feel that what you are doing is worthwhile. And suddenly you see your country disintegrate into something that is totally unknown, that you can't truly relate to. It takes some time to grasp the enormous implications of your country being controlled by the military. So it is a very profound *herida.* How do you put it?

TGW: A slash.

JS: It is something that affects you enormously. Now, at the very beginning, you are not thinking about these things. Your first thoughts are about your family, and your children, and the very concrete. Where were my wife and the children, et cetera? So I took a plane that same night back to Chile. It was an Eastern Airlines flight, and the Chilean skies had been shut off. So we wound up in Buenos Aires. It took me about five or six days.

Sill the air space was shut, and there were no commercial airlines. But there was a UN flight that went into Santiago to take UN people out. And I got onto that flight into Chile. That is the way I got back. They were horrible moments.

TGW: What did you do next after you got back?

JS: From Buenos Aires I had resigned my functions right away. Then you begin rethinking your life. You don't have much information about what is going on. There is no information system, so it is all ear-to-ear. Where are your friends? What has happened to them? Some of the ministers, you know that they wound up in Isla Dawson in the south of Chile. So the whole tragedy begins to unfold. And you wonder whether it is going to reach you.

So rather early on my wife and I concluded that it would be better for us to leave. So exile became a reality. I was not in the forefront of the politics, but the way these systems work, they go to the next stage and the next stage and the next stage. Our analysis proved to be absolutely correct. We had decided to leave in two or three months, but I had to go to New York because I was the *rapporteur* of this eminent persons group. We had had a first meeting in

September, and then we had the next meeting in Rome on something like the 10th or 12th of January and I had to be present.

You know how these things are. The secretariat had prepared a draft. I was working on the draft, and I took myself very seriously. Today the *rapporteurs* just sign off. I was actually doing my job. I had my own notes. I asked myself what was it that Jacob Javits had actually said when he mentioned this or that?

I left for New York through the airport where I had gone in and out a thousand times, so I knew everybody there. I got on the plane, and then somebody from the police system of the airport comes and says, "*Don Juan, tiene un problema* (Juan, you have a problem)." I asked, "What sort of a problem?" He said, "*No sé* (I don't know). But I have been asked to ask you to accompany me." I went down—all of this was under the air force. The air force was controlling the airport. I asked somebody there, again a person that I know. I said, "So what is the problem?" "*Don Juan,* there is an '*u y de' en su contra*." So I said, "And what is an *u y de?*" He sort of hesitated and said, "*Ubicar y detener*."

It is a long story. I was detained when I was going out. This lasted for about forty-eight hours. I knew that something like this could happen. I had told the people in New York that something might happen to me. And in the end, there was a letter from New York that I was on official duty, this, this, and that. But afterwards I stayed a couple of days because I didn't want to leave just like that. I went to see the foreign minister who had worked on one of my projects in the Andean Group.

I was extremely arrogant about the whole thing, in part because of lack of information as to what was actually going on. I said, "Look, I want to know why this happened. There is no reason whatsoever." We began a political debate, et cetera. In the end, some Chilean security people contacted me later on and said, "We don't want to go into the details of what is going on in this country. You are taking the right decision. Leave and don't come back. And take this as a warning. If you want to understand what is going on, this is what we are telling you." That's the way we left.

Then I observed the situation for about five years. I took the first trip back home in 1978 or 1979, around there, just to test what the situation was. I came back in 1983. The change was in 1990, so I was in fact very much involved in politics on the international side—that is what I liked to do—from 1983 to 1990, until the government was changed. So I was operating within Chile under the dictatorship for almost seven years, from 1983 to 1990.

TGW: Where were you between 1973 and 1978?

JS: The first decision was to leave Chile, and in leaving I was told, "You are taking the right decision. We are not going to persecute you, but stay out." So we came to Geneva. Geneva is a sort of karmatic place because my wife and I met and got married in Geneva, we came here after the exile, and now I am heading the ILO. So we came to Geneva. My father-in-law, who was ambassador to Geneva, was here. We lived here in Geneva for about a year.

I became a consultant. I did all sorts of consultancy. I had a consultancy with UNCTAD. I was continuing to be the *rapporteur* of this group. So I was given an office in the *Palais*. I had a beautiful office in the *Palais*. I reorganized my life around consultancies for, I would say, 1974 and 1975, for a couple of years. Then my father-in-law moved to Paris. Except for the consultancy with UNCTAD, most of the things I did were outside of Geneva, so I could live in Geneva, or I could move to Paris. And I did some things from Paris.

It was funny for somebody who was in exile, who has just suffered a *coup d'état*, and is just trying to reorganize his life, but because of accidents of history I had three offices in Paris, three alternative offices: in *Maison de l'Homme*, in UNEP (UN Environment Programme), and in the *Centre International pour le Développement*. This last institution is the reason my father-in-law moved to Paris. It was something that had been created by Josué de Castro, and he was asked to head it.

In that process, you also reflect. And you reflect with the eyes of somebody who has seen this political process, this polarization, this difficulty of finding the means to make people work together, rather than destroy each other, and destroy society, and destroy the history of the country. So I think that we were as much responsible on the civilian side for what happened in Chile as was the military. It is always the civilizations that create the conditions for the militaries to justify a *coup d'état*—not always, but in the Chilean case very clearly so.

And if civilian political parties were able to come together, the way they came together to get rid of the dictatorship, there would have been no *coup d'état*. The coalition that we have now is the coalition between most of the parties that were working with Allende, and the Christian Democrats, who were the opposition at the time. Once that coalition was put together—which begins to coincide with the time I returned to Chile. I returned to Chile in 1983 when politics was beginning to operate again, slowly. If the reasons that began to bring us together in 1983 against the dictatorship had operated ten years before, there would not have been a *coup d'état*. So very clearly there is responsibility on the civilian side. But, of course, the militaries, and the type of the dictatorship we had, is their responsibility—and the foreign support for it, et cetera.

So you begin reflecting on all of these things. Then I saw that my space was a natural space in which I felt very comfortable, which was the space of civil society. And I wound up creating an institute—the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies—based in Mexico. The notion was to study the transnational process—it was looking at globalization before it became globalization, if you want, but the transnationalization process was the way we defined this phenomenon at the time. I founded the institute and we got going. I wanted to be in Latin America, so I discussed it with Venezuela and the Mexican government at the time. And finally, President [Luís] Echeverria of Mexico was very interested in the idea.

We wound up establishing ourselves in Mexico with support from the Mexican government, and from Sweden and the Netherlands, through program and project support. That is the way that the *Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales* got going. We assembled a group, and eventually up to fifty people were working there at one point, with a program on communication, another on economic issues, and on women's issues, and created a program called *Fempress*.

With the multinationals, you had people from Argentina, from Chile, from Uruguay, from Peru, from Bolivia, and Mexico, of course. So it was also a place to reflect a little bit on why it was that we were all in Mexico and not in our respective countries, and also to think about the future. It was an important moment in terms of the work that we did there, and particularly on the communications side. We were very much involved in the whole debate on the New International Information Order (NIIO) and those sorts of things.

Then there were a number of studies on the economic side. We also established a trade unions group in order to have the opinion of trade unions in the transnationalization process. So it was a good and productive period. And at some point in time, we concluded that probably going back to Chile was possible, and that for the Argentines going back to Argentina was possible. In fact, we changed the headquarters to Santiago in 1983. We opened up a small office in Buenos Aires, and left an office in Mexico.

We understood that all of these were transitional processes. We were not building institutions for the ages, but organizing ourselves in terms of being able to develop analytically, intellectually, and politically on issues of the day, and at the same time reflecting on our own national situations. So it was a combination of doing important research work on frontline issues because studying the transnational process in the middle of the 1970s was not what was normally done. And at the same time we were reflecting on issues of democracy and the future of our own countries.

But a lot of energy was dedicated to recuperating democracy, let's say. Let's put it that way. This is where the tension between integration and democracy that I mentioned before comes in. And what are the issues? What are the issues in thinking about democracy? This question in a certain way is the avenue into the South American Peace Commission and the whole notion of human security, which we developed originally in the South American Peace Commission.

TGW: One of the ideas that must have motivated all of you, which now seems very commonplace, was this basic notion of human rights. Looking back over the last fifty years, is there any other idea that seems to have been more revolutionary in the ups and downs of the last fifty years?

JS: I agree that it has been a key issue. It is an issue, again, which our family is very much linked to, because my father-in-law was a drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So I can remember, when we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary in Paris, it was my wife who was invited to it. She was sitting right beside the granddaughter of Eleanor Roosevelt. And I accompanied her because of the role that her father had played. There were nine drafters, after all. It was a small group. So it is an instrument that is absolutely key, and a great historical advance.

The only question mark and cautionary note concerning the human rights issue is the way it was instrumentalized in the Cold War. It is not as if you just had the situation of "what a fantastic notion," and it just grew and grew, and everybody understood it. It was put to the worst of purposes by the Cold War, particularly in the western world. So the Cold War made the western world forget about human rights, not to give a damn about human rights. We come back to the whole story of "yes, but they are *my* bastards."

So you supported any government. If you were supported on the Cold War front, there were no questions asked on the human rights front and the democracy front. And, of course, coming from Chile, I have a particular sensitivity for that issue. So as important as the human rights struggle is, you cannot but say how much it has been weakened by the instrumentalization of human rights issues during the Cold War, and the lack of legitimacy of certain countries to talk about human rights, given their track record of backing non-democratic and authoritarian regimes, simply because it served their purposes during the struggle against the Soviet Union.

So with that caveat, which is a big caveat, yes, the issue of human rights is important. But when human rights are manhandled that way, somebody who is linked to the history and the origin of it, and to the drafting of it, cannot but have a very strong reaction against it. And unfortunately, that's what happened.

TGW: I think human rights in the last ten years are distinctly different.

JS: Yes. But since you talked about fifty years, it is very difficult to talk about this ongoing, systematic advance of the human rights struggle, because it is simply not true in terms of the way that certain governments used it.

TGW: Ideas can be used for many purposes.

JS: If you take a look at the last fifty years in that sense, and you say, “What have been driving forces, driving issues?” there are some driving issues—and some that have been forgotten—that were there at the conception time after the Second World War. I would say there have been major changes in outlook and thinking on the environment. People think differently today, generally speaking, than from, let’s say, in the middle of the 1950s, the middle of the 1960s.

TGW: Even in the middle of the 1970s.

JS: Yes, but already in 1972, you had the Stockholm Conference (UN Conference on the Human Environment). So in order for Stockholm to happen in 1972, something must have been going on in the middle of the 1960s to produce that receptivity. Gender questions—also very much an important process. I would say that those engaged in those struggles were legitimate defenders of human rights. Yes, it’s been a cause. Even though it was manhandled for political purposes, it continued to be a cause for those who were suffering—we in Latin America, and those in other places. So yes, definitely, the human rights cause is at the heart of it.

What are the emerging issues that happen to be relevant to the world of today? What are we talking about when we talk of security? As far as my involvement is concerned, we started pursuing the issue in the middle of the 1980s with the South American Peace Commission. And I brought the human security perspective to the UN when I got there. That is an evolving one. That is going to be very much in the heart of things. We can talk about that because it is very much something that I feel very close to and very proud about having helped put the concept on the table.

A key issue that was present at the outset, and that we sort of lost track of, is work—the centrality of work to people's lives. It was not accidental that the Havana Conference was on trade and employment. The Havana Conference was 1946, 1947, 1948, around there. It was about trade and employment. We only retained the GATT. We only retained the negotiation on trade issues. We forgot about the fact that employment had been put together with the other one. And we have somehow got lost on this fundamental link between human beings and work. We can talk about it because it is something that I am now very much involved in.

So we have sort of a new space being developed and thought about in terms of what security is about, and something central to human beings that we lost sight of, which is life at work and the actual existence of work. If we want stable and democratic societies, there is a whole linkage between work, and family work, and democracy work, and social stability, which we simply lost sight of. These are two avenues that need to be further explored. And they are both linked, of course. There is a very strong linkage between the two, but they are also distinct. In both of them, I have been an actor, and I feel very strongly about what we need to do in relation to both.

Linked to this, I think that the notion of peace has also been important. The idea that peace is not just the absence of war, or the absence of conflict, has advanced. In the middle of the Cold War, the notion arises that peace is about how a society organizes itself, that peace is something that has to be built on a day-to-day basis. It is not about war; it is about the way human beings interact and feel comfortable living in a particular society that respects your human rights and organizes itself to make all of these other things function. I would cite that as another key development.

Again, there are linkages between all of these elements and the constitution of the ILO, which, already in 1919, says that peace is linked to social justice. I think that that notion has also advanced. The Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944 makes statements that are common sense for us today, but it is one thing for common sense to be formulated and accepted, it is another matter for common sense to inspire policies. Already in 1944 it said that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. That comes from the ILO Constitution, from the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia.

So what are the most visible issues? It is the struggle for human rights. It is the environment. It is the gender question. On the way are questions about what security is about, placing work at the heart of our issues, and the notion that peace is not the absence of war. These are some of the main threads—I see some of them completely underway, and others coming up, others cross-cutting as basic notions. And they are the underpinnings of democracy. I think that people do not see democracy as an electoral system. They cannot see democracy as an electoral system. Democracy has to be underpinned by fairness and a just society. This is what all of these issues are about. And this is what the UN is about. And this is what the conferences of the 1990s were about. How do we organize livable societies in which everybody finds his or her place?

