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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF
MICHAEL ZAMMIT CUTAJAR

BY

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THOMAS G. WEISS: This is Tom Weiss interviewing Michael Zammit Cutajar, on the 26th of April 2000 at The CUNY Graduate Center at about 5:30 in the afternoon. Good afternoon Michael. I would like to begin by asking you to tell me a bit about your own early life. A bit about your family, its background, and what it was like, I think, in particular growing up in Malta during the Second World War and shortly thereafter.

MICHAEL ZAMMIT CUTAJAR: I was born in 1940 when the Second World War had just hit Malta, but I have no recollection of it as an ongoing event. My parents and my family lived through it, so I heard about it from them and feel that it was part of my life, which has somehow colored my view of the world and of what is right and what is wrong. I feel part of that generation. It isn't history to me; it was part of my life. I grew up to see the physical damage caused by that war to Malta and lived my youth in a time when Malta was recovering and then trying to find its own feet in a world in which it quickly lost its strategic importance.

My family was made up of two strands. My mother's side were basically lawyers with a couple of doctors thrown in, typical professionals in a country in which the professionals, the *notables*, were rather important socially and politically. My father's father, my grandfather, was a businessman, so I was at an early age exposed to the wonders of the family business as an institution! Worked in it, did vacation jobs, that sort of thing, and was destined by the tradition of primogeniture to be the chief executive but decided at a certain point to go my own way. I think this was basically out of a spirit of rebellion, which has continued to characterize some of my life decisions since then. I decided to study economics because I thought, mistakenly, that it might be helpful in carrying the family business forward and also thought that it might appeal to my father as something relevant and therefore fundable. The latter worked, the former didn't,

and I stayed out of the family business after having done my first degree, which is my only degree, at the University of London.

At that point—I mean I can tell you all sorts of other things, but I’m just drawing the line more or less straight—at that point I started to look for a job, still thinking of Malta as a place to be but looking farther afield, and came across an advertisement on a bulletin board. (In those days bulletin boards consisted of boards with pieces of paper pinned to them.) It said something like “Young Economists for Africa Wanted Alive,” and I applied and was promptly offered the option of a job in Uganda or a job in Ghana. I chose Uganda because one of my far-flung family—an uncle—was working there.

This was the beginning of a scheme which has since died, I think, whereby a foundation in England, the Nuffield Foundation, through the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), topped up the salaries of green, young economists who wanted to see the world, and thereby provided some sort of input to the manpower of emerging developing country governments, or national administrations. So I found myself as a young economist—not really much of an economist but, anyway, young—in Uganda working with the Uganda Development Corporation. This was an industrial development corporation which had been working successfully in the colonial days and continued into the early years of independence. ODI was run by William Clark, whom you may have come across in the oral history of the UN since he went on to become a vice-president of the World Bank for external relations working with Robert McNamara. William was very much a man of the world and a great networker. He had a good address book. I was one of the first crop of three “fellows” who went out on this scheme. One of the other two ended up in the World Bank as well (Landell Mills, I think he produced the *World Development Report* in its early days). Various later fellows found their way into international life. William Clark invited

some of the first batch to go and work with the ODI in London, and I accepted to work on something which I didn't know a thing about. It was the second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He said, "Could you come and work on UNCTAD II which is coming up next year?"

Backtracking to dates: born 1940, started university studies in London in 1959, graduated 1962, started this job in Uganda 1963, moved to ODI in London 1965. I was married at that point, and by 1966 I was father of two, one born in Uganda. So in 1965 to London, a two-year project, which resulted in a modest book co-authored with Alison Franks. It was called *The Less Developed Countries in World Trade*. It was a guide to the issues to be discussed at UNCTAD II. It involved a fair amount of digging into what was UNCTAD I and the commodity issues and trade issues preoccupying developing countries at the time. So that was a good exercise in research and reading, accidental in a way. The notice board was an accident; this was a consequence of that.

One fine day, while I was in London, a recruiting officer—I think that's the title of a play, by [August] Strindberg, is it?—the personnel officer of this same UNCTAD visited the ODI and handed out those yellow forms that you will remember from your past life, personal history forms. "Fill it in, fill it in." I filled it in like everybody else did, and I was called to an interview and again offered two jobs. That seemed to be my fate at the time. Those were easy days then. UNCTAD was just getting established in Geneva. I was called to interview by a UK-based academic who had just taken on a job in the division of UNCTAD dealing with shipping. It was called the "Division for Invisibles." This fellow had been a lecturer at the university when I was there so he remembered me vaguely and I did him. He said there are two types of jobs available, one is more of a research job and the other is more of what in UN terms is called, or

was called, a “special assistant” job with the director of this division. I expressed a preference for the latter. The director wanted somebody who could write English but wasn’t necessarily of that nation, and I fitted the bill. And that, I guess, was the last accident for a long time because things followed on logically after that.

TGW: May I just sort of go in reverse for a minute? You mentioned that growing up in the devastation of the war had an influence on your own ideas about what was right and wrong. Did it have an influence on your choice of study or any other ideas that came on line later?

MZC: Not on my course of study. On the course of study, if you want to go back to that, I grew up in a society which was quite peculiar, a small island with some poverty. I was not afflicted by that; my family was reasonably well off, well situated socially. But, my career choice wasn’t obvious if I were not to go into the family business. People were streamed, in a way.

University in Malta was quite a long drag. There was no “6th form” in those days. So, a first degree took five years; you really had to be committed to the idea. And you had to pass certain hurdles to get in there, one of which was having good command of the Maltese language, which I didn’t. That’s a long story, but it’s still to this day a feature of our society that some people bring up their children to speak English as the “done thing,” as the socially good thing and as the medium of communication with the outside world, for which it is absolutely essential. But it leads to a neglect of one’s own national language, and I was part of that. In fact, the school I went to (St. Edward’s College) obliged one to speak English and penalized one for speaking Maltese, so you can imagine what sort of people it produced. Misfits, in a way, and there is still a lot of that around. It was not a school that specialized in producing university undergraduates, so it wasn’t evident that I would join that stream if I did not go into the family

business. What it was good at, apart from producing young businessmen, was producing young army officers. But I wasn't interested in that, although many of my contemporaries did take that track. I really wasn't interested in the military life.

So, my course of study was really quite haphazard. I didn't really know what economics was, but it sounded like something to do with business. So, the war didn't affect that at all. What it has affected, I guess, is my sense of what is right and what is wrong, of justice and of the need to work for justice. That has played a very important part in my choice of career. It isn't an accident, I guess, that I went to a developing country for my first job. I was interested in that. I was interested in the issue of poverty as against wealth and how to overcome imbalances, injustices in society. This didn't come from any family influence that I know of because my family was either apolitical or center right, in today's terms. There was no socialist influence in my family, but I grew up as somebody who would instinctively vote left. And when I see the imagery of the Second World War, which is still coming our way through the television, I associate with it and I see the goodies and baddies. Of course, now, with the passage of years, I realize that the goodies weren't always good. But there was a sense of right and wrong then; I think it affected me in that way. Not the Malta experience, which was a side show to the main thing, in which you couldn't say who was good and who was bad. But some of the bad things that were going on came through to me very strongly later.

TGW: Do you recall, either at the University of London or before that, debates about decolonization or events that look important in retrospect, like Bandung (Asian-African Conference). At the time do you recall thinking about them, chatting about them, having seminars about them, or was this something that came to you later?

MZC: It wasn't part of my life at all. I don't really know where that inspiration came from. I guess going to Uganda was partly driven by spirit of adventure, discovery, allied to an interest in the world. Malta is a very small place, you know. Wherever you look you see the sea and that's a frontier, that's a boundary. You can live there in a great sense of isolation. Some people like it and others want to get away.

No, at university I was a very poor student. I was not particularly good academically, though I got through it with a decent degree. I was considered to be bright at school; I was deemed to be clever. But I was, I think, badly educated because I wasn't taught how to learn. I wasn't taught how to research, how to read, how to analyze, and I suffered from that when I got to university. I didn't really integrate well and therefore didn't get much into discussion about the big issues of the day.

But felt myself somehow naturally drawn to the side of the reformists, the Labour Party in the UK. When I arrived at university, I was there for a general election, though I didn't have a vote. I've never voted in my life; in fact, I've never had a vote in a national election. I would have voted Labour in 1959, I guess.