All the language has to be put in practice—the language of equality of opportunity, the language of fairness in the rules of the game, the language of a level playing field. Concerning all of those things that nobody would, in principle, say no to, we have come to a moment when you cannot just go on with the talk, because of the capacity for global intercommunication, and the fact that people through radio and television just know more, hear more, see more, et cetera. And very fundamental questions are being posed in relation to the fairness of our societies, to the fairness of the international rules, and in contemporary terms, to the fairness of this model of globalization under which we are living today.

But none of this is new. The main point is that we have to be able to come to closure in the sense of acknowledging that these are the problems that people are facing. We have to be able to have political systems that respond to the way people are perceiving things. One of the things that I have been repeating for some time—and this is part of my own outlook on all of this—is that you have to see problems through the eyes of people. We are not going to have the right policies unless we look at them through the eyes of people. It is very much more difficult to look at policies through the eyes of people than to look at people through the eyes of policies. It's not just a play of words. It's a very fundamental difference in approaching the understanding of a problem and the policies that you have to formulate in order to deal with it.

TGW: In looking at your list of six ideas—three nascent and three longstanding—what do you think the UN's most significant contributions have been in the areas of environment, gender, legitimate human rights, human security, employment, and notions of peace? What's the UN's comparative advantage in inventing, sustaining, disseminating ideas in these arenas?

JS: I don't think that the UN is very inventive. If we go through the list, with the exception of human rights—that of course came out of the war and had to emerge through a system, so the Declaration of Human Rights is a product of the UN and of the conditions arising from the Second World War—most of the other issues are civil society-led. So the UN, I think, has difficulty in being the mobilizer of new ideas. It plays a very fundamental role as a legitimizer of ideas that are nascent, of things that are out there. The UN picks them up in time and, consequently, gives them institutional legitimacy, because the moment the UN begins discussing an issue, and it becomes part of programs, and institutional debate, et cetera, then it legitimizes something that otherwise could be perceived of as marginal in society.

So does the preoccupation with the environment stem from the UN? I would say no. It stems much more from activists in civil society who, in the course of the 1960s, began to remind us of the implications of a certain industrial model for the environment. There was somebody who could link all this up together, who was Maurice Strong, and then he produced the 1972 environment conference. So you always have this combination of issues and people who are the bearers of the torch, and who dare to go forward and go beyond the accepted. So it comes from civil society. The gender question is obviously so. It is there. It is in the UN Charter, but it is another matter if you ask, “What did the UN do from 1945 to 1960 to promote gender equality in the world?” In the meantime, you move into the 1960s, with an enormous amount of feminist movements throughout the world that expand themselves into women’s movements, which argue that gender equality issues come under human rights, that women’s rights are human rights, and all of that goes on up to the Vienna Conference (UN World Conference on Human Rights). It comes from civil society. The UN legitimizes it, and says, “It has a space.”

We mentioned the human rights dimension. The fact is that the struggle for human rights needed to have the society behind it, through autonomous instruments like Human Rights Watch and all sorts of independent human rights monitoring systems. If it had been left to the UN system alone, it would have been a complicated thing to move forward. One important reason was the Cold War context. You can always say something is wrong in very extreme cases. Pinochet was sufficiently serious to be condemned. What about Argentina, and Brazil, and all of the other military governments in Latin America never condemned by the UN? So when you can only condemn absolutely outrageous things, or your political enemies—the role of the UN on human rights was very complicated at that time.

So in that context, the civil society became key. The instrument was generated by the UN, but the actual capacity to promote it and develop it had to come from civil society. And of course, we are in a different ballgame in the last ten years, up to a point. So even with human rights, civil society has been absolutely key.

In terms of the emerging issues, the human security notion comes from civil society again. As I say, I feel particularly proud. I think that this is one of my contributions. I don't know if we are there yet in terms of the way you want to carry the interview, but it's all right if you want to deal with other things first.

You see, when we created the South American Peace Commission—and this is very interesting also from a political point of view—we were living in a world in which the militaries had taken over for themselves the notion of security. So security became synonymous with defense. And national security was national defense. These concepts became completely entangled, and this was in democracies. In dictatorships, the militaries developed the notion of the ideological frontiers. Since you are the defenders of the frontiers, you defend the physical frontier through your defense system. But you also have ideological frontiers. A country can be invaded by the wrong ideas. A country can be sapped and weakened in its national soul—I am using the military verbiage—by communism, left-wing ideas, et cetera. So we have to establish also the internal frontiers. And consequently you have the internal enemy. So the enemy is not only somebody coming from outside. It is also the internal enemy.

Now this, in a Cold War context, and in which you are viewing the right side of the Cold War argument, is a non-democratic scenario. That permits you to do whatever the hell you want with your own people. And this was the prevailing notion in the countries of South America when we were slowly moving out of military regimes into democratic societies. So the objective of the South American Peace Commission was to say, “We need to develop democratic concepts of security. How do people look at security? What is important for people when they think of peace?”

The interesting political part of it is that when we created the South American Peace Commission and began to have meetings around security questions, some of my left-wing friends said, “Juan, what are you doing? These are military questions. These are questions that have to do with the military.” I said, “No, no, no. Security is too much of an important issue to be given up as a concept of the military. On the contrary, what we are doing is that we are now recuperating the issue of security in a democratic setting, and in a development setting.” So the way we went about it was to say, “What is the object of a security policy? Security policy has to have an objective.” We said, “We think that the objective of a security policy is to reduce insecurity in a society. A good security policy reduces insecurity in a society.”

If that is the objective of a security policy, then the next question is, “What are the sources of insecurity?” Then we have to ask people. It is the question of seeing the problem through the eyes of people. To do this, we brought together business people, trade union leaders, representatives of the church, members of the armed forces, academics, grassroots leaders, members of other NGOs, and politicians to reflect on the causes of insecurity. This way of working is another expression of the diversity of working relationships, which has been my fate in life.

Then we ask people, “What are your sources of insecurity in Latin America today, in South America today?” The answer is poverty. Poverty produces a lot of insecurity. Poverty is, of course, linked to unemployment. Insecurity also comes from violence, uncontrolled violence, including domestic violence—too often wives get hit at home and the children beaten. In the street, people are worried about their children, drugs, random crime. At a popular level the environment is a concern. People worry about the health hazards for children and the elderly. It is all very, very practical. And, of course, political instability is a main source of insecurity. The weaker people are going to get hit hardest when you don't have stability.

So our conclusion was that if people would like to see the source of insecurity on these issues be reduced—and the gender question comes up very often in the context of violence as a whole—then the next step was to say, "Obviously, you don't bring down the insecurity in these issues with military instruments. So if the military is saying that they have a responsibility for security, and this is the way that people perceive security, then the military instruments are not instruments that can deal with these problems. So let's make a separation between defense and security. Yes, defense of the frontiers, et cetera, eventually is something that can actually require military means. The real security issues do not.

If you take a look at all of these things, what we are talking about is peoples' security, the way people understand their security. The notion we developed initially was peoples' security, and then as human security. And I tell the story there of how we discussed these things in the South American Peace Commission, and how I arrived at the UN with these notions. And consequently, we were highlighting the non-military dimensions of security.

TGW: What is the publication date?

JS: The collection of my speeches was published in 1999. But I was looking the other day—you forget all these things—at an opening statement delivered to the Social Committee of the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council, May 1991, which says, "This leads me to ponder that we should start thinking about the possibility of convening a world summit for social development, a summit to place human beings and their social needs at the heart of the United Nations endeavor." And then, four or five paragraphs down the road, it says, "This demands progress in developing an integrated notion of security. Together with a classical notion of the state's internal or external security, we also must develop a modern concept of human security that reflects social needs, and whose satisfaction becomes the principle source of stability and peace in every society. It is essential to explore the non-military dimensions of security."

Then there is a document here in which I tell the story of the South American Peace Commission. And that has been taken up in different ways. In 1994, the *Human Development Report* centered on human security—

TGW: Of course the Security Council in 1992 introduces that expression: "non-military dimensions."

JS: I did. I was behind that. It was a big negotiation to get it into the Security Council. I drafted the paragraph and went around selling it. So this is something that I feel very strongly about. It is an expansion of the classical notion of social security. Social security has been seen in terms of how you organize your life after you stop working. This is a much more encompassing thing that has to do with how a person feels secure in a society. It has to do with social security, but it has to do with a thousand other things that you have to put together.

And we have not really centered on that. We have not done so for a very fundamental reason. We do not define policy in terms of the way people look at problems. To a certain extent, we do it because you have to be elected in a democracy. So you go to the polls, and you see what people are worrying about, and you tell them, "This is what we are going to do." But it is a mechanical instrument to get elected. So we don't have the overarching capacity to deal with all of the dimensions of human security, which is another one of the reasons I have been pushing so much for integrated thinking, for an integration of the UN instruments as a very major task for the future.

I got going here a special project on social and economic security, and there is a lot of very good research coming out of that, in terms of how we can classify human security and what are the different components of it. It is still very much linked to the world of work, because that is our mandate here. But you clearly have to go behind it.

TGW: In thinking about these ideas, one of the ways, it seems to me, that an idea becomes important, at least in a UN context, is once it takes an institutional form. This could be a new institution—UNEP (UN Environment Programme) is a result—or within a government this might be a ministry of environment or an environmental branch. But it takes an institutional form. And it seems that one of the problems with human security, I suppose, is that it is everywhere and nowhere. So we are at a very early stage.

JS: But I think that this is a general problem with almost any issue that you pick up. No significant issue for our societies today can have a single institutional basis. Of course, we're the International Labour Organization, but the decisions that are taken elsewhere on financial and economic, and trade issues affect us enormously. And if you are working on the environment, the industrial bodies that are promoting the technologies, things that are defined in other contexts, are absolutely key. So the problem is that an animal that is becoming increasingly integrated, the global economy, is affecting the whole of the United Nations system in different ways. But each one of the UN organizations—I include the Bretton Woods institutions—are looking at this global animal from its own perspective and trying to suggest solutions in its own specific area. This sectoral approach to an integrated phenomenon has reached its limits.

I think that the UN is clearly under-performing today in terms of its capacity to contribute to solving many of the problems that this model of globalization poses, because there is no system. There is no capacity to make the system work together, and that is a reality. We have joint projects, which is a different thing. What I am talking about is policy-thinking together. It is what I call integrated thinking.

By the way, I presented these ideas to the ACC. I have made my effort. I have been looking at these things from the governmental side for the last ten years, and from the governmental side it looks ridiculous. It looks totally ridiculous—a system that is not capable of coming together in order to deal with these problems. I was president of ECOSOC a couple of times, and ECOSOC has the function of making sure that the instrument works in a coordinated manner. So if there is somebody who knows how uncoordinated this whole thing is, it is Juan Somavía before coming to the ILO. Now from within the ILO, it just becomes so much more evident.

So I have been very much pushing for integrated thinking, and I presented a document to the ACC on the subject, saying that we have to be able to develop this more coherently, more cogently. And the word "coherence" has been around for some time. But the actual reality is that the institutions are so set in their ways, and so conservative in terms of being able to change, that this becomes very, very difficult to do.

TGW: But this almost argues that one idea that may have been good, or a particular organizational idea that may have been terrific at one point in time after the Second World War—namely, functional specialization—can then become counterproductive. We didn't know enough about labor or banking or agriculture or education. The idea at the outset, at least as I look at it, was that a functional specialization was better in order to move in separate arenas. And thereafter all of this would come together. So we sort of created this monster willy-nilly, and now the real task is to bring it back together again.

JS: But I think it goes deeper than that. It begins with our educational system. We are taught sectorally. You are taught as a lawyer. You are taught as an economist. You are taught as a sociologist. And you have been requested for the last twenty years to become more and more specialized. So if you are a doctor, you know about the knee. The whole system has pushed, pushed, pushed, in educational terms, towards specialization, when the reality of the world has been pushing more and more towards integration. So to begin with, the educational system is totally dysfunctional in this capacity for integrated thinking, because we don't teach integrated thinking. We don't teach holistic approaches. We don't teach how it is that one thing depends on another if you want to have a balanced society. Societal balances are not really taught.

So it begins there. It continues through the organization of the state, of the government. It is reflected in international organizations. The labor minister comes to the ILO, the foreign minister goes to the General Assembly, the finance minister goes elsewhere, the development corporation ministers go to the World Bank, the health ministers to WHO, or UNESCO, et cetera. The national system is organized this way, and consequently it is reflected in the international system. What is the difference? The difference is that the international system has, I think, after all, more freedom of space and more capacity to take note of this fact, and then make a leap of imagination and creativity. It can say, "OK, if this is the situation, maybe we should be more flexible, if we just take the decision to choose a couple of issues in which we begin thinking together—not just the programs in the field, but the concepts, the analytical tools." What is the implication of thinking in an integrated manner in relation to such and such a problem? Well, truly speaking, it just depends on us. We are not doing it. It is going to take much, much longer to develop integrated and holistic approaches in the curriculum of universities and schools. It is going to take longer to change the state structure. It doesn't take such a leap of imagination to think that the multilateral system, which is well-versed and has a very strong technical foundation in our respective mandates, should be able to come together to produce integrated thinking, and to show that it is feasible and possible, and then have an impact on the structure of the national governments and education processes.