One of the things I remember in that respect, one of the points which I can't say changed my life but signaled a change: in 1956, when Britain, France, and Israel were invading Egypt—the Suez Crisis—I was in Malta seeing some of it happen because Malta was a supply base. There were a lot of ships around, military activity and so on. And I was listening to this on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) radio. There was no TV at the time, and at that point I recall being on the side of the Brits. I was just out of a school which was a sort of imperialist school, as the imperial ethic was being promoted there, and I was on the side of the Brits. Three years later I would have been on the other side. I don't know what happened then, but something

did. I do recall the politics of the time in Malta were quite polarized as they continue to be between left and right, pro-British, anti-British. And although most of my friends and family were pro-British, and therefore allied with the right, I was ready to take the side of the left or to give the left a second look. Nevertheless, I would have been pro-British at the time of Suez, and then I grew up a little bit.

TGW: Was it strange, though, because Malta became independent after Uganda? So was it strange, or did it feel strange, being basically a young white guy in Uganda immediately after independence and thinking about your own country? Was this awkward? Was it challenging? Was it just an adventure?

MZC: I didn't feel out of place. I mean, I didn't feel incongruous. I didn't make that comparison, in fact that's the first time that it occurs to me. I knew that Malta was heading to independence and, in fact, became independent while I was in Uganda. So much so that the following year I actually sat for an exam to join the Malta Foreign Service. (In fact that was another incident of rebellion. I can go off on that tangent later.) But no, I didn't feel "Hey, how come these guys have it and we don't." I didn't make that comparison. Kampala at that time was a friendly place. It got a bad press later, but the early years of independence were very positive, very upbeat. It was very much influenced by the presence of Makerere University. Richard Jolly, of course, was one of the products of that institution. Most of the founders of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) of Sussex University were groomed in Makerere. So there was this ambience around, and I had some contact with that, but not much. I wasn't very gregarious at the time; I became more so later. I didn't have the sense that there was some injustice, as between Uganda and Malta. No, independence for Uganda was good, it was

happening, it was the right thing, it was peaceful. There was I, a young father and quite happy to be living in a rather isolated house, no real sense of insecurity.

There was one point where there were these military rebellions in East Africa in 1964, I think it was, when there were some soldiers driving around with guns and one jeep wandered into the drive of our house by mistake and they turned around and went away and that was that.

TGW: Well, now that we've stumbled into UNCTAD and what you've described as the last of your mistakes for a while—

MZC: Accidents, accidents—

TGW: I'm not so much, I guess, interested in the committee on shipping, which was, I suppose, a success story of sorts, but a sort of modest story in the UNCTAD cycle. I'm more interested in your impressions of the secretariat when you got there. Virtually everyone we speak to in this project mentions Raúl Prebisch as larger than life, intellectually as a *force de la nature*. What do you recall of his strolling through the corridors at that point?

MZC: Very little. I was small fry and he was the big man. He didn't stay long in UNCTAD after I joined. I joined in September 1967 and he left. It must have been in 1969, and before that he had actually moved out and left an interim management behind with two committees. One headed by Wladek Malinowski and the other headed by someone else, Paul Coïdan, I think. So, he wasn't present in my working life.

I remember clearly a couple of things about him. And of course I saw more of him afterwards when I was closer to the secretary-general's office. But at that time, he was remote. Two things I remember about him. One is his saying, which has stayed with me, that you can be objective about development but you can't be neutral. To put it the other way around, you can be committed to something while remaining objective. I think that is a very useful guide to work

in the UN. If you have no views at all, then you're lost, and that's a point made recently in the Secretary-General's (SG) report on the Rwanda debacle. Prebisch was, of course, putting it in the development context, but it has a certain general validity. The other was his fluency, his ability to speak, which I have since then associated with the Latin American politicians. I've seen Enrique Iglesias do the same thing, just stand up and give a perfectly fluent speech. Standing, I remember them standing and beating time with their hand and just speaking. Gamani Corea used to speak impromptu as well, but he'd ramble somewhat and he was somehow less rhetorical. But these Latinos seemed to have been trained to speak, or maybe born to speak. Prebisch spoke so well. I've learned to speak, but I don't have that touch.

Another thing I observed, and I've used in my time, is Prebisch's apparent ability to listen. He may have been off in a dream or something, but whenever somebody else was speaking, he was staring fixedly at this person, as far as one could see, taking it all in. So, I take that as a rule of conduct when one is sitting on a podium, as I do often now. Listen, or at least appear to be listening, impassibly.

TGW: UNCTAD also had the reputation for that time, late 1960s, mid-1960s, probably through the 1970s, of being an intellectual hothouse of sorts with lots of interesting personalities. I don't want to use the term "giant," but who were the main minds that stick out as you look back?

MZC: Well, from my very early years, I worked with one. I was the special assistant of Wladek Malinowski. He was one of the powerful people. I wouldn't call him a big intellectual, but certainly he had a very active political mind. He was assigned the area of invisibles, mainly shipping. He made out of that a campaign for developing country participation in an industry which had been monopolized by imperial powers. Shipping was very much an instrument of

empire. The British ruled the waves, at least Britannia did, and he saw it as his mission to reverse that. He could have been anywhere else, he would have taken that same line. His job was to campaign for developing countries for greater participation in whatever it happened to be. He was an example, not necessarily a good example nowadays, but an example of the committed advocate of a certain point of view. He saw his role and that of the secretariat as working for the Group of 77 (G-77), giving them ideas, more or less writing their scripts, to an extent that today would be seen as excessive, even by the 77 themselves. But at the time, when the whole concept of the developing country group was in its infancy, he saw the secretariat as necessarily helping it along. Being Polish, he nevertheless identified very strongly with the developing countries. And I learned through him the art of preparing the draft resolution before the debate had even been started, feeding ideas to delegations. I don't do that in my present job, in fact, I am very careful to steer away from it. But I learned a lot about the crafting of the legislative documents of the United Nations, how to draft UNese and so on, how to manage meetings, how to influence them. He stood out as a tactician, a very courageous man, not afraid to stick his neck out, to speak his mind.

The person whom I remember as the intellectual of that group, other than Prebisch, was Sidney Dell. But I didn't know him well; I knew of him through Malinowski. They were close. I think they had worked together when Malinowski was in New York. Since Dell remained in New York, I never got close to him. He was a rather remote person. He was, in fact, not terribly outgoing. The little I did see of him didn't teach me much about him. He obviously had a brain and he was, again, putting that brain to the service of developing countries.

Others were more diplomatic types. Paul Berthoud was one of those who was in the cabinet of Prebisch. Diego Cordovez, Jorgé Viteri, these were more operational. I don't say that

in a pejorative sense, but people who can keep the contacts going, make the system work. But in terms of intellectual leadership, I think the people that stick out are Prebisch and Dell.

TGW: What was the working atmosphere like? Was there a difference of views? Was there a tolerance for difference in views? How were the tensions sorted out in your experience?

MZC: There, I think I have to jump ahead a little bit, because in those early days I was more or less cloistered in my “invisible” space, aware through my boss of what the tensions were. There were certainly tensions. He spoke very strongly about them, within UNCTAD and between UNCTAD and the UN. I remember him speaking in most scathing terms of a certain Philippe de Seynes, who could do no good in his eyes. ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) was the pits! I later got to know Philippe and he was a wonderful gentleman, a great intellect and I got to like him very much. But he was the devil incarnate to Wladek. Well, it was part of UNCTAD’s emergence that one had to fight the New York establishment to get UNCTAD on its feet, in the same way as one had to fight the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

But, later on I became more aware of the feudal nature, I would call it, of the UNCTAD secretariat, which has never, I think, been managed as a coherent entity. I don’t think any one secretary-general of UNCTAD has devoted time to management. Maybe Ken Dadzie (UNCTAD’s fourth head, from Ghana) did try to do that, but others were more concerned with expressing themselves on the policy issues they were dealing with, getting their point of view across, choosing more or less good people to run their divisions but not really seeking, in so far as I could see, to promote a coherent view among the management team of where UNCTAD was heading and where the work was going. Maybe Prebisch did, but I was too immature to sense that. But from [Manuel] Perez-Guerrero (the second head, from Venezuela) on, I got the feeling

that as a division director in UNCTAD you had a very large freedom of maneuver to say what you liked. For example, that resulted in Surendra Patel taking one policy line, and Krishnamurti taking another, and both working in the same house.

From my present perspective, that seems horrendous because I am a great fan of working out a common line of coherence. At the same time, I see that UNCTAD's tolerance of difference was one of its appealing points. It was, by nature, a different organization. It was something new; it was advocating the rights or the interests of the underdog. It was fighting the establishment, and so it allowed the same thing to happen within its ranks. There are several examples of people in UNCTAD who just did their own thing, more or less well. And it's difficult to think of other places where they could have done it. Fred Clairmont, you remember, was one such type. I don't know that he had any supervision or guidance; he just used his time in UNCTAD to write what he wanted to.

Looking back, I think one has to count that as a plus—horrible organizationally, but a plus intellectually in terms of giving people space to think. But the fact that management, the coordination that goes with it, the search for efficiency that it should inspire, was never given much attention by the top man in UNCTAD (it's always been a man) is one of the causes of the weakness of the organization. Again, I put Ken Dadzie in a somewhat different light there. I was working closely with him, and I know that he was trying to structure things and organize things and so on. He wasn't just an ideas man; he was trying to do something about the organization.

TGW: Actually, in this book that you edited, *UNCTAD in the South-North Dialogue*, in honor of Malinowski, there was an interesting passage at the outset that reminds me of something you just said. You wrote, "UNCTAD was a child of the era of decolonization, the

first institutional response in the economic sphere to the entry of the Third World on the international scene.” What exactly did you mean? The reason I’m asking this is that one of the ways that we’re trying to, if not measure, at least suggest the importance of ideas is once they became imbedded in the form of an institution, or part of an institution, or a new unit in an institution. And UNCTAD obviously was created from scratch, perhaps the first voice in the wilderness on some of these issues. Therefore, I would like to tease out, a little bit, your own response to that sentence you wrote fifteen years ago.

MZC: Well, I understood the emergence of UNCTAD to be driven by two things. First by Raúl Prebisch’s analysis of the economic relationships between North and South, center and periphery, which is something that had been forming in his mind quite a while before the 1960s. I mean, we call the 1960s the age of decolonization, although some of the big moves—China, India—had happened before.

That was one. The other is the emergence on the scene of many independent states in their very dependent economic situation, looking for some means of catching up on the economic side what they had gained on the political side. And UNCTAD was the platform from which they voiced their aspirations, and which gave them some of the words with which to express themselves. It put ideas into their heads about what they could be aiming for. At the time, I think it was extremely necessary.

Perhaps the problem that UNCTAD has faced since then is how to adapt to the way the world has been changing, to the way in which the world view of developing country leadership has been changing. UNCTAD may not have adapted well enough. I don’t know; I’m a bit out of touch with UNCTAD now so I shouldn’t judge. But in the 1960s and 1970s, it was the place where developing countries could speak out loud, whereas in other forums they were more

circumspect. They were not very vocal in the GATT, in the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund); they were on the “recipient” end of the forum. In the UN, I guess, they were pretty vocal, but the focus was lacking there, it was more diffuse. They didn’t see ECOSOC as a friendly place because of the way it was structured. So, they could speak out in UNCTAD, and it served a very useful purpose.

TGW: How did you become interested in the environment? We are now in 1971, and you’ve moved from invisibles to the environment in the preparations for Stockholm. When did you meet Maurice Strong, and how did you get involved in what, in retrospect, was the first of the major global ad hoc conferences that have characterized the 1970s and once again the 1990s?

MZC: Well now, I said earlier that the last accident for a long time was filling in that yellow form and joining UNCTAD, joining the UN. (I should say I joined the UN of which UNCTAD was part. And I feel that because I’ve always felt a UN person first, and UNCTAD or whatever else, second.) The career moves that followed were accidental in the sense that they were not planned, but at the same time there was a natural sequence. In this case, Maurice Strong in 1971, perhaps even in late 1970 but certainly in 1971, was trying to put together a secretariat for the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) which was due for 1972, mid-1972. There had been a secretariat which hadn’t worked out. The Secretary-General of the time had scrapped that and brought in Maurice. It’s not often that that sort of thing happened so it must have been pretty bad.

TGW: Who was that?

MZC: A Swiss gentleman whom I never met and whose name escapes me but it might come back. M. Mussrad, I think. If you really want to know, Lars-Goran Engfeldt knows because he was part of the move to replace this gentleman. OK, Maurice was looking around

and improvising his team with the flair, the dynamism that we've come to know. (Incidentally, one of the things that he did straight off was to put together a symposium on development and environment in a suburb of Geneva called—oh, sorry not a suburb, it's a village in the Canton de Vaud called Founex. And German minister Trittin today in CSD (Commission on Sustainable Development) was saying, "For the first time in Rio in 1992 the world's environment and development were brought together." And I felt like standing up and saying, "No, no, no. It happened twenty years before.") Anyway, Maurice was getting this team together.

One of the people with whom he was in contact in the UN was Diego Cordovez. I forget where Diego was at the time, perhaps still in UNCTAD but if so, in the New York branch of UNCTAD. And Diego put his finger on me. I had just been offered, and in fact had accepted, a move within UNCTAD to work on technical cooperation with Paul Berthoud. This other option came up and seemed to be so much more exciting because it was something very new. I went back to Paul and asked, "Would you release me from my commitment?" And he said, "Yes." So I went into this thing, again not knowing what it was all about except that it was new and interesting. Again, the spirit of adventure or whatever. I remain grateful to Paul for his understanding.

With Malinowski I had learned the trade of the special assistant, the cabinet person rather than the specialist in a particular branch of work. The position I was asked to fill in Strong's secretariat was the assistant to his *chef de cabinet*, so I was applying the same sort of skills—organizational skills, office management, correspondence, drafting of documents, organization of meetings, this sort of thing—in a new context which was very exciting. I guess this is why I say it was not an accident.

There was a very different approach to management. There you had something called a management meeting, and I found myself taking the minutes of the management meeting from the word go. That has influenced very much my attitude toward management. It wasn't that I was impassioned by the environment, but just that somebody said, "Hey, would you like to do this? It's new, it's exciting." I said, "Sure." So that's how I got into that.

TGW: Strong, I suppose, was more akin to Malinowski in the sense that he may not have been a great intellect on the environment, but he certainly was an effective pusher and shover of ideas.

MZC: He had a much broader reach than Malinowski. They're both very energetic people, but Strong had this varied background that he really drew upon to back him in whatever he was aiming to do. Malinowski was an academic, a civil servant, a bureaucrat in the good sense of the word—somebody who knew how to make an institution work. Strong is not a bureaucrat. In fact, more of a builder who then leaves somebody else to get on with the implementation.

His address book—I mean I talked about William Clark's—Strong's was fantastic. He came from the business world and from government. He could call up on people in merchant banking. I remember reviewing letters from him, or seeing letters by him, getting things signed by him, to people like Warburg and [James] Wolfensohn (who turned up at the World Bank) and this minister in Canada and that one. His previous job had been the head of the Canadian International Development Agency, so he had all that world, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) development assistance world, at his fingertips. He was able to mobilize financial inputs. The Founex seminar, for example, was done just like that. He had a great reach and a business background, so he really was in a different league. Not an

intellectual leader in the traditional sense, but certainly a visionary. He had big ideas about where things should go, and he had big ideas about how to organize. I don't think anybody has done much that's very different from that Stockholm exercise in terms of the way you put a conference together, attract publicity to it, get the NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) involved. This was the first one with a NGO Forum. (It was miles away, by the way. They were kept at a very safe distance, as in Rio.) So, he had his way of seeing a UN venture. It was really quite revolutionary and, again, I was very glad to be part of that.

TGW: Where did this environmental idea come from? Or was it picked up by the secretariat? Many folks think there was Rachel Carson, there was the Club of Rome, there were a lot of NGOs, the Sierra Club and others who were pushing this idea. The convening of the conference and the energy that was devoted to that resulted from all of the above? Some of the following?

MZC: My recollection of the very specific driver for that conference (Stockholm)—but it may not be all the story—was the recognition of pollution. We were talking in those days of pollution not of sustainable development. Pollution was a transboundary problem. Pollution in country X could affect country Y. The typical manifestation of this was acid rain. Sweden was suffering from acid rain deposition in its lakes, acid rain coming from Britain, I guess, or from Poland, or wherever. So, it was no accident that Sweden was the driving force and the host of the conference. It was not so much environment per se, but the concept of its transboundary manifestation that got the conference going.