TGW: In terms of what you called earlier an "international division of labor," in terms of thinking about where integration comes from, would you see any comparative advantage for the UN system? Or do you think that progress comes from mainly academics, mainly civil society, mainly research groups, as opposed to the UN system?

JS: No, I think we have a very strong comparative advantage, which is the technical knowledge in one of these fields. One of the great strengths that the UN has is knowledge. The knowledge strength of the UN is pretty good. It is not the case for everybody, everywhere, at every level. These are big bureaucracies, and big bureaucracies generate dead wood by definition. But this is equally valid, I would say, in the incredible movement of change today, equally valid for governments or even for the academic community.

We are all revising our knowledge base. We are all asking ourselves, "Is the knowledge that I have, or the policy that I produced in a particular ministry, or the courses that I have been teaching over the last twenty years, are they knowledge-relevant to the realities of today?" So I think everybody is facing a fundamental question: "Is my knowledge base up to the problems of today?" Now I think the UN fares pretty well there. Yes, we have specialists here in all of these varied fields who know a lot. The problem is that we haven't been able to agree that we want to put that knowledge base at the service of a common understanding of the problem.

Just to give you some details, but they are not such details after all. For us, fundamental rights at work, and particularly what we call "labor standards," are absolutely key. And a fundamental component is the freedom of association—the right of any citizen to organize, in any field of life, if you are working in a democratic society. Now, if you are in a parent-teacher association, you organize as a parent. If you want to be a community worker, you organize in the community. In politics, you organize in a political party. And you can go through the list of all of the spaces where you as a citizen can organize. Yet when it comes to organizing in the workplace, suddenly your citizens' rights are limited, because, "Mmm, this may be complicated. I don't like unions in my company."

We have a situation which winds up making the World Bank say that freedom of association is really not good for productivity, when we see it as a fundamental right of any people at work to organize. Or when finally a decision is taken to move forward in terms of the debt of certain countries, and countries begin to say, "OK, there is going to be a fundamental elimination of the debt." But of course it has to be under certain conditions, which I think is perfectly reasonable. So you put up the PRSP (poverty reduction strategy papers) and you find that it is full of very interesting and very useful and practical things, and I would sign onto all of it, except that employment is not there. I ask myself, "How the hell are you going to get out of poverty without a job, or an income-generating activity, or a sustainable livelihood, or whatever?"

I am just giving you a couple of examples, which are sort of, from my point of view, common sense examples. We still have a problem today, moving into the twenty-first century, with the Bretton Woods institutions on things that are *ça va sans dire*, from my point of view. Forget that I am working in the ILO. I had the same attitude when I put together the Social Summit. These are the types of issues I am referring to. But then we have to concentrate and decide: What is the organizing factor of integrated thinking? Why is it that we want to have a holistic approach and an integrated approach? To do what? To pursue what? To promote what?

If I had to make a super-synthesis of it, I would say, "Why don't we decide to have an integrated approach to promote *la mise en application* of the UN conferences of the 1990s? They covered a pretty wide spectrum of peoples' preoccupations. All of them were more or less synthesized in the Social Summit. We sort of incorporated most of the conclusions of the other ones, while adding poverty, social exclusion, and unemployment as key factors. So it is not as if we didn't know what we would like to do. All of these concepts of the 1990s—ending up with the Millenium Summit—are a pretty good synthesis. If we say, "Let's organize our thinking in order to make this happen in an integrated manner because we already know each one of these issues on its own, but we don't seem to move forward enough. So maybe by going at it in an integrated manner, we would."

So we have to define what the object of our love is. From my point of view—and that's why we got the Social Summit going—it has to be people. It has to be enhancing the security of people, reducing the uncertainties of people. It is the third or fourth paragraph of the Social Summit, which again brings us back to peoples' security and all of those questions. That's what the Social Summit was about. It was about reducing peoples' uncertainties and insecurities in three completely interrelated areas. That was at the heart of what people perceived as being the social crisis.

It is the second paragraph: "We acknowledge that the people of the world have shown, in different ways, an urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, that affect every country. It is our task to address both their underlying and structural causes, and their distressing consequences, in order to reduce uncertainty and insecurity in the life of people." It is not an impossible task. We have to choose one of them. Maybe we can choose something else as an objective. I don't mind, provided we get one. There is something revolving around the life of people that the UN is responsible for, and why can't we work together in order to make that happen? This is something that I truly believe is very much what I am about, in the ten years I was in New York, and in being here now.

TGW: Why don't we stop here?

TGW: This is the beginning of tape number three, Juan Somavía and Tom Weiss in Geneva on 2 October 2001. I wanted to start with a quote from a member of our advisory council, Eveline Herfkens. But I wanted to ask you whether you think she was correct: "He, Somavía, is philosophical and pragmatic, a pragmatic idealist, rather than an ideologue." Do you think that's true? And if so, how do you maintain any sense of optimism after thirty years of working in the system?

JS: I think it is true. I think you have to have a sense of purpose. You have a sense of a direction, and the values you believe in, and the ideals you pursue. But you don't want to make the point that you are right. You want to change reality and to make things move forward. Let me tell you one thing. There is not a day in which you say, "I am going to work throughout my life in order to make society better." It doesn't happen that way. You get involved. You move forward. Options in your life come to you, and that's the way your life constructs itself. But in the end, you do realize one thing, that if you have taken that option—which is never one single conscious decision, but in the end just maybe an approach to life—you also took another decision. You took the decision to swim against the current. You took a decision to opt for very difficult things.

So the only thing you can't do is to complain that change is difficult. Of course it is difficult. Naturally, it is complicated. The decks are stacked against making societies better and more just. But that's what it's about. And in many ways, we have obviously advanced in the last forty years that I have been involved in international life, or even more. I can go through a long list of things that are better today than they were forty years ago. But the fact that in many areas we may have backslided doesn't mean that you don't pursue the cause.

I think that one of the most liberating things that the notion of a revolution brings with it is that you set yourself the objective to see all of the changes in your lifetime, and that they can happen by one goal. Inevitably, that exchange between [Henry] Kissinger and Zhou Enlai comes to mind, when Kissinger asked Zhou Enlai what he thought the influence of the French Revolution had been. After thinking a while about it, he said, "I think it is too soon to tell."

I won't say that I go that far. But you do what is in your purview during your time, in the responsibilities that you have had. You help produce as much change as possible, and then others take over and continue the struggle. So what you need are people who are committed to do whatever they can do in their own lifetime, and then hopefully others will take up the task. In that sense you always have, fortunately, people who are prepared to be the ones that carry the banner forward.

So I think that this is essentially not a question of making judgments in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. Making societies more fair and more just is a damned difficult thing to do to. And we all just keep at it and create spaces where more and more is happening. As I say, it is not a question of striking a balance. We have spoken about a number of areas for which thinking and approaches and sensitivity and consciousness have changed. We were talking about the environment, human rights, gender issues, notions of peace, et cetera. So this is what it is about, not getting discouraged.

TGW: I wanted to become just a little more specific for one instance, because one of our researchers wanted to understand a bit more about the dynamics of this eminent persons group on multinationals, which is where we were in 1973. We have fast-forwarded and have to go back. We just wanted to understand what were the major debates and disagreements. I think that obviously it is a little ironic, given the supposed role of multinational corporations in overthrowing Allende, that this is what you were working on in 1973. But he was interested in what the dynamics were, how this worked, and how it moved along debate about the role of corporations in society.

JS: Let's take a look at the results. The result was to get the United Nations involved in studying the phenomenon of transnational corporations and be able to deepen their analysis. I think that it was the only scenario. So it is not so much the group of eminent persons themselves, and whatever debate we may have had there, and probably by now I have forgotten what the main lines of debate were, but rather what we finally concluded and agreed to. This was a phenomenon of such a nature that it was useful to have space within the UN to study it and to promote its advantages, and to limit its negative aspects, which was basically the conclusion of the Centre on Transnational Enterprises.

I think that if you look back, an enormous amount of more adequate and useful material and information was put on the table for peoples' use. And now that the center as such no longer exists, this is very much a part of what UNCTAD does in terms of observing international investment, and international investment flows, and the pros and the cons, and the problems as they change. I think that much of the understanding also, of UNCTAD, in terms of the globalization process, comes from knowledge that has to do with all the studies on transnational enterprises. So I think the conclusion was to move forward to achieve a better understanding of a key instrument in the way the international economy is organizing itself.

I think that was the main result of the group of eminent persons who had come from very different backgrounds. I remember some of the members. You went from Jacob Javits to the head of the German trade unions, from the CEO of Cummings International, who was a very interesting gentleman, very open-minded, to John Dunning. So it was truly a very varied group who, I must say, worked in a rather coherent way. We knew that these were new phenomena that needed to be understood better.

TGW: In terms of ideas, how would you judge the utility of expert groups? I am also thinking here, in particular, of more visible groups than this one, that is the Pearson group, or the Commission on Global Governance, or the Brundtland Commission, or the Palme Commission. In looking back over the last several decades, what role do you see for either expert groups or more visible groups of eminent person who bring out blockbuster reports? How do these push along an intellectual agenda, if at all?

JS: I think that they do, but probably never the integrated agenda that each one of the reports contained. So it is not a matter of saying, "Look, this report touched on and made these seventeen proposals, and look how they have all been put into place." That is not how it happens. Yet, taking each recommendation individually, and then looking at things that have happened, you obviously established a relationship between one and the others. So I think that they have a general influence on thinking. They help to bring out new issues. And they make an enormous amount of proposals that never reach the starting point.

But since we are making an intellectual history here, I think that by and large what they do relates to the interaction between civil society and the United Nations system, of which I spoke earlier. They do capture ideas that are out there, that have not yet become mainstream, necessarily, and use some of them—not all of them. So they play a role of legitimizing, questioning certain things that are going on, and putting some proposals on the table. They consequently have an influence in the sense of saying, "These ideas that seem to be marginal are not that marginal because we consider that these things have to be looked at and thought about."

But this is something that experts in the history of ideas know well. It is extremely difficult to isolate a factor in terms of the influence that that factor had in putting concepts and notions together. So this is something that you find in the work that you are doing now. Where is the beginning of an idea? When was it first launched? It's a difficult process. And in the same way, it is difficult to pinpoint one instrument and to say how influential it was or wasn't in developing an idea.

So all of these are interlocking processes in which ideas are carried forward. It depends on where the space of less resistance is present. Sometimes you can advance a lot on the international and governmental side. But sometimes those avenues are blocked, and you have to advance on the civil society side. And when the energy can flow, those are the moments when important things have happened.

That is the origin of the ILO, by the way. The ILO was created in 1919, in the aftermath of the First World War. Why? Because from the end of the nineteenth century, the evidence was that the total lack of a framework for dealing with social issues and social development was producing havoc in the lives of people, the lives of workers. It was reflected in the encyclical *rerum novarum* on the side of the Catholic Church, and there was a very strong questioning coming from non-Catholic sources in terms of the very exploitative European reality. So by the end of the First World War, it was a propitious moment to say, “Let’s take a big decision. Let’s create an institution that has to do with bettering the life of workers.”

Now this was 1919. Governments, employers, and workers were part of the structure. If you tried to create the ILO today it would probably be very difficult. This is to say how visionary it was. It was the same thing at the end of the Second World War with the creation of the United Nations, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So there are these moments in which the official and the unofficial, the governmental structures, and civil societies, and political structures sort of come together to produce these important decisions. These are moments in which you move forward. If not, you always have the tension of how to make things happen.

But I think that those of us in this place in which we are working in the realm of ideas, have been proposing and promoting ideas, and at the same time our operators try to make things happen—the combination of both of these things is a key one, I think. That is needed in the architecture for moving forward. This means that very often it is very difficult to separate an idea from the operator. It is the operators that make ideas happen. And it is the people who know how to build consensus. And it is a combination of both that pushes things forward.

I am thinking of [Olaf] Palme, for example, whom I have strong respect for, and who has influenced my own thinking. He was a thinker, and he was a political animal. Consequently, he had a clear framework within which he wanted to move, whether we were talking about social issues in a highly advanced developed country, or the notion of peace, or the personal will to become involved. I will never forget the image of Palme heading a street demonstration against the war in Vietnam, while he was prime minister of Sweden. Of course, I am giving an extraordinary example, which is Palme's life. But these are the processes that make ideas flourish.

TGW: Some would argue that Prebisch was an economic equivalent, somebody who knew how to think, but also especially knew how to package and—

JS: And make things happen. Exactly. And this is very much my own outlook. I feel that is part of what I should help to happen.

TGW: In this process, I would like to tease out your own thinking on the role of global ad hoc conferences. You obviously took a role in thinking about, pushing, and animating the Social Summit in Copehagen (World Summit for Social Development) in 1995. But how would you persuade a cynic who looks upon the series in the 1970s, or the series in the 1990s, as expensive jamborees that do not actually lead to anything?

JS: My first recommendation is never discuss anything with a cynic. So if it is a cynic, don't bother. He will always be a cynic. So those are not the real counterparts. The real counterparts are the honest people who would like to see things change and who ask the question, "I am all for this, but can you convince me that we will move forward?" I believe that if you take a look at what has happened in the last thirty years, there is no doubt that a lot of things have moved forward. And I think that the consciousness has changed. If not, we wouldn't have had the conferences of the 1990s.

But things do not change from one day to another. One of the biggest problems that we have today is the quick fix mentality, the idea that you spot a problem and you are immediately asked, "So what is your answer? What should we do about? How long does it take for this to happen?" The sort of issues that the United Nations deals with are processes. And you can see this clearly in the UN's difficulty in dealing with media. The media deal with conflict, and the United Nations is about reducing and eliminating conflict. One can understand that the prevailing media values lead to a search for tensions, conflicts, and differences of opinion. That makes news.

Conflict-solving—except for a very important conflict that was solved—and the thousands of little things that the UN does in order to advance things is not news. And in the same vein is the question: "You do all of these conferences and everything, but where are the results?" And when you try to explain the limitations—one thing is to define the direction in which you are going to go and the other the objective limitations—then the conclusion is: "But this doesn't serve any purpose if you learned so little, if you have gone back, or the advance that has taken place maybe would have taken place without the United Nations, who knows?"

I think the basic answer to this type of question is to say, "Take the United Nations away from these last fifty years, and just think what the world would look like." Who would have dealt with all of the information-gathering, the studies that have been done, the knowledge that has been developed on all of these issues, the enormous efforts to push them forward?" So the issue disappears. With all the limitations in which the power situation continues to be overriding in the way the world works, the United Nations, with all its institutionality is a factor of control and of limitation of just sheer power.

In many respects, the whole ILO convention system on workers' rights, which is negotiated here because we have legislative capacity, but which, at the same time is adhered to on a voluntary basis because you have to ratify a convention for it to become a commitment—it is a mixture of international decision-making plus national decision-making, to make it a reality—has been very successful because it is the basis of most labor legislation in the world. And I think that every institution can probably say the same. If you ask the World Health Organization (WHO), they will tell you, "But look at all the things that have happened as a result of the existence of the World Health Organization." And if you go organization by organization, I think every one can list what they feel to be their contribution to changing things.

Now I think that the basic failure of the last fifty years is that we have not been able to stop the growth of inequality. If I had to highlight one issue, for which we seem to be unable change the logic of the whole thing, is that we have an increasingly inequitable world. We have reduced poverty, and we have increased the social indices, but the distance continues to grow. So I would say that if we have to pinpoint one major failing, it is that—in the economic and social field. Obviously, in the political field, it is the capacity of the political dimension of the ILO, and particularly the Security Council, to actually perform a function of dealing with conflict. But that is another story.

TGW: But what about these conferences, like Copenhagen or Stockholm (UN Conference on the Human Environment)?

JS: I will come back to the conferences, but the failure of the Security Council also has to do with the difficulty of understanding what security is about. The way security was defined, to give it the name of the "Security Council," was so limited that it only has to do, in the Charter, with conflict among nations, when the reality is that the majority of the issues on the Security Council agenda today are internal conflicts. So the lack of the right ideas tends to have a very important effect—and not having gotten it right at the time of the Charter on what security is about is significant. Then you create something called the Security Council with an extraordinary mandate to keep peace, but found it on such a limited understanding of conflict that it cannot actually deal with the real conflicts that emerge after the end of the war.

By the way, that is another of the things that I am a little bit proud of. When I was in the Security Council, we were discussing the Great Lakes region. I said, "Look, why don't we listen to the NGOs (nongovernmental organizations)?" NGO's in the Security Council? My God! So I invented a formula that came to be mentioned as the Somavía formula in some of the documents. Finally, I said, "I represent Chile. I sit here, and I hear so-and-so say, 'We have just received a cable from our embassy saying this. From our security sources we know this and this.' So OK, some of you sitting at this table have the benefit of information coming through the channels that you have. I don't have such a benefit. But I do know what NGOs are about. Many of them are my friends. I would like to listen to them. And I think it would be good for you to listen to them."

Finally it was possible to do it, but you can't imagine the type of debates we had before it could happen. We wound up having Oxfam, CARE, and the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). The three of them came to that meeting. In any case, this is one of our biggest problems. Again, it has to do with this issue of human security. You wind up with big power concentrated in a few hands to deal with the problems of peace in the world, but the nature of conflict is defined in such a limited manner that it can't deal with the reality of the world.

TGW: You did the same thing—and I was involved in this discussion—on sanctions, and the humanitarian impact of sanctions. So one of the important impacts of global ad hoc conferences on economic and social issues is to mobilize and allow civil society to play a role. So would you see a growing role even within the Security Council, now that we have opened the door, or the window, or whatever is opened, a little bit?

JS: When I was in the Security Council, I was very much for the creation of an NGO that covers the Security Council in New York. I can't remember now the name of who organized it. In any case, I stimulated enormously its creation. And if I am not mistaken, their first meeting with the president of the Security Council was with me. Or if I wasn't the president at the time, I was the first member of the Security Council that received them and briefed them about what we were discussing. Afterwards it became a habit. I think that I must have been president. It became a habit, and now I know that they regularly meet with the president of the Security Council, who briefs them on current issues.

So this has been a constant. The NGOs were in the field. The NGOs in New York had an impact on sanctions, and NGOs in ECOSOC, and the Social Summit. In part it is the fact that, in my own mind, I feel myself to be much more a civil society person than as sort of an official person. I have difficulty with the discipline that you need to have if you are an "official," quote unquote. And even in my post today, I have had to make clear to my constituents that there will be times in which I am going to be speaking as Juan Somavía, and that this may not reflect a common ILO understanding.

But it is one thing when I look at a problem and say what I think about it, it is another thing when it comes to the way I manage the institution, when I have to take into account the consensus and the combination of interests needed to move the institution forward. But it doesn't mean that my function is to simply reflect the lowest common denominator of the institution. There is the institutional function and the person who is heading the institution. We have to keep those two things separate.

It is in that sense that I prefer the spaces of liberty and freedom in civil society. And fortunately in my years in New York, both presidents that I represented—President Patricio Aylwin Azócar and President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle—they were very happy to give me that space. So very often I was speaking on issues and it was not necessarily the Chilean position, or the governmental position, but perceptions and ideas that I felt were necessary to move forward. But they also understood, and my political system in Chile understood—we come back to the same story of the beginning. I have always sought autonomy and independence, even in public functions. In the earlier years, I was working for Eduardo Frei Montalva and for Allende, and yet I wasn't a member of any political party. It is the same thing that repeats itself. I say, "OK, but give me the space and the autonomy in which I can be a person here, not just a cog in a machine."

TGW: So you are a representative of civil society cross-dressing in the clothes of a director-general?

JS: Very much so, I must say. My instincts are much more of a civil society person than an official person.

TGW: In some ways the ILO is the one institution that has an official way to represent a part of civil society, however imperfectly constructed. Could you see, in the future, a similar kind of opening towards parts of civil society in other intergovernmental organizations?

JS: Today, speaking at the beginning of 2001, I believe it is indispensable. But at the same time, I think that there is a mixture of understanding about the need to communicate with civil society—I am talking about the other organizations—and a growing fear, and a growing criticism, of the civil society itself. At the same time, when you look at polls and things like that, people tend to trust civil society organizations more than official institutions. So I think, particularly in the UN system, in the last three or four years, there is growing tension about the participation of civil society organizations in conferences and things like that.

I already saw some of those problems in the Social Summit. But in the Social Summit, I just threw the doors open. It was very clear that that's what I thought was necessary, and that's what we did. But you could feel the tensions. They became more and more evident.

Now that's in terms of the UN system. In terms of society at large, I think that the great challenge of the future is how to give the citizen a voice in the running of society in whichever way the citizen wants to organize. It is evident that one format, one way, of creating a space for the citizen, which was political parties—political parties represented in parliaments, parliaments being representative of the people at large—is being weakened. It does not respond effectively to the demands of a community of citizens that doesn't think that being consulted every three or four years with one vote to organize a parliament is a sufficient way of participation.

On the other hand, who is representative? What are democratic structures? Because you have civil society organizations that are very much one-person organizations, that have very vertical structures of decision-making. You have linkages between civil society organizations and NGOs from the North that cultivate acolytes in the South through their funding structures. So these are true and complex issues of how you organize societies into the twenty-first century.

But I think that it's inevitable that we find ways of giving citizens a voice that goes beyond the vote. Now how do you go about it? For the moment, it has been through movements. We come back to the environment movements, the women's movement, the human rights movement. So movements have tended to coalesce in order to be able to exert influence on issues that they care about. But we do not have yet an institutional answer of how it is that you can have a voice beyond the vote. This is still a big question mark. And consequently, you have the same problem on the multilateral scene: how can you have a voice if your basis of representation is not somehow demonstrated in a democratic way?

That's the strength of the ILO structure, because the people sitting in the governing body for the employers represent the international organizations of employers, which is active in 130-something countries. So the people who get here are elected by their peers. And the fourteen workers, most of them come from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labor, who represent in total about 220 million organized workers throughout the world. So these are real democratic structures in terms of the fact that the people who get here are elected by their peers.

This is a much more complex exercise, if you are talking about nongovernmental organizations. Who are their peers, and who elects? So in the end, what happens is that the process is one in which the civil society becomes recognized because it is perceived as relevant. And of course, that's a very subjective judgement. But we come back to the three examples we have been working with. A number of international organizations on the environment front finally wound up being very respected and being consulted because they were perceived as relevant, as having played a major role in changing consciousness. It is the same thing with some of the women's movements and human rights organizations.

Human Rights Watch, and organizations that monitor human rights, receive incredible respect from the rest of society. So in the end, what finally legitimizes a civil society organization is that they are able to demonstrate that their contribution is a contribution.

Although they may be questioning everything that is going on, they are still perceived as serious. For example, many of the human rights organizations question very deeply what the UN is doing, and yet we all perceive them as serious institutions performing a very important function. So in the absence of a democratic basis of peer selection, you wind up being judged by the contribution that you make. That of course is always a subjective element.

TGW: I am thinking of Marc Nerfin's division of the world into princes, merchants, and citizens—that the pluralization of all of these is a problem, except perhaps for the princes. You have governments that supposedly speak with one voice, although we know there are multiple parts of governments. But for the merchants and citizens in particular, there really is no way of coming up with a representative sample.

JS: And you shouldn't. You see, the richness is precisely the diversity. But on the other hand, the system of representation that we have now in our democratic societies is lacking space for much more direct presence of citizens. That's a big question mark we have in front of us, in terms of how to organize a democracy that is attentive to the voices of everybody.

I posed this question in a speech that I made in the Copenhagen summit to the nongovernmental organizations. There I was extremely clear. Let me see if I can find it, because it is exactly what—maybe it's this. Yes, "Turning Words into Action: The NGO Hallmark." This is the speech for the NGO Forum in Copenhagen. It says, "I am here to say that without you, all of you present here today and the millions that you represent, the World Summit for Social Development would not have been possible. You created the consciousness that made it necessary. You mobilized the support that made it a reality. You provided the experience and ideas that gave direction. You proved once again that the United Nations of today and tomorrow can only be relevant to people if it listens and is influenced by peoples' organizations." This is my profound belief.

If I had taken civil society out of the organization of the Social Summit, if it hadn't existed, you would have had another Social Summit. Now because of the way the representation is organized, most of the NGO contribution came from me as chairperson. I had people handing me drafts of things. But that's the way it is, because if they sit down they can't sit down as delegates. That's the way it's organized. But it would have been a totally different summit without their contribution. I mentioned there that the women's caucus was absolutely extraordinary. There was a values dimension within the context of the event. So to round things out, I think the civil society voice is an indispensable component of the scenario. But inevitably, you wind up working with those that actually do the contribution.

TGW: This doesn't exactly quite follow, but there is something I had meant to ask earlier, which is in your role as a pragmatic idealist and a non-ideologue. Two documents of the 1970s that seem to be neither would, in my view, have been something you mentioned earlier—the New International Information Order, and the other one being the New International Economic Order (NIEO)—as being so bitter, aggressive, and unpragmatic as to have represented a step backward instead of towards the middle ground. Do you disagree with that?

JS: Let me give you the background to each one of them to say where I agree with you. On the New International Information Order, you had two distinct avenues on that issue. One of them was sort of the nonaligned, heavily influenced by state domination of communication and all of that. The other one was a demand for cultural pluralism and for not having an ethnocentric view of the realities of the world. Why am I saying this? Because the easy enemy to attack was the nonaligned position, very heavily governmental, in which the New International Information

Order is defined in international organizations. That ultimately became the model to attack saying, “Look, you can’t be serious. Look at what these people are saying.” And it was very easy to bring that down.

What was never really answered—and I was part of that process—was the other one. Advocates of this position were saying, “We want free flow of information. In fact, we want more free flow of information rather than less. And we want a freer flow for the perceptions and the ideas and the visions of society that are not out there today. Our criticism, from the point of view of liberty and freedom and democracy, is that this information system is simply limited to an ethnocentric perception guided by those who control the instruments of communications.”

So I completely agree with you on the criticism of the New International Information Order, as defined by the nonaligned or government structures. But the other position was not really explored and answers were never found to the challenge of having global communications structures that actually have the capacity for multicultural understanding, and the promotion of a multicultural perspective, and the identification of a problem as seen by the people that are living there.