A second driving force was, if you like, a counterforce, which was the developing countries led by Brazil—Amazonian superpower of the Third World—saying “Hey, hey, hey, these are conditions on development, don't impose them on us. If you want to do things at

home, that's fine. But we have to develop, for which we need to grow economically. So don't put any conditions on that." And so that led to an attempt, starting with the Founex seminar, to integrate the development concern with the drive for better environmental management.

So, you have those two things: the defense against transboundary pollution, and the attempt to integrate the development discussion within the environmental one, or vice versa actually.

TGW: Actually, a quick tactical question I just thought about. The UNEP (UN Environment Programme) was another institution that embodied a new idea. But these days, UNEP is, if anything, a very marginal or modest player, and the emphasis seems to be placed on mainstreaming an issue like the environment. No agency can get by without having an environmental section. Do we have to do both, is one preferable to another? That is, mainstreaming versus the establishment of a new, dedicated institution?

MZC: Well, I've given a fair amount of thought to this question over the years. So, I'll take a little time to answer your question. When we were preparing for Rio—I say we, I was at that point in the climate business already—I was invited to an environment-development discussion pre-Rio. We were asked to give our views on what had happened since Stockholm and what hadn't happened. We were given a minute each to say something, and my minute was along these lines: that while Stockholm created environment institutions (UNEP, ministries in most countries), the job of Rio is to integrate environment in economic institutions or economic processes. But that hasn't been done, despite Rio and everything that has followed.

So I think you need, first of all, to create consciousness of the environment issue, hence the environment ministers everywhere. But it cannot be dealt with satisfactorily if it remains an isolated issue; it has to be mainstreamed. And this somehow, is not happening, partly because the

environment ministers, having found their place in the sun, don't want to give it up. They are everywhere—they are in CSD these days, they will be in a UNEP meeting in Malmö in a month, they will be wherever there is a climate conference. They love discussing climate change, so the ministers are everywhere. Climate change is a typical example of something that cannot be solved by environment ministers alone. It is deeply economical, and in many countries, of course, it is dealt with in a coordinated way. But you have, in creating the vested environmental interest, put up an obstacle to mainstreaming. That is the challenge. It was correct, in its time, to create UNEP as the advocate, we still need an advocate. UNEP is rather weak; perhaps its geographical location hasn't helped it develop a strong voice. Environment is a weak portfolio, so it's always an uphill battle. I do think we need a strong advocate with a good scientific base; it could be UNEP, could be any organization, which would have to mean the disappearance of some others. But then, the task is how to integrate that into economics, typically into the WTO (World Trade Organization), into trade. So, that's the challenge ahead.

TGW: How did you get back to UNCTAD in 1974?

MZC: That's an easy one. Following the Stockholm conference in 1972, there was the inevitable resolution before the GA (UN General Assembly) calling for the establishment of a new UN Environment Programme. This had actually been agreed to at Stockholm. So it was just a fine tuning that took place in the GA in New York in 1972.

At that point comes the question, which I had to live through again in my latest incarnation, where do we place this new secretariat? The secretariat was based in Geneva, and there was a general assumption that it was a good place to be and it should stay there. But along came Kenya with a very strong bid in the Second Committee of the GA. And I don't know if it was the first of these bids, but certainly it was very successfully organized. The votes were well

mobilized by a very active ambassador of Kenya, name of Odera-Jowi, I believe. He wore a rose in his buttonhole and so did one of his successors, maybe it has something to do with being a Kenyan ambassador. Anyway, he got the votes, and UNEP was then given marching orders for Nairobi. That move actually took place in 1974.

At that point in my life, that was an adventure that I was not ready for. Family reasons were in the way. It's probably the one professional adventure that I didn't go for when it was offered to me. And so I stayed with UNEP until the first meeting of the governing council in Nairobi in early 1974 and then moved back to UNCTAD where an opening had turned up as deputy secretary of the Trade and Development Board (TDB). It was a move to avoid something else.

TGW: And is that when you met Gamani Corea? He was not yet on board?

MZC: I returned to UNCTAD just about when Gamani started again. Yes, definitely. Wladek Malinowski was still there. Now, I'm not sure in what capacity; he may have at that point become a sort of special advisor. He knew Gamani from the old days. Gamani was very active in UNCTAD I as a delegate, and I think Malinowski was one of the partisans of Gamani, if you like, in taking over UNCTAD. Wladek wasn't so hot on Perez-Guerrero (PG), but he was very keen on Gamani, and one of the things that followed quite soon was that I found myself being mobilized by Malinowski to do odd jobs for Gamani. So, while I was deputy secretary of the TDB, I was being dragged into front office, secretary-general's office work, and within a year I had been asked to join as special assistant to Gamani. Stein Rossen was deputy secretary-general, having become the first occupant of that post under PG. So, I joined that office in 1975.

TGW: What was the most interesting and the least interesting part of being there?

MZC: I mean, I was pleased. I was trying bravely to organize an office. Something which I thought was important, which I had done before, I've done since, and I still think is important. Getting things to happen in a timely way, getting information, correspondence, papers to flow in the right direction and having action taken on them. It was quite an uphill battle with Gamani, not only with Gamani, mind you, but very much so with him. And I found myself working a great deal with Stein, who had a much more organized approach to work and Frédéric Tabah and others in the office at the time. If you like, we were organizing the work despite Gamani, which is fine, that was Gamani's approach to work. One of his classic phrases—I told you about Prebisch's phrase that marked me—Gamani had one which marked me in a negative sense. I was horrified by it, but it's very true. He let papers pile up on his desk and said, "Don't worry, they'll take care of themselves." Because in the end if you neglect a piece of paper, it does take care of itself.

TGW: Actually, Jack Stone may have learned that from him or taught him that.

MZC: Jack Stone must have taught him that. Paper man, oh yes! Gamani was a person who appeared to be very sure of himself, very bright. He had led, I think, a rather protected existence. Certainly very brilliant. I don't know that he was ever exposed to any hard knocks, but he felt quite comfortable talking to anybody. He was, as I said earlier, a very fluent speaker. He could make an extempore speech. I think the most frustrating experience of my working with Gamani was when I once sat up late laboring on a speech; it was at the Rome World Food Conference in 1974. I was working with the secretariat of the conference but nevertheless helped to write a speech. And I saw him just put the speech aside and give something completely different, obviously much better.

He had a great disrespect for paperwork and bureaucratic routine and so on. And since my job was to try and organize all that sort of stuff, there was some frustration. But he was very tolerant of my efforts. Looking back on it, I don't have any bad thoughts about that time. I certainly wasn't, at that point, a thinker nor much of a talker. I was more of a scribe, if you like. I wrote things, tried to organize paperflows, things like this. Observed what he was up to, didn't have much of a part in it though.

TGW: When he retired, you actually wrote about his intellectual prowess. He has a Ph.D. in economics and had written a number of things. Did this facilitate his leadership in the secretariat, which obviously was responsible for ideas above everything else? Or did this get in the way?

MZC: Well, he brought ideas into the secretariat. His approach to the commodity problem was his contribution. Prebisch had his analysis of inequitable development, of imbalanced development. Perez-Guererro was not an intellectual contributor but more of a political operator, I think, seizing the opportunities that arose around the early 1970s with the end of the gold standard, and [Salvador] Allende, and UNCTAD in Chile. I wasn't there at the time, so I'm a bit fuzzy about that period.

But Gamani came with his ideas. He had a program. He had an agenda. His intellectual prowess was possibly a barrier in that he was so bright that he may have had difficulty communicating with some of his colleagues. And whereas he might try a little bit to get across, he would also be quite inclined to leave things go. I think he was the prime example, that I could see, of somebody who was not at all interested in coherent management. He was interested in getting his ideas across, and it didn't really bother him if one of his directors was saying something which was intellectually incoherent with what he was saying. He would say, "Oh, it

will take care of itself, as well.” So, he had good examples and bad examples to give, and I took those with me. You remember Surendra Patel and Krishnamurti? They were very different in their world views, in their politics, in their policy prescriptions. Yet they were working in the same organization. And happened to be from the same country too, but it’s a big and diverse country!

TGW: I mean, IPC (Integrated Programme on Commodities) and the Common Fund, this is, I suppose, the major story. What did Gamani actually think he was doing, and why did he move in this direction? Did he basically come with a program? Did he develop it while he was there? What kinds of calculations or strategy and tactics did he have in mind?

MZC: I don’t know, really. He has written about it, and I haven’t read the book. I imagine that he would have brought the ideas in with him. I’m sure that Prebisch influenced him in that sense. They both looked at dependence on commodities as a weakness, and I think they’re right. But, they both thought that this weakness could be overcome by policy intervention in commodity markets. Well, it hasn’t turned out that way. So even though it may be a source of weakness, you have to look for the solution somewhere else. Certainly, nowadays, intervention in markets doesn’t really work, except when Mr. Greenspan intervenes to shore up Wall Street! So, I would imagine he brought that in with him, maybe shaped it with others around him like [Bernard] Chidzero and so on.

But it didn’t really outlive him. What was it all about? There was a strong counterattack on UNCTAD after Gamani left. I think the Integrated Programme or the Common Fund exists somewhere, I’m not even sure. I’ve never seen a word about it in the press; I’ve never seen a publication, a paper, a job advertisement. There was a big interest, I remember, in who would get the first job of executive director or whatever and then it sunk from view.

TGW: Was this doomed to fail? Is it the fragility of commodity stabilization or the power of the industrialized countries?

MZC: Oh, I think it came at a wrong time in history. When did Gamani leave UNCTAD?

TGW: 1984

MZC: 1984. Well, I mean, [Ronald]Reagan/[Margaret] Thatcher came when, 1979, 1980? That really did it. UNCTAD rode on producer power for awhile, while the oil exporters were exerting that and calling for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). And then along came Reagan/Thatcher and that was that.

TGW: Actually, Christopher Brown, in this book *The Political and Social Economy of Commodity Control*, wrote a scathing critique of, I suppose, top management at this time.

MZC: Of UNCTAD?

TGW: Yes, have you seen that? The people who are doing work on trade and finance, John Toye and Richard Toye, just were curious whether you agreed with this. I think much of it relates to the management you spoke about. John is the former head of the Institute for Development Studies at Sussex, and he's been the director of the Finance Division, and now he's going back to Oxford, and Richard is his son.

MZC: I see, I don't know John Toye. Anyway, what's the question?

TGW: Well, basically, how much of this scathing critique do you agree with?

MZC: What was the critique?

TGW: Basically, top management and the way the commodities issue was dealt with, being politically inept, et cetera.

MZC: I don't know who could have predicted this turn around in the way that governments of industrialized countries saw their role, in their prescriptions for correct economic management and the limitation of their role in it. OK, Gamani didn't see that coming.

TGW: No, I don't think anyone else did either.

MZC: No.

TGW: One of the other things that you wrote in this book in the mid-1980s, but it was about the earlier period, was that you thought one of UNCTAD's successes, well you actually listed several, but two of them were in generating new ideas on policies for trade, finance, and money, and in promoting a climate of intellectual and political opinion more favorable to change in existing policies. What, in your view, were the best and maybe the worst of these ideas? And, what was the link between an idea and the change in intellectual and political opinion? What are the dynamics between the two?

MZC: I'm not sure I get all of that. A typical approach of UNCTAD that I was referring to then was to propose that tariff preferences are a good way of promoting development. And then to bring it about or to encourage governments to pursue that aim in the appropriate organization, which was the GATT. So you had the GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) in which UNCTAD had some sort of monitoring role, I recall. Another perhaps less evidently good idea, but it had its day, was the link between the issue of SDRs (special drawing rights) and development finance. So, there again, UNCTAD would come up with an idea, but it would be the IMF that would take it and put it into practice. I think UNCTAD was more successful in that sense than in actually carrying out change itself, since it wasn't really accepted by the industrialized countries as an organization that they were going to entrust with actually doing things.

TGW: Actually, I would have to agree that the comparative advantage, I think, would have been in the generation of ideas. But there was such an emphasis upon negotiating a number of things. It seems to me most of the energy and attention went there, rather than to the development of longer-term perspectives.

MZC: Yes.

TGW: Why?

MZC: Well, there was, I guess, a quite natural wish to build monuments, to be associated with achievements, typically in some sort of legal or quasi-legal form. Hence, the various exercises to negotiate codes of conduct. I think, looking back, one can see that the timing of these was virtually always wrong. For example, The Code of Conduct on Liner Conferences was the big achievement of Malinowski in shipping. I forget the actual title, but anyway it's more or less that. It attempted to codify the right of developing countries to participate in conference trade, liner conference trade. It came at about the time when liner conferences were disappearing as a form of organization in the shipping industry. They had a great historical relevance but it was waning when this attack came, so by the time the code came about it was more or less irrelevant. A code of conduct on transfer of technology never came to be, but it was an idea that more or less coincided with the retreat of governments from the market. So that governments now say, "Transfer of technology is very important, but it's not something we do." So, I guess, one has to say, unfortunately, UNCTAD's attempts to codify change came too late.

The world was changing in a way that people didn't anticipate. I can apply this to my own experience. I grew up in the 1960s; my kids are on the job market in the 1990s and 2000s. They have a parent who grew up in a time when employment wasn't a problem. Everywhere I turned I was offered one or two jobs. And it's not because I was particularly qualified or

brilliant or anything; it was an easy time and then that time changed. Had I been out on the market, I guess I would have felt the change, but I was sheltered by UN employment most of the time.

TGW: One of the factors you mentioned in, I suppose in the middle of the 1970s, which fueled the enthusiasm about moving ahead with commodities and the IPC, et cetera, was the ability of one set of commodity producers, OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), to set an agenda and increase prices after the Six Day War. How precisely did this new leverage make possible new ideas, or new framing of issues, or broadening the agenda as a result of a change in their own leverage?

MZC: I think the ideas preceded OPEC. I mean the ideas about market stabilization and of consumer cooperation as a force in influencing the market. That was the Prebisch thesis. Commodity agreements were what he prescribed. I remember looking at this in my work in 1965, 1966, 1967, and thinking that. I think I had written then that it could work with oil, it could work with copper, but not much else. I don't know why I said that, probably a sense of their strategic importance, as opposed to commodities like tea and coffee. Anyway, the ideas were there before, but here was the example of a group of producers actually doing it. So that sent quite a wave of euphoria through the political system of the developing world. Don't forget, this was the time when the U.S. (United States) was losing the war in Vietnam too. More or less, no?

TGW: Yes, 1975 was the end.

MZC: So, you had two big messages. One, that a developing country can beat a superpower in armed conflict, or force it to withdrawal. Two is that a group of commodity producers can set the price if they cooperate. So those two things together, I think, were

encouraging the thoughts of a new world order, as somebody called it later. So, that is, I think, what the OPEC action did in the more general sense. It was probably a mistake to think that you could reproduce in tea or even in rubber the balance of forces that apply in the market for petroleum.

TGW: Well, I think that, somewhat ironically, the ability to set the agenda for a year or two based on oil contributed to a situation in which much of the developing world was then also paying substantial debt and which then laid the way for a more intrusive form of adjustment. So, the ironies in these are rife. And so as I look back, I guess, one of the things to ask is what about the path not taken, which was trying to set up a special effort, or whatever you want to call it, for the “NOPEC” countries, and an ability to try to keep the 77 more together and not come apart as a result of, in particular, the 1979 increase and then the debt crisis of the 1980s. What do you recall from these efforts to try to do something special for NOPEC countries and to compensate for their dire situation?

MZC: What do I recall? I recall the establishment of IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). I’m not sure if there were some new facilities in the IMF. I have a vague recollection of that and certainly the accession of Saudi Arabia to a permanent seat in the IMF, a permanent seat on the Board of Governors, whatever it’s called. Anecdotally, I remember Prebisch, and if I’m not mistaken Sidney Dell, being involved in an exercise, which had some UNese name, in New York which was meant to mobilize funds, for the countries adversely affected, funds from “countries in a position to do so.” I remember that, “countries in a position to do so.” I’m fuzzy on that, my memory is extremely selective.

TGW: All of our memories are extremely selective. I just recall, because I was involved with least developed countries, the tensions between trying to keep the Group of 77 under one

big tent and the obvious wealth of one part and the obvious poverty of another, and the idea that doing something special for poorer countries would drive a wedge in the solidarity, whereas there was no wedge at the top. So, I just look back at that period as a terribly important one and, since it also coincided with this flip-flop in western politics, as a probably lost opportunity.

MZC: You mean that the West could have driven a wedge in the 77? Well, that, if you like, is still going on. I think one has to go out of the economic sphere to understand that. Well, first of all, the wealth of oil exporters is relative. If you look at the numbers, they're not among the richest countries, but still there is a lot of money flowing in and in some cases they have a rather rich leadership. But, it is a dependent wealth. It's not as solid as a wealth based on a flourishing industry or service sector. I don't know quite how to describe this.