On the New International Economic Order I agree. I think that it was a pure construct. That’s why it was discussed at a couple of conferences and why it simply didn’t go anywhere, because it was too much of a construct with little or no connection to the reality of the way economic and social phenomena, and social processes, move. So I am fully in agreement with your characterization of the New International Economic Order, and also with the New International Information Order, as defined by nonaligned governments, but not in terms of the multicultural questioning that came from some of us in the developing countries, who said, “We don't see our voices there. And we don't see our understanding of our own society sufficiently well reflected."

TGW: I wanted to ask how you think—we spoke a little bit about this earlier—the idea of security, if you could do it in fifty words or so, how do you think this has evolved over time? You mentioned your activities at the South American Peace Commission and the Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies. But how do you see the idea of security having evolved over time?

JS: Let's take the beginning of the immediate postwar period, if you want. You have security as understood by the United Nations. It is peace among nations. And you have security as understood by the Declaration of Philadelphia, which is an integral part today of the ILO's constitution, which says the way to peace is social justice, and poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. So you have a notion of security that is very much centered on the classical notion of military security and conflict among states. And you have a notion that links security to social justice.

What I think happened is that one proved to have all the limitations that I have just spoken of. And the notion that security is social justice was lost along the way. So what about the issues? The issues were decolonization. How can you talk about the problems of peace and social justice when you have colonial powers that are hanging on to their colonies, some more than others? So something that was very clear coming out of the conflict, as revealed in the nature of the Second World War, got lost in the process. If the United Nations could have advanced that understanding through some of the elements in the Charter, it could have taken us on the road to social justice. Instead you take away the capacity of the United Nations to think about economic matters and you put it in the Bretton Woods institutions and the GATT. And the possibility of trade and employment coming together is also limited.

So the formulations are there, but you have one institution on the political path that is increasingly limited in its capacity to deal with real problems, and the other that is sort of lost sight of. And the UN is not given the instruments to do it. That is why things like human security appear new—because they are new. We went through a desert. We went very clearly through a period in time in which these questions were not truly at the heart of the agenda.

Part of the security link to social justice was developed, but just part of the agenda, which is the whole notion of social security. That I would say, if you compare 1945 to today, in countries—one must not forget we are coming out of the recession just before the Second World War, so the real structures for stable social security systems were developed after the Second World War in Europe, the United Nations, and afterwards, Japan. So I would say you had one element that continued on its road and finally consolidated in the social security systems that we know today in the developed countries, which are relatively sophisticated and give an important level of security to people.

So of all of the things that have evolved and consolidated, I would say that is the principal one. Today, the fact about social protection in the world, 80 percent of the people of the working age population do not have any sort of really serious social protection system—social security plus health and other things. So one does not respond to the real problems. The other gets stomped, and there is one that sort of follows through, which is the social security thing. And then you pick up all of these things around the 1980s. And the whole notion that you do not have to be in the military to understand security, that expanding social security to people that are not covered, and the whole idea that there is an informal sector—the ILO invented the informal sector in its time—begins to make its way.

Then the need to take into account how you look at security reemerges. But most of these things could have been built upon the things that we did right after the Second World War. But the things that I have been mentioning happened, so these issues sort of disappeared, and then they began to reemerge in the course of the 1980s. For example, in Latin America fighting for social justice and for human security became the fight for democracy. So you couldn't be developing notions of security when you were fighting for the essential things. But once you begin to have some sort of stability, that allows for reflection, all of these things emerge to be defined in very different terms. Canada put together a group to think about human security, but they understand it as human security in humanitarian situations.

We have been looking at it much more in structural terms and saying, "What is the insecurity that people have in their normal life, not in exceptional situations?" Obviously in exceptional situations, there are threats to security. The problem is that in the normal conduct of affairs, there are constant threats to security because we don't look at these other things. This is a little bit of an unconnected answer to your question. But I think that this is the nature of where we are at in terms of the analytical tools to deal with this.

TGW: I am going to ask you to answer a question that you asked, which is, "Why does it seem, quote, more urgent for the United Nations to act when someone is killed by a bullet than when someone dies of malnutrition?" So our ideas are moving, but the institutions are lagging?

JS: I think that we have *sobre dimensional*—we are overdimensioned? There must be a better word.

TGW: To exaggerate? To overestimate?

JS: We have given more importance to, we have given greater weight to, overestimated open conflict as opposed to daily occurrences that are equally tragic. So what I was saying, the media look for conflict. There is something embedded in the Charter that leads the media to focus on conflict. If protective measures don't work, we have to do something about it. So you go through the stages of the Security Council, which are extremely interesting. First of all, preventive measures, hopefully preventive measures will stop the conflict. Then stop the fighting. Then move towards a formal ceasefire. Then make sure that you have a political agreement to stabilize the country. And once you've done that, and you've approved resolution 1341, the Security Council says, "Well, we've done our job. There is peace there."

We forget about two absolutely basic components, which is that this is a destroyed society. So there is a little bit of reconstruction to begin with. And this is very much answering that question—it goes out of the political scenario, and into development. So let the development agencies deal with this country, and then the search is on for the next conflict, what is the hot place that we have to concentrate on now, and what's urgent? I think what is happening is that somebody killed by a bullet appears to be urgent, because it implies a level of conflict that calls for action. The child dying of malnutrition is seen as part of the development process that takes place over time. Consequently, it does not call for our concentration on a day-to-day basis.

So after going through all of these stages, you hand it over. You drop it, in fact. We don't have, today, a clinic where a country that has gone through the Security Council stages can remain for two or three years in order to be helped to go on to normal development. But you don't move from a conflict like the one we have seen in the former Yugoslavia into normal World Bank projects. You need to go through some intermediate stages.

The other major question, which is much, much deeper, is that nowhere in the UN Charter will you find a reasonable notion of reconciliation. How do you put a society together after brother has killed brother? How do you go back to your house when you know that the person in front killed your son-in-law? So there is no notion of reconciliation as a process in which a society works out how to rebuild trust, how to rebuild people's confidence and to link their future with that particular society. I am just mentioning two incredible limitations of the way the Security Council works, and yet there is this concentration on what is perceived to be urgent as opposed to what is perceived to be a much longer-term process. It is true that development is a longer-term process, but that does not mean that it should not have the same level of political concentration.

The major difference is manifested in the resources that you are prepared to allocate. If you have open conflict, somehow, somewhere, even with all the limitations, the money appears. Meanwhile, ODA (overseas development assistance) is coming down, coming down, coming down. Inevitably, resources are an indication of the political importance that you give to something. Obviously, development is becoming irrelevant for the rich part of the world, in political terms. That's where we are. That's part of the answer to my question.

TGW: An interesting counterfactual would be whether in even in the Nordic countries somebody like Jan Pronk could emerge as a politician these days. Is development a sellable issue anywhere in the North?

JS: I think that unfortunately it is becoming less and less possible. This is the point. You have a good example there in Eveline Herfkens, who is somehow capable of keeping the Dutch commitment to international cooperation, although there is a general disinterest in the development agencies and of governments. This is the terrible thing about this whole situation—these are public opinions. These are public opinions telling the people they send to parliament, "Look, we better worry about our own societies." In the Netherlands and in the Nordic countries, the commitment is kept at reasonable levels in relation to their own richness, but in other countries, no. Other countries say, "This is not a priority. A priority is our societies and ourselves." The message is pretty clear.

And of course, these are always majorities. You will have an enormous amount of people fighting for Third World issues. Around debt, for example, there was no doubt finally, that the recognition that something had to be done about the debt of the poorest countries was because of pressure from public opinion in the North. It is public opinion in the developed countries that helped to bring about that change. It wasn't popular manifestations in the countries themselves.

So this is not a black and white picture. What we are describing is the tendency. You can find moments of breakthroughs. A big coalition on the debt issue, inspired by the change of millennium had an impact, I must say. But the general tendency is there. And the very fundamental question remains as to why societies that are basically well-off find it so difficult to understand the balance of things internationally.

Now part of it is that when they look at the developing countries, a lot of the governments are not angels. And a lot of the ways in which the resources have been used have not produced the results expected. Again, this is in part because some of the policies promoted by the Bank and the Fund didn't help develop the countries, because they were so monetarily and financially driven. But you have also had corruption. You have all of these authoritarian regimes—nobody feels particularly happy giving resources to authoritarian regimes that are controlling their people.

So this is by no means just a problem of the public opinion of the North. There have been many good reasons also to say, "Hey, let's hold on here. This is not just a question of writing a check and tranquilizing our consciences." But having recognized the problems, there are ways of dealing with the problems if one has the will to ensure that we have a more balanced world.

This is a very valid thing, because you will find that if you concentrate the public opinion in the North on an issue or a particular problem—especially if it is a humanitarian issue, but you saw what happened with the debt of the smaller countries—you will tend to have rather high levels of commitment and willingness on the part of people to contribute resources to it. When the issue is very general, if it has to do with development, if it has to do with wider questions, then the tendency comes down.

TGW: After being an NGO for several years, you returned to government service in going back to New York. I think many people point toward the end of the Cold War as an important moment for the renaissance, or whatever we are going to call it, of conflict management within the United Nations. Were there also opportunities for economic and social development that resulted at the end of the Cold War, or was the impact more negative than positive? Were there any missed opportunities? The lack of interest and cynicism seems at present to outweigh any notions of modest solidarity or interest in poverty. So I am just wondering whether we missed a moment, or whether the Cold War's end was actually irrelevant?

JS: I think it is a question that has many angles because it also has to do with the political side of it. There was a possibility of a renaissance, but it lasted about two or three years on the political side. And I think it ended in the wake of the Gulf War, which was perceived as—many people called it "the UN coming into its own." It may be a bit exaggerated, but the UN gave the framework that permitted that to happen, and a large coalition was put together. And then there was more of an activist potential for the Security Council. That came to an abrupt stop in Somalia with the death of eighteen Americans.

So no more of these types of operations. No more Americans were to be involved—et cetera, et cetera. It was a sort of a break that affected the whole of the Security Council acting in other regions, and even the Security Council acting without any American presence. So you had a moment there, and it came abruptly to an end in Somalia. And I don't think that it has recovered; although concerning the decisions that are being taken now in relation to terrorism, there may be again a space in which the United Nations can truly come together on such a fundamental issue. But in between it is up and down, up and down, up and down, Angola seems to be solved; it's not. Sierra Leone seems to be solved; it's not. The Great Lakes—you go back and forth, but no real commitment.

I am saying this because it probably also has an effect on the other comment I want to make which is that, in my view, the biggest problem with the end of the Cold War is that the end of the Cold War was fought in the name of democracy, and it was won in the name of the market. So what was the consequence? The language of democracy was forgotten, and the consequence of the end of the Cold War was obviously—rightly so—the destruction of centralized economies, which were simply not performing and not delivering the goods, and nobody is going to defend them. But the whole frame of mind in which the end of the Cold War was interpreted was a market conclusion. It led us to the question, "What other market policies, now that centralized planning has been destroyed, need to be put in place?"

That's a perfectly legitimate reaction in terms of a system having been destroyed—the one that won determines the new organization. There was a total lack of balance in terms of the implications of having a global economy organized around market principles—which, of course, was a necessary conclusion of the end of the Cold War—versus what does it mean for democracy to have won as an organizing principle of global society. So having wagered on democracy, we should have reached conclusions on how to promote democracy in the world. Instead, we wound up seeing how to promote market principles around the world, which in the democracies of today is obviously part of the problem. But if you only concentrate on that, you are bound to exacerbate a lot of things.

And in that context, because the democratic objective is absent, the social dimensions of development are not key to the objective of making the world safe for markets. Now there is nothing wrong with markets—I believe that markets have an incredible dynamism and can act as a stimulus. But as any good thing, if it is exaggerated, then you create problems. You cannot organize a society around market principles. It doesn't work that way.

So we are missing the reason for which the Cold War was won, which is the deepening of democracy. The loss of that opportunity then has an adverse effect on the economic and social side.

TGW: Was the UN system, writ large, a little timid in confronting the Washington consensus?

JS: I think that on the contrary, because we all had the feeling that something like this was happening, it was the most creative decade in terms of the UN through all of its global conferences. If you wanted to deepen democracy, the UN was telling us through the environment conference, or the human rights, or the population, or the Social Summit, or through food, et cetera, that these are the sorts of things that can be done to deepen democracy.

TGW: But that was the 1990s versus the 1980s. I would date the Washington consensus—actually, the word was constructed in 1989 by Williamson in his article, but the [Ronald] Reagan-[Margaret] Thatcher period when there was nothing the markets couldn't do.

JS: Yes, but I'm trying to answer the consequential logic of what I have said. The opportunity in the 1990s was there. But since we did not put the emphasis on the deepening of democracy, it is not that the United Nations was silent once the opportunity emerged, because we did have answers to many of the key questions. And even the UN was able to be a place of consensus on what needed to be done.

I think that in the 1980s, here I must say that I am not certain as to what are the elements that came together to make the Reagan-Thatcher approach, when this extreme form of a liberal economy become dominant. I must say that I am not clear about how that happened. Why did it happen? It probably has to do with all the logical criticisms of a welfare society, both in the UK and in the United States. And that there wasn't enough energy within the system to respond to the problems that were emerging.