But the second thing is that people will decry the lack of logic, of economic logic, in the Group of 77, or the concept of "North-South" or of "developing countries." But it is not a question of logic. There is a sense of not being in the club. Saudi Arabia may be rich, but it certainly is not accepted as a member of the inner circle. It's foreign, it's not Christian, it's not "white," it's not western, it's "the other." It's a most fundamental feeling; I'm speaking with some emotion now, because here am I, I'm Maltese. I'm, I guess, you could say almost European. Most of my countrymen would burn me; they would say of course we're European! But this feeling of not belonging or of being excluded still comes through if you're in a country like England where there are definite barriers as to who is in and who is not. That's a rather peculiar case, but the feeling of exclusion is a very strong phenomenon in the world and anyone who can share that feeling with somebody else has an immediate solidarity. Of course there are many contradictions and ironies in that, in that you have exclusion working within the developing world too. You have all sorts of racist and elitist barriers within it as well. It's very

easy for countries to band together against the U.S., against the OECD, against the rich white West, whatever you want to call it, because of the difficulty of that rich white West in accepting somebody who is not western and not “white” into the fold. Japan succeeded; the Shah’s Iran tried and failed.

TGW: Actually, during the conversation, we’ve mentioned several ad hoc conferences: NIEO, special session of the GA, Stockholm, UNCTAD itself, the Paris Conference on Least Developed Countries, women, population, and on and on and on. What exactly is the utility of these sessions which some people see as crucial, others see as jamborees? What in your view, at least in terms of flagging issues and keeping ideas in front of governments and NGOs, what is their precise utility?

MZC: I think the utility is very uneven. It is to give visibility to an issue and to give support to people and groups who are militating for something. The women’s conference in Beijing, where I was not, had a value in that it put gender issues up for scrutiny globally and gave support—moral support, strength—to groups fighting for gender equality. The Stockholm conference on the human environment put the subject on the agenda for the first time. The repetition of such conferences is dubious. Rio (UN Conference on Environment and Development) was, in a sense, not quite a repetition of Stockholm; it was more than that. The great value of Rio was that, because of Maurice Strong’s organizing genius, it was a summit. It actually attracted heads of state and government. Just getting the head of state to go somewhere produces all sorts of tremors through the machine of government, and all sorts of things have to be done to explain the issue, to write the briefs, to work out what the president or prime minister has got to do. So they all came and signed conventions in Rio. We got 150 signatures in few days because they had to do something, to have a photo opportunity.

So, they certainly have value, but the repetition devalues. So Rio Plus Five had very little impact. Rio said environment and development have to be seen together. That message got through, and besides there was this convention on climate change, this one on biological diversity—two new instruments, fine. Rio Plus Five: I was there, but I can't extract anything from the morass of words that gave me anything new on top of Rio. I don't know what Rio Plus Ten is going to do. I'm trying to figure out by listening in these days. The Millennium Summit? Very big idea, what's it going to put on the map? Perhaps the role of private sector in international cooperation? In looking at the SG's report, it's not too clear. So, certainly yes to put things on the map, and yes to give support to people who may be laboring against the odds to get their points of view across, but beware of repetition and institutionalization.

TGW: Well, another vehicle that's favored, or over the years has been favored, more to put things on the map than to provide a gimmick for governments to do something, are reports from eminent groups of people: Pearsons, Brandts, Brundtlands, et cetera. In your view do these make a difference and if so, how?

MZC: We all remember them. You mention those magic words, and I know exactly who they were and what you're talking about. Do they make a difference? I can't really judge. First of all, I think that it's unnecessary to produce a book to make a difference, but people seem to be geared to write books.

TGW: Careful now, you're on delicate turf.

MZC: Yeah, I realize where I am, I might be dropped out of the window here. You're trying to change the way that political leaders, business leaders, trade union leaders look at things, and they don't read books. So, OK, by writing a book, you're providing material for the people who brief them to give them a better brief. But, I'm not sure that you need to write a

book. Getting a group of people with some clout to put their name to a message, yes. What I'm questioning is the carrier of that message. I think Brundtland performed a good service. That's one I can speak to with some recollection still, performed a good service in evolving the notion of sustainable development. It is rather vague, but it's useful, it's a useful label and sustainability is something which has the merit of being a global notion. It is mistakenly limited to developing countries, but sustainability is for everybody. Pearson is too far back for me. Brandt basically said development cooperation, no?

TGW: Yes, a new partnership of sorts.

MZC: The new partnership is coming about in different forms. People's tongues are hanging out for business opportunities in China, that's the new partnership of today.

TGW: Different partnership, right?

MZC: But, you know those old maps of Africa where there's a big hole in the middle with mythical beasts? We're still there; nobody's interested in that African hole.

TGW: Well, I think probably timing has a lot to do with these. Brundtland (*Our Common Future*) came out post-Gorbachev and in a period of time in which the idea was acceptable. Brandt (*North-South: A Programme for Survival*), which I think analytically was a very strong report, landed smack dab in the middle of Ronald Reagan's inauguration. So sometimes, I think, timing over which you have little control actually can, alas, do a lot about your message.

MZC: It's amazing in, well amazing isn't the word, but it's remarkable that in all we're saying this Reagan/Thatcher turnaround has been so powerful, has had such influence. That's really a historical break in a pattern or reversion to an earlier pattern, one could say.

TGW: Actually, one of the themes that hasn't come up, now that I think about it, is tensions. You've sort of *en passant* mentioned the Bank, the Fund, GATT, and UNCTAD all in the same sentence. To what extent are tensions between parts of the UN system, Bretton Woods, GATT, and now the WTO which is not part of the UN system, to what extent are these useful? In this country, many people grumble about overlap and duplication. But at least as I look at tensions they can be useful. As you look back over this period, the obvious tensions and ideological, or I suppose analytical, tensions between Geneva and Washington, or Geneva and the other part of Geneva and GATT. What do you recall from these, and how are they useful, either to UNCTAD or to the World Bank?

MZC: To me tensions at the intellectual level, in the sense of different policy approaches, different analyses of a situation, are a form of diversity to be welcomed. A competition of ideas, if you'd like. I think that's a good thing, and it's a pity to try to achieve uniformity because you're depriving the system of the opportunity to change and to grow through change. So from that point of view, I'm for them. Tensions in actually trying to get things done are different; they can be wasteful of public money. Say in technical cooperation, in humanitarian relief, this sort of thing, competition among agencies can lead to inefficiencies in the flow of relief. Even in that sphere you can talk about tensions as a form of competition in offering services. Can UNDP (UN Development Programme) do a better job than UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) in a particular situation? Perhaps, but I would be more inclined, given that we're not in a competitive framework, we're talking about institutions for dispensing public money, I'd rather they have organized some rational division of labor but not intellectual uniformity.

There may be some contradiction in what I say. Coordination has always been a great buzzword in the UN; it puts me to sleep. One of the joys of my life is that I've never been too much involved in interagency coordination mechanisms. One of my best friends, Patrizio Civili, whom I'm meeting for dinner this evening, has thrived on it all his life. So it takes different strokes. I think you can coordinate something to death. If coordination means drawing up a repertory of who does what and saying of course we all agree that we will respect each other's sovereignty, then that doesn't add much. So, I'm not a great fan of coordination for its own sake. I am instinctively in favor of a coherent approach to doing things, but in favor of intellectual diversity. In UNCTAD, of course, what I saw as its strength was its readiness, its availability to say something different. The moment UNCTAD conforms, it really ceases to have any reason to be. You need that sort of organization to be looking for what is wrong in the other person's argument. For that to be done well, it has to have a certain intellectual honesty in what it's doing, it has to be challenging. But if it becomes too attached to its own arguments, then of course it can fall victim to complacency or worse.

TGW: I don't know whether it was complacency. As I look back, I wonder whether there wasn't too much respect for the orthodox line coming from the G-77. Swimming against the tide, it seems to me, requires throwing various temperatures of cold water on different groups of people, and I'm wondering whether one of the challenges for UNCTAD, or other parts of the UN that are involved in generating ideas, is being willing to stand up and be counted, even if it's unpopular?

MZC: Coming back to that Rwanda report?

TGW: I think that sets a new standard, in honesty.