Consequently, it became easier to have a sort of a black and white attitude. But I think that essentially, to the extent that what Reagan and Thatcher were doing was strongly supported by public opinion in both countries, it carried an enormous weight internationally. And the moment these policies were adopted by the Bank and the Fund (International Monetary Fund), which was simply a matter of deepening the prevailing policy outlook, it was probably difficult to challenge them.

Now your question is, should the UN have done more to counter that? I think that you would probably find—I am less knowledgeable about what the UN was actually doing in the 1980s. But, if I take a look at Latin America, you would probably find that already by the middle of the 1980s many of these things were questioned by ECLA. And at least in the Latin American context, the exaggeration of the liberal model, or the neoliberal model as it's called, was already beginning. It was clear that it was the end of the decade.

TGW: Actually, I think it was the same in Africa towards the middle of the 1980s. Richard [Jolly] claims that UNICEF's (UN Children's Fund) work on *Adjustment with a Human Face*, which was published in 1987, began in the middle of the 1980s. But there was a four-or five-year period when there was silence on most fronts.

JS: Yes, but this is understandable because it was not possible to grasp the implications of the whole thing until you began to see the results. But in any case, it is true that we didn't have a massive sort of—you didn't have the 1990s in the 1980s. Let's put it that way. But the 1990s are a direct response to the 1980s. So it recouped in the next decade, if you want, and in the framework of the end of the Soviet Union.

TGW: You were president of ECOSOC twice. And I understand that only your father-in-law had that honor before.

JS: It's a family affair.

TGW: The one principal organ of the United Nations that virtually everyone agrees is moribund and out of control and has probably generated more proposals for reform than any other is ECOSOC. After two terms, what would you do with ECOSOC?

JS: You know, I think that the true possible function that it could perform is the function of integration. It is a sort of internal function to the UN. You will see that on the ECOSOC agenda—it has been there for the last three or four years—there is an agenda item that says, "The Integrated Analysis of the UN Conferences." So it is an effort to look at all of the UN conferences together. I put that item on the agenda after the Social Summit. That could be a truly useful function, because this is probably the one that we are most lacking in terms of something that is internal to the system. And this is the only institution within the system that has an overall purview.

What is the basic problem with it? It is an institution to which the governments do not send their high-level people. So it winds up being managed or having a sense of direction not given to it from a high political level. So it is an interaction. The institution is not really performing what it could be; it is not really staffed in order to be able to do it; and since it is not staffed to be able to do it, then it winds up not being relevant.

So a possible way out of this would be to choose a couple of issues that are dealt with on an extraordinary basis, or in an agenda-setting way in which you could really concentrate on the substance of, for example, the integration process, and the capacity for choosing two or three issues which the whole system comes together to deal with. That is in the logic of what it has become. In the logic of what it could be, I think it would be very difficult for the economic decision-making function foreseen in the Charter to be restored to it, at least as things now stand.

To summarize, it could do useful work if you upgrade, if you take the political decision to do something that responds not to the whole world, but to something that has to do with the internal workings of the system, and provided you upgrade the representation. But concerning the role of the Economic and Security Council, as it was conceived of in the Charter, I don't see it coming to fruition in the short term because the fundamental part of it seems to have been taken away.

So one can say that ECOSOC is not working. On the other hand, you can also say it is not meant to work because there are functions that it could perform that were taken away from it. So the major powers do not want it to work.

TGW: What is the role of institutional tensions or turf consciousness? You have spoken about the role of ECOSOC and having difficulty in bringing the system together. And you now have the, I presume, “extreme pleasure” of sitting on the ACC. But to what extent are the impressions of an exaggerated sense of institutional possessiveness about my part of agriculture, my part of labor, my part of children getting in the way of a better United Nations?

JS: I think it is. I think that we could all be much more relaxed about our different mandates, the way they interact and don’t interact, and things that we could do together, and the recognition of the great work that others may be doing, even though it is in the mandate of another. It is my mandate, yes, but look at what they are doing. So what are you going to say? They shouldn’t do it? It’s up to me?

But that’s why I’m saying that the UN system is under-performing. I have consistently been saying that. It varies according to the institution. The big ones say, “Why should I?” So you have mission creep: “If I have money I can do whatever I want because I am going to put money behind my ideas. If I get less and less money, I am going to concentrate on what I believe should be done.” I won’t name institutions here. But these are reasonable human reactions.

I think that the turf issues are issues that actually hurt what I think is the most critical function of the system and results in the incapacity to think in an integrated way today. Let me try to be as refined as possible in this analysis. You will find that in the field, the turf problems are much less than at headquarters. In the field, people are much closer to being part of a system, part of the UN family. They tend to work together. There are still problems, but there is comparatively more cooperation in the field centered on concrete problems and specific initiatives. And in that sense you can't say the system is under-performing, because we all give a very long list of things that we are doing together.

How are we under-performing? When does turf competition become a problem? It is not when we get together around a project or a program in a country, because that we can do. I think it basically has to do with how we get around the fact that we may have different opinions on the nature of a problem and what needs to be done about it. What happens if I disagree with the sort of advice that is given by the World Bank on the way a social security system should look? What happens if the ILO would have a different perspective on it? So how do we go about having legitimate differences on all of this without simply saying that the other one is wrong or being excluded because the other one has the money and you don't? It is those sorts of issues. If we have a vision of how to promote employment but another institution believes that this has to be done in a different way—that is the whole question of coherence.

At the same time, how can we recognize legitimate differences? The Washington consensus is defined in French as *la pensée unique*, which is a very good description. But we are not going to replace one *pensée unique* by another *pensée unique*. So in dealing with a particular issue, a couple of the institutions that may have differences may both be right also, given the fact that they may be looking and putting together the issues in a different way.

Having a coherent system in which it may be legitimate to have differences of opinion takes you into complex territory, because then maybe some of us are going to say, "I think that there is a total exaggeration of the importance being given to financial considerations in the way that policies are put together today." And if you take a look at the global economy today, you have first and foremost to organize yourself in ways that the financial markets find appropriate. Now there was an extreme case of this about a month ago or six weeks ago, when—I won't name the country—a Latin American country had to satisfy the market. There was a big, big external debt. It was moving into discussions with the Fund. On the same day it reduced the salaries of public workers and pensioners by 13 percent and increased the short-term interest rate to 37 percent. And that is perceived by the financial markets as a good solution, something good done by that country.

There is something fundamentally wrong if that is the way we believe you get out of a crisis. But that is where the exaggeration of a purely financial analysis of a society takes you. And that is where you say you can't organize a whole society around purely market principles, and even less around purely financial ones. Now how do you get around that? These are real differences and that is not solved. And the problem is that in the intergovernmental institutions, some of them more are democratic than others. I feel that the ILO is the most representative organization within the multilateral system because of its composition, because we have different forms of linkages with civil society organizations, and because—this I didn't know before I came here—the meetings of its governing body are open to the public. And I see it in action because sometimes we address sexy issues in terms of media interest. One of them is Myanmar. So when we are discussing Myanmar, we have a lot of journalists turning up to see which way things are going to go.

To have a governing body open to the public, ç*a n'est pas mal*. Ç*a n'est pas mal* in terms of a transparent organization. You go from there to the Bretton Woods institutions organized as banks, so that the decision-making power is in the hands of seven or eight countries that control the capital. So these represent two extremes, if you want, of the legitimacy base of an organization, and consequently the legitimacy base of the opinions. Now here I am obviously talking from the civil society perspective and not as the head of the ILO. But these are real issues.

TGW: Do you actually include the Bank and the Fund in your notion of the UN system?

JS: Oh sure.

TGW: I know that you tried to bring them into ECOSOC. They belong, but are they really there?

JS: You must never give up on dialogue. Definitely they should be there. We should continue talking. Some of these issues we are talking about are things that we have also addressed with Jim Wolfensohn and with Kohler. These are real issues that need to be seriously considered. These are not just for speeches or for slogans. We need to come to grips with them.

TGW: We need to stop because the tape is almost out. May we go on for another half hour or forty-five minutes? Is that alright? I would like to get to the ILO here, if that’s alright.

TGW: This is the beginning of the fourth and final tape with Tom Weiss interviewing Juan Somavía. You have been involved setting up NGOs and research institutes. You have also been on the boards of a couple—the Hammarskjöld Foundation and the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). I am curious as to whether or not you think there are topics of research that are more easily treated outside the UN system, in a totally academic setting, ones that would be treated in a think tank that is sympathetic and well-plugged-in like the Hammarskjöld Foundation? And are there other issues that are better treated in something like UNRISD or the Institute for Labor Studies that are part of the system, but have slightly more room to maneuver than a bureaucracy? And finally what things might be better treated by the bureaucracy writ large, with all of its intergovernmental constraints? So if we have this range of possibilities, are there things that are better and worse about each of these in terms of trying to push out the envelope on new ideas?

JS: I think that you have to distinguish research from policy formulation. I would say that by and large the more autonomous the research structure is, the better. It gives the freedom to look at issues, to go beyond the accepted norms. You don't have governing bodies hovering over you saying, "Why are you choosing this subject, this conclusion?" Research is research, and research from every angle. So you are going to have research that will be promoting maybe a progressive view of things, or trying to answer questions that a progressive mind would apply to a problem. And you may have other kinds of research. I think all of that is good. It contributes to the debate, to the analysis of issues, and particularly to a non-ideological set of solutions.

I think the biggest problem is when you feel that the research is not necessary because you know the answer, because you are right, because you have the right solution. On the policy formulation part, I think that you probably have to go half and half. It is important that you have levels of autonomy and freedom to imagine policy options different from the ones that are being applied. But there may be a long lead time between an alternative policy proposal and what is actually discussed, decided, and promoted within a particular intergovernmental forum. Policy advance has to take place in the places where policy is made. Research can help it, and policy proposals coming from outside can be helpful. But in the end, the policy is going to be made in the governmental circles, and the intergovernmental circles, and in our case in the tripartite structure of the ILO, plus employers and workers.

It is very difficult to define this dichotomy in terms of issues. I am trying to think to myself whether you can, and I think it is not possible. I think that the big line is research and policy. I would suggest that research should be as autonomous as possible. If it is done within the context of international organizations, there is that space for freedom for it. On the policy side, if things are going to happen, it must be within the organizations in the end. Let me give you an ILO example at this moment. In the 1990s, you had the big debate on the whole question of core labor standards. How do we deal with it? And this came to the fore during the Social Summit. And the Social Summit, for the first time in history, said that there are a set of basic rights and principles at work. It chose seven conventions of the ILO system and said, "These are the principles: freedom of association, collective bargaining, the right to refuse forced labor, child labor, and non-discrimination."

This was decided at the highest political level by more than 120 heads of state. Then the ILO, given that these were ILO-defined standards, put in a motion a declaration that was a follow-up to that political decision. Now, this was influenced by social mobilization on the part of trade unions and other civil society organizations that brought to the agenda of the Social Summit the question of workers' rights.

In most issues that are finally decided in international organizations, you have some sort of interaction between the decision-making bodies, civil society activism, and some sort of good research that has put the issue forward in such a way that it is difficult to deny from a policy-making point of view. You have that triple interaction, but you probably need all three of them if you want to move forward.

TGW: What was your impression when you came to the ILO in 1999? Or even before you were offered the job, when you were being considered? Just to play devil's advocate here, one of the things that many NGOs have proposed over the years would be to have a sunset clause for institutions because they get old and tired and out-of-date. The ILO is the oldest UN technical institution. To what extent did you think that maybe oldness, or sclerosis, or what have you, had set in? And to what extent had the institution, in spite of the fact that is was eighty years running when you came on board, maintained an ability to adapt?

JS: I think that it had it. I think that there are two important things. One is that this is a value-based organization. And there is a very strong identity in the whole of the structure, including the constituents, based on the fact that the ILO responds to a certain value-vision of things. That is what we are about. If you come here, that is an understanding of the way you work here in the organization. And the institution, both the governing body and the staff, are clear about that. That is one point. The second one is that, at the level of the staff, there is a relatively high level of commitment to those values. A consultant, who was here before my arrival and who I kept on as a human resource familiar with the personnel and the atmosphere within the institution, said, “Look, I’ve gone to many different places. Everywhere you have cynics and everywhere you have deadwood. But the level of commitment to the ‘cause,’ quote unquote, here is rather high as compared to other organizations.” And this is my own perception.

The third one is that there are a lot of very good people. Again, there is deadwood and the rest. But you have enough to carry the day from my point of view in terms of competencies. So my problem was not so much that this institution was old, and had lost its value system, and was full of incompetent people. That was not the problem. The problem was that it had lost its focus. What is the ILO about, and how is it that we want to project what we are about? I sensed that very strongly in my campaign. In my campaign—I am elected by the governing body of the ILO—when talking to them, I, of course, gave some general ideas about what I thought needed to be done. I said, “Basically, what is important is for me to understand what you want me to do if I am elected. So a good part of this conversation," I said, "is so I can learn about what you think is necessary."

Then I discovered that they were talking to me about a very different ILO. They were putting emphasis on different parts. Secondly, they all had a rather long shopping list. So by the end of the discussion, each of them wanted to make sure that I understood what they wanted, whether that worker from the South or that worker from the North. In my mind I saw a long shopping list as a good sign because it meant there were things in the institution they felt to be worthwhile. But there was a very low level of common commitment.

Another important thing is that I was elected a year in advance. I was elected in March 1998 to take over in March 1999, which I would highly recommend, provided both the sitting director-general and the new one establish a system by which the newly-elected one is not going to speak about the ILO for a year, which is what I did. If anybody asked me, I would say that I bowed to the director-general in what he was doing. At the same time, the sitting one gives all the support for the new one, for whatever he needs from the house, in order to prepare the policies for the future, which is exactly what happened. This was quite a model transition between my predecessor and myself, particularly because I proceeded to change an enormous amount of things.

So to answer your question, I asked, "How do we focus?" I had an enormous amount of consultations, because that's the way I work, and this was consensus-building, and getting people together, and listening to the others. It's part of what I like to do. That's the way the Social Summit was put together. And I just applied the same methods. Then we wound up saying that the ILO is about four objectives. It's about workers' rights, social protection, job creation, and social dialogue. These are the four strategic objectives of the ILO. It is also about the cross-cutting issues of gender and development.

Let me say something about gender. This was an issue that I wanted to put at the heart of the ILO's work. I wanted to ensure that the ILO was a leader in the field of gender equality—to make sure we had balance, that gender equality was real in the house and in what we did. The ILO has done a lot of good work in this area. Still, going further and really mainstreaming gender is an enormous challenge. It is built into our strategic budgeting process. We have integrated gender equality into the activities under each of our strategic objectives. In fact, a UN study has commented positively on how the ILO has integrated gender into its program and budget.

We are just starting an office-wide gender audit, the first of its kind in the UN system. It is an organizational learning process about implementing gender mainstreaming into all of our work. It uses a participatory approach and is essentially a self-assessment of what we are doing on gender. We are involving the tripartite constituents and other partners into the exercise. The response has really been most encouraging—different parts of the house have volunteered to take part in future exercises.

We synthesized all these objectives and issues saying, "If we make all of these things happen, we are moving towards the goal of the institution, which is decent work." Politically, this meant a marriage between the historical agenda of the ILO between workers' rights, and social protection, and a development and growth agenda around job creation—and job creation today is enterprise creation—and consequently enabling it means creating an environment for enterprise creation and social dialogue to help all three to happen. We called it "Decent Work." Why did we call it "Decent Work?" Because my perception is that work, on the one hand, has a basic importance in terms of individual identity—it's a source of personal dignity, satisfaction, self-fulfillment. It is key to family life, something that I believe continues to be totally unweighed, because an unemployed family is a very unhappy family. We take unemployment as a statistic, and we put up a firewall with family issues and we say, "Oh my God, look at how family values are being devalued. Look at all the problems the family has," as if one thing were not related to the other. It is at the heart of community life. It is at the heart of politics.

But at the same time, if I looked at the development concepts, all the development writing covers almost everything, but very little about life at work. So somehow, this institution had lost its place in the development discussions and was not able to put its issues on the development agenda—this even happens today. I think I mentioned this in the beginning, that PRSPs, which is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of the Bank and the Fund, which focus on how to reduce poverty in the countries where we are eliminating the debt, do not have employment creation as a critical objective that is necessary in order to reduce poverty. I don't know how you reduce poverty without giving people jobs.

Now this is being changed, we've begun to work with the Bank in five different countries where we are putting employment into the picture. But I was giving you an image of what I was doing in relation to what I had seen of the ILO. The ILO was absent in the development discussion. It was sort of working in its own cocoon, in its own world. And I perceived that governing body members were saying, "Look, one of the good things of bringing you here is that you can open up the ILO a little to the world. We are too concentrated on ourselves." An indication of that loss of presence was precisely the fact that it has not been able to put the imprint on policy of the fundamental ILO issue, which is life at work. So this is the reason for putting this together.

Was the institution capable of changing that rapidly? I had to take a very fundamental and difficult decision. I was starting in March 1999; I would be presenting the budget of the year 2000 and 2001. So if I didn't do anything about the budget, I would be saddled for three years, because the budget is the place where you begin to make the changes. So I did something crazy, which was to begin preparing a budget when I was not yet sitting in this room. That's where the support of the sitting director-general was very good. I totally modified the budgets that had been done before. We had thirty-nine major programs, which I reduced and streamlined according to the four strategic objectives, which I had defined. I then organized the house around these four strategic objectives, creating four sectors, plus finance, administration, and technical cooperation.

The budget was shifted from an administrative budget to a strategic budget, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Was the institution pliable to moving in a new direction? The answer is yes. And it was done relatively quickly. I would say as soon as I came on board. Does it take some time for all of this to seep in? Of course. You make the changes and you work at them. Yesterday, I was in Turin, because we had a meeting of about sixty people to look at the new directions. Once all of this has been absorbed, it has to be taken up by the regional structures.

It has been absorbed. Now we are in the process of setting up the policy integration part and the national delivery of the decent work agenda. It is a fascinating exercise because people are very enthusiastic about it, sensing that there is an innovation. Yet it is a big agenda. We have set decent work, but we haven't filled it yet with the content, with the component of how you go ahead and do it. I was telling them yesterday that Juan Somavía, the former head of a research institute, and Juan Somavía the political animal had a clash here. The researcher says, "Look, let's go step by step. Let's do the research. Let's deepen the knowledge. Let's deepen the understanding. Then let's formulate the policy." And the political animal says, "Look, you are going to have a window of opportunity which will probably last for about six or eight months during which you need to respond to your feeling that people want change, and that they are putting you there because they want the change. If you tell them that it will take three or four years to do some research to determine which way we have to go, we will not have change." So I had to take the political opportunity while it was there. That is why we made all of these changes so soon.

Now there is something that we need to concentrate on, having defined these four strategic objectives—we don't need to do too much research on the objectives themselves, because these happen to be the knowledge basis of the ILO's pre-existence—but we now need to focus on interaction between these four strategic objectives, and the manner in which we can reinforce the decent work concept and the decent work agenda. It was not there before, but now that we have the demand, we have to fulfill the demand. But it is very, very difficult, very different, to do research on policy proposals when you have the political demand as opposed to when it's simply a good project.

Having generated the political demand, this of course produces in people an interest in actually going ahead and doing it because it is there. I am describing this whole process at some length in order to say, "The institution had the resiliency to change." But you have to keep your foot on the accelerator. It doesn't happen from one day to the other. And it obviously also produces disconnections. So you have to be attentive to make sure that the whole thing works together. There are blockages. There are the normal things that happen in an organization. But our problem has more to do with functioning than with being unable to redefine our directions.

TGW: So in this effort, you had these notions when you came, but you also had a transition team. I presume that they were of some use in trying to move this along.

JS: Absolutely. This was done with the transition team.

TGW: Is your impression that the rest of the system now understands this notion or idea of decent work?

JS: I think it is happening little by little. I think that in terms of the external perception, there is some similarity with the concept of sustainable development. I don't know about you, but when the term was coined, we probably took about three, four, or five years, depending on where we were, before it became a notion we were all conversant with. In Spanish, it's even worse. In English it sounds alright, but in Spanish it's horrible. It's *"desarrollo durable*," durable development, or *"developpement durable"* in French. It's a little bit like that with decent work. "Decent work" sounds alright in English. It's rougher in Spanish and French. But in the end both Spanish-speaking and French-speaking people, in the context of the ILO, have decided that it is a sort of a trademark that we are trying to develop here. So even though you might quarrel on this or that, in the end it's there.

But it will have to make its way. But from my point of view, the key point is not the formulation, but rather the centrality of work in how we ought to look at development policies. And that's going to be the ultimate test of what we are now doing. If we can reestablish the centrality of work in the development process, then the decent work idea becomes *ca va de soi*. If not, we have a basic problem with the substance. That is, we have been working so much with a development agenda that doesn't give importance to employment and life at work that it is actually difficult to put it into the mill.

My feeling is that we are advancing. It is very difficult to say that you have a development agenda that doesn't take life at work, and particularly employment creation, as a very fundamental part of it. And the more I speak to the governments, and particularly when I speak to the presidents and the prime ministers, they jump on the idea and say, "You are the only one who is putting emphasis on what I have to deliver for my people, which is jobs. I get all sorts of recommendations on what I have to do with a lot of other things. Nobody is helping me think about how to create employment, or very few are helping me think about what I have to do to create employment."

TGW: Is this a return to the mid-1970s and the notion of full employment?

JS: Absolutely, which is understandable, after having done such an extraordinary job in putting employment in the picture, which again at the time did not have the impact it should have had—the ILO has a difficulty with relating to the rest of the system, so the rest of the system either steals the ideas, like the basic needs strategy, which was sort of taken over and transformed into a different concept, or says, "yes," like it did with employment, but didn't really capture it and assimilate it in the right way. So this is going back to what big Louis [Emmerij] did in the 1970s in a modern context. That's why I put employment in a wider context, because I think that part of the problem was that employment, on its own, was not enough. Even the way it was organized within the office, it was a totally autonomous operation that was big and important but not linked to the rest of the institution. When the priorities of whomever came here changed, they would just cut the program and the institution was not heard as much as it is today.

The four strategic objectives provided the basis for a political consensus among the constituents. You now have a constituency, a very strong constituency, which supports employment as part of the ILO agenda. You can't cut it just like that, because it is backed by the constituency of the developing countries, of the employers, and also of the workers behind the scenes, but the workers don't want rights to be forgotten. But putting it this way, you have given employment a chance. And by not calling for "decent employment" but for "decent work," you cover all the other dimensions of the strategy. So it's a relatively sophisticated operation in terms of consensus building within the ILO, and it gives us a chance to be understood outside of the house through something that connects with people.

I have done the exercise, in some of my travels, of stopping somebody in the street and saying, "I am the director-general of the International Labour Organization," and of course I get a totally blank stare back. But if I say, "Sorry, let me say it another way. I head an organization that cares for conditions of work, and we would like to promote decent work. Do you have some ideas about it?" That's another matter. They say, "Of course I have some ideas."

So the decent work agenda wants to connect with people. And we come back to the whole notion of what I was saying at the beginning. There's a very different way of understanding problems if you are looking at policy through the eyes of people, or people through the eyes of policies. And this is a big effort to look at policy through the eyes of people. And my experience is that it does connect with people. And the ultimate success of this approach is that it is becoming clearer and clearer.

But I have two points of observation: it does respond to what people are asking in their daily lives, but I also see at the highest political levels that there is a problem of *tracasse* for heads of state and prime ministers. In order to get elected, they have to offer more jobs and better jobs. Then they don't have the means to deliver it because we are working in the global economy, in which many of the things that they need to do are not in the purview of their decision-making. So you have this contradiction between having to offer something, having to offer decent work in order to get elected, and then facing enormous difficulties in delivering it.

And the reason I find that the concentration on work is essential from a global point of view is because an incapacity to deliver on the work agenda is putting a lot of strain on the credibility of democracy. People have a feeling that you will offer almost anything to get their vote on the work agenda. Then things don't really happen. So then you vote for the other person who offers you a different solution on the conditions of work, and that doesn't happen either. Then you say, "What shit, this system," not only on this but also on a number of issues. So there is a direct relationship between the decent work agenda and your individual self-worth, your capacity to hold a family together, the peace and stability in the community, and with the credibility of democracy.

Now these things are not evident in the minds of people. But they are real in the way things happen. So the decent work agenda is directly related to very fundamental things that happen in a society. Now, as you go along and explain these things, people become more and more linked and say, "Well, of course, naturally."

Something else is happening because of the composition of the ILO; we have the actors of the real economy here. Employers' and workers' organizations represent the people who know what happens in the world of enterprises, who know what is happening in the labor market, who come together in the workplace. This is a space that the ILO has never attempted to occupy. We have been happy to be perceived as an institution that develops social policy, and particularly conventions on work. But if we are talking about the global economy having such an influence on the way all of these organizations work, the fact is that the knowledge of the micro-economy is here in the ILO; it is not in the Fund or the Bank. The people who actually live those experiences are members of the governing body of the ILO.

Now if I were to say today that we were the biggest experts on the micro-economy, the answer is no. But do we have the linkages, the backward linkages to the people who can actually put together positions for the ILO on the way the productive economy should work as compared to the macro-economy? The answer is yes. Now we have never decided to exploit those backward linkages that we have because of our constituency. And again, I think that is something that is slowly going to come to the fore.

So there is a legitimate place for the ILO in terms of these four strategic objectives. But they are all also linked to the manner in which the productive economy is working, and the opinions that we may have as to what is necessary for the production system to be able to create enterprise and generate jobs as a result.

TGW: This thought just dawned on me. The tripartite structure, and representing forces in the global economy—is this something that you think Secretary-General Kofi Annan is perhaps trying to replicate in his Global Compact, in the sense that bringing together NGOs, or monitors, transnational corporations, and the secretariat?

JS: Yes, I think it is a great initiative. At the end of the road, it is going to have to have some monitoring system, otherwise it runs the risk of being a PR operation—a PR operation for the companies, not for the Secretary-General. But it goes in the direction of integration. Here you have the Secretary-General telling companies, "Look, you are key actors in the global economy. There are some UN things that you should take into account." And he puts together human rights with environment. It is exactly the role of the Secretary-General, exactly the integrating role of the United Nations. So I can't agree more, and he has had all of my support in putting it forward. And I am really happy that, of course, there are labor standards in it.

As I say, in the end there will have to be some monitoring to make sure that what companies say they are doing is actually happening. Otherwise, you run the risk that we lose credibility.