MZC: I'm very interested. I'm seeing John Ruggie to find out what's actually being done about that. It's a wonderful statement but how does one translate that into daily practice in an organization like ours, where other than the Secretary-General, it's not that easy to speak out on big issues.

TGW: I think no one except the Secretary-General could have signed that report or the Srebrenica report.

MZC: Sorry, it's the Srebrenica report that the SG signed, right?

TGW: Yes.

MZC: And it's there that he brings forward that discussion of moral equivalence and so on.

TGW: And the Rwanda report was of [Ingvar] Carlsson. And then there's also this new report by Bob Fowler on Angolan sanctions, which takes a different kind of tack on honesty and calls spades shovels in a very unpopular way.

MZC: That I haven't seen. But, applying this to the economic and social area, and UNCTAD in particular, it's a rather different set of issues that one is dealing with. It's not life and death. If you're looking at an organization which should be devoted to challenging convention, let's put it that way, to looking for another point of view, to finding the weak points in someone else's argument, then it's a tricky job because you've got to be pretty honest in what you're saying and not be afraid to say that you're wrong. You can't espouse a black-and-white approach to everything, and one of the weaknesses of UNCTAD, since it was trying both to do that and to be an advocate of the 77, was that the more unthinking UNCTAD staff members would be taking the line that the 77 is always right, especially if it is that the 77 are saying what

we are telling them to say. And of course, you have a tension if you try to do that, which is a perfectly fine advocacy tactic, and also try to be intellectually honest.

TGW: Unresolvable in that case. Was there ever any serious consideration given to making UNCTAD a southern secretariat? Squaring the circle, which I thought Sidney Dell tried to do in your book, or the more subtle Prebisch commitment and objectivity, but doing away with being a universal institution, being a more partisan one. I know it was discussed, but who was for it and who was against it? The West was always against paying for it, but were there other concerns?

MZC: Well, the West was speaking with forked tongue on this. I'm now referring to a later time, when there was this attack on UNCTAD. There was the [Alister] McIntyre interregnum after Corea and then Dadzie. The West was saying that UNCTAD should become a sort of OECD of the Third World, in effect. A place for analysis, research, policy advice, perhaps technical cooperation but not negotiation and that is what UNCTAD declares itself to be now.

I don't know if you've read the documentation for UNCTAD X in Bangkok. I just skimmed it, but I was quite struck by a very strong, to me, a very strong statement by [Rubens] Ricupero (SG of UNCTAD) saying, "Don't worry. We're not going to negotiate anything, come to Bangkok and talk, this is a dialogue, this is a parliament of the world. But don't be afraid; there is no negotiation. You're not going to give anything away." So, that has come through, but it's still not the same thing as the OECD of the Third World, it's not a southern club, it's paid for and very much influenced by the North.

Where I'd like to go back to is Perez-Guerrero's time, this must have been early seventies, when he was trying to get some sort of Group of 77 secretariat set up. I forget the label

it went under. I knew of that, I wasn't involved in that in any way, but I knew of it happening, and I remember learning at the time that the idea was torpedoed essentially by Argentina, which is absolutely understandable given Argentina's view of its own place in the world, which is like an Australia that got by mistake grafted onto the South American continent, but quite ironic given that Prebisch was Argentinean. Argentina was always, in those years, rather unhappy at being in the Group of 77. Remember they weren't nonaligned, and probably at the root of many of those Afro-Latin American conflicts over coffee or cocoa. The lack of solidarity between Latin America and Africa was quite remarkable at the time. Struggles that took place between those two groups on commodities issues were very strong.

TGW: You mentioned Dadzie, for whom you worked also. You vaguely mentioned earlier differences in his concern with detail and management, maybe emanating from his position as director-general. Are there any other differences in the Corea-Dadzie leadership styles that are of note?

MZC: Oh yes. They're very different people. I have very great respect for Dadzie as a diplomat—I think that's the best way of describing him. A tremendous listener. In terms of looking at lessons I've learned, I've learned a tremendous amount from Dadzie that is useful to me in what I do now. Very little from Corea because he's a big intellectual, you don't really learn much from him that you can apply to yourself if you don't have the spark. Dadzie was a diplomat, listened very carefully to what the other person was saying, sometimes playing it back to make sure he'd got it, and was always looking for formulations. His weakness, of course, was that he dealt in words, diplomats deal in words, and words sometimes cover up a lack of substance or disagreement or whatever. But as a wordsmith, as a person who was trying to craft text that brought people together, he was really very good. And the way I saw Dadzie was that

he was very consciously trying to maintain UNCTAD as an institution, despite a very strong U.S. attack, and keep at least some of its soul while surviving in a new world and moving away, indeed, from the negotiating function. Although, at the beginning of his term, he was still looking for ratifications of the Common Fund instrument. He got the Russians to ratify. By UNCTAD VIII—I was not at all involved in UNCTAD VIII, I was a visitor by then—he was trying to hold it all together against what he saw as a very strong attack.

TGW: So that in his view, he was able to at least somewhat counteract this less favorable political climate for UNCTAD rather than make it worse?

MZC: He understood what was happening, I think, and he went farther, I guess, than I was happy with. This is another way of saying that he was more perceptive than I was of where you had to go to stay afloat in this particular tide. Remember the issue of governance, which is now everywhere. I was very unhappy with it at the time. Not because I thought bad governance was a good thing, but because I didn't see what place it had in an UNCTAD agenda, which was essentially dealing with the international, external constraints to development. The whole idea of isolating external constraints to development from domestic policy has gone by the board and people look at the whole thing in an integrated way. Dadzie was much more understanding of the need to move in that direction. The 77 was not, but he was edging them that way.

So, I was in a strange situation then because I was writing a lot of his stuff, whereas Gamani would basically reject anybody else's text and would speak and then you would have people typing from a tape. Dadzie would insist on a fully fashioned speech, and I was the speech writer among other things and he relied on me. Very often just before the speech was to begin, there was no text and it would turn up at the last moment, and he would read it off. My rhetoric in there was somewhat to the left of where he actually was, I think, but he was quite happy to

read it. But then I felt that really he was trying to move in another direction. It was useful for him to sound more to the left, but he was moving more to the middle because he felt it was necessary to keep the U.S. on board.

TGW: Of course then, by the mid-1990s, it wasn't the U.S., but it was the Commission on Global Governance that was proposing tossing UNCTAD out. So it was not a very happy moment within the secretariat.

MZC: Who was The Global Governance Commission?

TGW: Sonny Ramphal and Ingvar Carlsson.

MZC: Peter Hansen was the secretariat, no?

TGW: That's right, not until the publication of the report. He had left to go to DHA (Department of Humanitarian Affairs) before going to the Middle East, but in the preparations he was. We skipped, I didn't mean to skip it, I want to go back to it, your fling here with an NGO, IFDA (International Foundation for Development Alternatives), and I remember actually, I remember bumping into you after you'd been there awhile and I asked you what the biggest change was. And you said you didn't have to wear a tie to the office.

MZC: How right you are. I really feel quite relaxed without a tie.

TGW: But there must have been some other differences too.

MZC: Yes, that was another of these, I would say, natural progressions. The founder of IFDA was Marc Nerfin who was the *chef de cabinet* to Strong in the Stockholm exercise and with whom I worked closely. He created this NGO to hold together the Stockholm network, or rather the Founex network to be more precise, the environment-development network. The funding came from Dutch, Swedish, and Norwegian sources, the so called like-minded (as we called them then), who had been involved in funding the Stockholm exercise. All the Stockholm

players were there, including some that had evolved to other roles like Iglesias and Corea, [Ignacy] Sachs and Mahbub ul Haq.

It was a place to promote dialogue, to give a vehicle for people to put their thoughts on paper. And Marc, having set this up, wanted to create a very small secretariat, and he asked me to join him in 1978, which I did, again, I guess, because I was interested in something new. I forget the order of things. I had been approached by Dadzie, who had just been appointed DG, director-general for development in New York. I believe I had already accepted Marc's offer when Dadzie came along, and I said no, I won't change now—unlike my earlier move to the Stockholm secretariat where I did change tack. But I stayed in close touch with Dadzie and joined him later, as you know.

In terms of the ambience, IFDA was very different type of work. Not wearing a tie was symbolic; it was something I love and I do so now. I may be one of the few senior officials of the UN secretariat who goes to the office in an open shirt and jeans, but that's the beauty of being in Bonn where nobody else is seeing you. The ambience was very different; it was more academic in a way. We were a small group, more open. Marc was the boss most definitely. Again in terms of learning, I learned from him too in terms of chairing meetings, keeping up networking.