TGW: Supposedly NGOs are reporting. If the corporate reports are not correct, they are supposed to be able to reply.

JS: Yes. But you have to make sure that they have the capability to do it, and the resources to do it. You can't just rely on it happening automatically. And we may eventually perform a function also in looking at those things, et cetera.

TGW: The term that everyone uses, "globalization," seems to appear in lots of these new documents. How does globalization link to the concerns of decent work? Where does social responsibility get tucked in between globalization and decent work?

JS: The way I have put it, and it's there in *Reducing the Decent Work Deficit*, is to say, "We are about promoting these four strategic objectives, which we define as being things that take us to the goal of decent work. I have made it clear that decent work is not a standard. It is a goal towards which you move. Each society has its own idea of what is decent, relative to that society and to the opportunities of development that you have. But it means moving forward on these four fronts and integrating them."

If that is what it is about, then if you look at the world, you have a decent work deficit in the areas covered by the four strategic objectives, in terms of workers' rights—workers' rights are violated in a number of places—in terms of social protection, with 80 percent not having adequate social protection. Unemployment is growing in the world. If you take a look at some of my speeches at the time of the Social Summit, I am giving figures of 1992 and 1993. I think, I used the figure of eighty million people unemployed. We are now up to 160 million officially unemployed. I gave the figure of 820 million underemployed. We are now up to about one billion. And social dialogue, of course—the dialogue is one of the most difficult things to get going.

So what I say is, "Well, if we have these deficits, and the organizing factor of the economy today is a global economy, then this is a legitimate way to question the global economy." What should we look for in the global economy and the globalization process that can help us reduce the decent work deficit? And it's a legitimate way of addressing the problem of globalization, instead of having an ideological view. Whether you are for or against globalization is not the issue. The issue is, from my perspective, can globalization help us reduce the decent work deficit. That's the linkage.

TGW: As we now are into the twenty-first century, what do you think is or are the major intellectual challenges that the UN system faces or could address in the next ten years? Are there things that we are not looking at that we should be?

JS: I don't have a snappy, immediate answer to that. But, beyond all the speeches and all of these things, I think it continues to be people. Are there things that we should be looking at that we are not? My answer would be, "Yes, we still have to go on looking at people." We don't focus enough on people, and on the fact that, in the end, the reason for all of these organizations is to better the lives of people. And although, it is there, in the wordings, we do not seem to be able to come together in order to actually make it happen in the lives of people.

Is that the responsibility of the UN system? Definitely not. The powers that move the world are not in the UN system. There are military powers. There are economic powers. There are centers of communication power, et cetera. So the last thing you can say is that the world is going to shit because the United Nations cannot get its act together. We cannot get our act together on a number of things, but that's not the reason for the way the world is moving. So the basic question is, how do we help to create the consciousness that the way the world is going is moving it into crisis territory?

We are still too close to the 11th of September, which makes it easy to juxtapose it with almost any issue and then link them. I don't want to do that. But it highlights the fact that we have very tense societies, and that social tensions and social crises are there. That's the reason we had the Social Summit, because we wanted to call attention to that factor. But we still haven't been able to get to the point where the powers that be will actually acknowledge that a mere combination of privatization, deregulation, and the reduction of the role of the state is not going to produce the solutions.

Intellectually, today nobody would dare to say that those three elements don't contribute to a solution. But the intellectual arrogance you had in the 1980s in relation to those three elements, as being the ultimate solution, is no longer there. Yet the policies continue to be influenced by that thinking. So we haven't moved from the intellectual weakness that those proposals would have today towards the policies that can make the change. That's where the decent work agenda comes in because it is a positive way of addressing the issues of globalization. And it's a positive way of addressing the tensions of today, saying, "If we can organize the global economy so that we can reduce the decent work deficit, we are making a pretty good contribution to showing that open economies and open societies can actually work for people, for much more people than today."

Then on the other hand, there is a governance that can acquire the legitimacy that it doesn't have today. And it is a proposal that includes business, because it includes enterprise creation. So of all of the proposals on the table today, if I had to think politically, which is the one upon which we could try to build some sort of understanding in order to make globalization work for more people, I would definitely say it is the decent work agenda because of the nature of its components, and because of all that went into building a consensus that covers employees and workers.

So we already have a rather large in-built consensus. This is the way I see it. So our composition and our proposal make the ILO a good place for the dialogue to take place. In a certain sense, this is the role of the Working Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization that we are now putting together.

A key thread that runs through all that we have talked about from the start to now is how do you make things happen, how can you produce consensus. How do you produce consensus that has the widest possible level of agreement, and at the same time has a value base to it? Move forward, but not by occupying the moral high ground and saying, "Look at me all of you," but by simply having a good ethical base and a good moral base to what you are saying, but putting it at the service of making people agree.

So I may not have a place in the intellectual history of the UN, because it is not so much about my intellectual contributions—although, about those I have made, I am happy—but more about my persistence. And you just move the agenda forward, in the context of what we said at the beginning. You chose to swim against the current, so it is difficult and don't complain.

TGW: Most of all, don't drown. Well, this has been delightful. Thank you very much. That was good fun. I hope I haven't taken up too much of your day.

INDEX

Adenauer, Konrad, 9
Adjustment With a Human Face, 80
Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), 18, 48, 81
Africa, 6, 80
  independence movements in, 6
Algeria, 6-7
Allende, Salvador, 23-24, 27, 29-30, 34, 55, 64
  assassination of, 29
Alliance for Progress, 13
Andean Group, 23, 25-26, 29, 32
Angola, 73
Annan, Kofi, 98
Antwerp, the Netherlands, 2
Argentina, 26, 35, 42
Asia, 6, 25, 25
Asian-African Conference (Bandung), 6-7
Aylwin Azócar, Patricio, 64
Bandung, Indonesia, 6-7; *see also* Asian-African Conference
Belgium, 1
Berlin, Germany, 11
Bolivia, 22, 35
Brazil, 10, 26, 26, 42
  military coup in, 10, 26
Bretton Woods institutions, 18, 47, 51, 70, 84; *see also* International Monetary Fund *and* World Bank
Brundtland Commission, 56
Buenos Aires, Argentina, 31, 35
Canada, 72
CARE, 62
Castro, Josué de, 34
Catholic Church, 58
Center on Transnational Enterprises, 55
Centre International pour le Développement, 34
Chile, 1, 4-5, 10, 20-22, 27-35, 37, 62, 64
  military coup in, 10, 30-33
Cité Universitaire, 6
civil society, 34, 42, 63-64, 84, 87
Cold War, 11, 37, 39, 42, 76-78
Colombia, 22
Commission on Global Governance, 56
Copenhagen, Denmark, 59, 67; *see also* World Summit on Social Development
Cuba, 11-12
  missile crisis in, 11-12
Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 85
debt issues, 75, 84
Declaration of Philadelphia, 70
decolonization, 6, 70
democracy, 77-79, 97
  as organizing principle for societies, 77-79
dependency theory, 10
developing countries, 7
Development Decades, 13
Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, 6
Dominican Republic, 1, 4
Dunning, J., 56
East-West relations, 11
Echeverria, Luís, 35
Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), 11, 15, 17, 29, 79
economic security, 47
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 17-18, 29, 45, 48, 63, 80-81, 85
Ecuador, 1, 4
Emmerij, Louis, 95
environmental movement, 65
Europe, 2, 8-9, 24-25, 24-25, 71
First Development Decade, 13
France, 6-8, 26, 26
Frei Montalva, Eduardo, 21, 64
Freu Ruiz-Tagle, Eduardo, 64
French Revolution, 54
Furtado, Celso, 10, 14-15, 30
gender, 38, 40-41, 45, 55, 89
Gaulle, Charles de, 9
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 14, 16-18, 39, 70
  and regional integration, 14
  and UN Conference on Trade and Development, 16-17
Geneva, Switzerland, 1, 14, 21, 24, 24, 29, 33, 53
Germany, 8, 26, 26
Global Compact, 98
globalization, 34-35, 40, 56, 100
Gossens, Salvador, 21
Group of Eminent Persons on Multilateral Enterprises, 29
Havana, Cuba, 10, 38-39
Havana Charter, 18
Heinke, Ralph, 20
Herfkins, Eveline, 53
Hitler, Adolph, 9
human rights, 36-38, 41-43, 55, 66, 78
  and the Cold War, 37
human rights movement, 65
Human Rights Watch, 42, 66
human security, 38-39, 41, 43-44, 62, 69, 70-71
  and Latin America, 72
Hungary, 11
ideas, 1, 5-6, 11-13, 38, 40-41, 56-61, 64, 79, 84, 91, 97
  and civil society, 64
  and global ad hoc conferences, 59, 78

  and independent commission reports, 56-57
  and institutional rivalry, 81-83
  and national independence, 6
  and religion, 1, 5
  biographical influences on, 1
  holism of, 48-50
  ideological confrontations involving, 12-13
  UN role in the generation of, 41
Institute for Labor Studies, 85
International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), 66
International Council of the Read Cross (ICRC), 62
International Labour Organization (ILO), 19, 27, 33, 39-40, 47-50, 57, 60-61, 64, 66, 70, 71, 78, 83-90, 93-97
  and gender issues, 89
  and human rights, 78
  and sustainable development, 94-96
  and workers' rights, 87, 94
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 18-19
Japan, 71
Javits, Jacob, 32, 56
Jolly, Richard, 80
Kennedy, John F., 13, 15, 17
Kissinger, Henry, 54
labor protections, 51
Latin America, 2-3, 5-8, 10-14, 22, 26, 35, 38, 42, 44, 71, 79, 83
  dependency theory in, 10
  human security in, 44, 71
  intellectual ferment in, 12
  military regimes in, 26
  trade issues within, 14
Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), 14, 22-23, 24-25, 27
Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies, 34, 70
Lima, Peru, 22
Maggio, Giuseppe, 21
Marxism, 10
Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), 26
Mexico, 35
Montevideo, Uruguay, 5
multinational corporations (MNCs), 55; *see also* transnational corporations
  and assassination of Salvador Allende, 55
Mussolini, Benito, 9
Myanmar, 84
Nerfin, Marc, 67
Netherlands, the, 1, 35, 74
New International Economic Order (NIEO), 68-69
New International Information Order (NIIO), 35, 68-69
New Orleans, Louisiana, 3
New York, New York, 29, 31-32, 53, 63-64, 76
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), 7, 68-69
nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), 62-63, 67-68, 76, 85, 98
  and the UN Security Council, 62-63
Nordic countries, 74
North-South relations, 74-76, 88
  and debt issues, 75-76
Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 20
Oxfam, 62
Palme, Olaf, 58-59
Palme Commission, 56, 58
Panitchpakdi, Supachai, 19
Paris, France, 5, 8, 10-12, 14, 21, 33-34, 36
Peace Corps, 13
Pearson Commission, 56
Peru, 22, 35
Pinochet, Augusto, 24, 26, 24, 42
poverty, 44, 53, 76
Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), 91
Prebisch, Raúl, 11-12, 14, 59
Pronk, Jan, 74
Reagan, Ronald, 78-79
Reducing the Decent Work Deficit, 99
regional integration, 14
Rome, Italy, 32
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 36
Santa Cruz, Hernan, 29
Santiago, Chile, 11-13, 19, 23
Sierra Leone, 77
Somalia, 76-77
sustainable development, 94
South America, 43
South American Peace Commission, 36, 38, 43-45, 70
Soviet Union, 37, 80
Stockholm, Sweden, 61; *see also* UN Conference on the Human Environment
Strong, Maurice, 42
sustainable development, 38, 41-42, 45, 55
Sweden, 35, 59
terrorism, 75
Thatcher, Margaret, 78-79
Third World, 7
trade issues, 13, 15-16, 18, 21, 24, 28, 39, 47
trade unions, 27, 35
transnational corporations (TNCs), 56; *see also* multinational corporations
Treaty of Rome, 8, 24, 24, 26
Treaty of Montevideo, 9, 14, 22
Turin, Italy, 92
UN Charter, 61, 70, 72-73, 81
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), 80
UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm), 38, 61
UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 7, 14, 16-17, 33, 56

  and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 16-17
UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 34, 47
UN General Assembly, 17, 22, 49
  Second Committee of, 22
UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 85
UN Security Council, 46, 61-63, 72-74, 76
  and nongovernmental organizations 62
  limitations of, 73-74
UN Social Summit, *see* World Summit on Social Development
UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna), 42
unemployment, 44
United Kingdom (UK), 1, 14
United States (U.S.), 1-2, 8, 13, 25, 25, 29, 76
  and peacekeeping operations, 76
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 36, 41, 58
Uruguay, 35
Valdes, Gabriel, 19, 27
Venezuela, 22
Vienna, Austria, 42
Vietnam, 6-7, 59
Washington consensus, 78, 83
Wolfensohn, James, 85
women, 42; *see also* gender
  rights of, 42
women's movement, 65
workers' rights, 60, 87, 94
World Bank, 19, 51, 73, 79, 84, 91, 97
World Confederation of Labor, 66
World Health Organization (WHO), 61
World Summit on Social Development, 59, 63, 65, 67, 78, 80, 87, 101
World Trade Organization (WTO), 17-19
World War I, 57-58
World War II, 38, 48, 70-71
Yugoslavia, 73
Zhou Enlai, 54