I have great respect for him as an individual. He had a militant past, and he was trying to keep his militancy alive. In the end, the venture failed because that too ran out of supporters, the times changed, it didn't change with it. The money was not forthcoming anymore. The like-minded sources dried up or turned their attentions elsewhere, but it was good while it lasted. The most important thing it did to me was it convinced me that I should resign from the UN which I did in 1980.

I spent a few years, five years or so, out of the UN. In fact, I discovered then that having been for thirteen years in the UN, it's very difficult to do anything else. I spent all my time doing consultancies for the UN, but still it was an experience in unemployment, or unstable employment, which I found quite useful in understanding the plight of others. IFDA was fun in that it was an NGO. It was not so institutionalized; it was an organization which brought together some very interesting people around the table to talk in small groups, 15, 20. I didn't do much talking but I started to learn how to talk then. Nowadays I talk a lot, and people think I've been a chatterbox all my life, and I keep telling them, "No I haven't. I was a late developer."

So, whereas in the UN I learned how to write, I think my exposure to oral self-expression started in this phase, which I appreciate very much. In terms of exposure to a network, it was really very good, as opposed to my earlier manifestations when I was a bag carrier, basically. And a lot of those people are in. Juan Somavía heads the ILO (International Labour Organization). They're around. Are those all the names I dropped?

TGW: These are all the names and acronyms that are going to help the typist.

MZC: I see, I see. You're very systematic.

TGW: I try. I'll put it another way. What is the comparative advantage of trying to spawn or nurture new ideas in a private versus an intergovernmental context, an NGO versus the UN secretariat? Can you do certain things better in an IFDA than an UNCTAD, and certain things better in an UNCTAD than an IFDA?

MZC: You can certainly generate new ideas more easily outside an intergovernmental framework where you're not beholden to anybody, where you don't have to find consensus in an intergovernmental body whose participants may be rather mediocre or unimaginative, let's say. But if you are operating in the international spheres, as IFDA was, what you have to try to do

then is to get your ideas to stick or to translate them into forms that will be carried into intergovernmental processes and this is not easy. If you have the ideas without getting them into the UN or some similar system, they wither out there. At the time we were working on what was to be the last of the international development decades, it was the third.

TGW: We had one more.

MZC: A fourth?

TGW: Yes we had a fourth.

MZC: No!

TGW: There's no fifth. Actually Gamani was the head of the fourth.

MZC: Really? In the Committee for Development Planning (CDP), or something like that?

TGW: For the 1990s.

MZC: Wow, I missed out on that one. Well, OK, it was the time of preparation for the third, and so it was an attempt, if you like, to influence thinking going into that, but when you translate that into the GA Second Committee and its intellectual level, it's not easy. It's one of the most conservative clubs around.

TGW: Is it possible to generalize about the quality of the international civil service, either in particular moments or over time? Can one actually say something intelligent about how this compares with a solid NGO on the environmental side? I don't know, for someone doing research, Greenpeace or the World Wildlife Fund and UNEP? Or on the development side, IFDA and UNCTAD. Or with a government? Or do we just have too many kinds of agencies and too many kinds of people? Is your experience as an international civil servant a positive one?

MZC: Yes, for two reasons. One is that I'm committed to the ideal of cooperation. I mean, getting people of different cultures, different nationalities to work together is tremendously challenging; it's very interesting. I would be bored stiff if I had to work with a group of people of one nationality, my own for example. Not because they're bad, but because they're more or less uniform, they think the same way. They argue perhaps over politics, but they have a lot in common. And I've really enjoyed working with people from very different backgrounds.

I accept that this has its costs; the transaction costs are high but are necessary to keep international cooperation afloat. I've seen very good people, very imaginative, very dedicated, very competent; I've seen very bad people. What I've missed in the UN is accountability. I've missed a sense that something happens if you work badly. I'm a bit of a workaholic, so I got along OK, but I've seen people who have done damn all and they—OK they never did get promoted very fast—but they've retired, taken their pension. So that is missing and perhaps is a bigger problem in the UN in an international intergovernmental framework than in a domestic civil service where you can be more disciplined. I mean the Secretary-General is the boss but doesn't have the same clout as the prime minister and that goes down the line. There's a lot of people beholden to others, and there's a lot of political balancing.

One of the joys of my present job, perhaps because we're small, perhaps because we're not central, I've been able to build a secretariat without once taking on anybody because a government asked me to, and I think that has made quite a difference to the way we work. We are multinational, we have various skills, strengths, weaknesses, some are better than others but not one person is there because a government has placed her or him. There was one case where I realized that I needed to have somebody from a particular country. I was offered two. I said no,

I don't want those. There was one person on their delegation who was really very good; I wanted that person and we got her. She's one of the best people we have. I've had people come and try to bully me, I've said thank you very much but no thanks, and that's worked. Countries of the OECD among others. But, I don't think our experience is typical of the UN as a whole.

TGW: Actually, that's, for me, a very important subject. The quality of people who get recruited and end up spending careers in the United Nations. I actually wrote a dissertation on that, many moons ago, and my own impression is that it's a little like these reports we spoke about earlier. One can push out the envelopes on reports, and one can resist the kinds of pressures that are brought to bear on secretariats by governments of all stripes to take people who shouldn't be there. I know that James Jonah and I have spoken at great lengths about this, and he really felt strongly that one of the most serious negative developments over the years was the deterioration of the notion of the balance between competence and some vague notions of geography and differences in perspectives.

MZC: The UN Charter says competence first.

TGW: That's right.

MZC: But people look at geography.

TGW: I think before competence and also the expectations of what kinds of people one should aspire to have in the secretariat. Not so much what one should pay them, but really the kinds of people one should aim at having. I was interviewing Brian Urquhart a few weeks ago on some issues. He mentioned that, in his view, this started on day one, this deterioration. The original idea was to have Dwight Eisenhower or Anthony Eden, and one ended up with Trygve Lie, and he made analogies at all levels. It seems to me that it's here, just as no UNCTAD

secretary-general has made a stance on management, it seems to me that no UN Secretary-General has really taken this particular subject by the horns and tried to make a difference.

MZC: Well, Kofi Annan has tried. I don't know if he's persisting in his efforts, I haven't followed. One very interesting thing which is coming out of the human resource management area of the UN is an attempt to inculcate a management culture. I don't know if you've heard about this. There have been a series of management training exercises called People Management which are essentially focused on communication. For example, it doesn't really matter what you know about climate change, it matters whether you know how to deal with people, talk to them, listen to them, guide them, motivate them, discipline them if necessary. I haven't participated because I haven't got lucky with getting into one for my grade, but I've got most of my colleagues, managerial colleagues, through them, and we are undertaking our own management coaching exercise with the same consultants that have worked with the UN.

Another thing that the same department is pushing now is a concept of competencies that are needed by UN professionals. These are not competencies in the sense of technical know-how; it's really human know-how, managerial know-how, communication know-how. One of the central competencies—they have a diagram which is like a series of concentric circles and each circle is divided into parts—one of the three core competencies is integrity. And many people don't understand this and say, "What's it got to do with working for the UN." Or else they say, "Of course we all know what that means; we don't need to discuss it." I've heard this reaction. And it's so obvious to me that integrity is something you need to work on because people come from different cultures and have different views on what it means.

Well, I'm quite encouraged by the approach that's been taken by OHRM (Office of Human Resources Management). I think it's one of the good products of Kofi's move to the top. I do agree on the importance of this and the demotivation that is caused by the employment of incompetent people because they happen to be geopolitically useful. It's really very off-putting and it turns people off. My managerial experience has been very limited. I think I've been very lucky because I've got ample funds to work on climate change, never any funding problems, and never any interference on staffing. I don't know if this will survive me, somehow. Not because of any particular merit of mine, but people will say hey, here's our chance to get our finger in the pie. But we're growing, and obviously we're becoming more structured, more hierarchical; there's more delegation going on. The one thing I am wary of delegations, though, is hiring.

TGW: That's not the only decision-making, but the most important.

MZC: The money I'm not worried about. You delegate money to a manager, if she spends it all, OK, could have spent it better or less well, but the money's gone, there's nothing more to be lost. Whereas you can live with a bad recruitment for a long time.

TGW: For a very long time. Well, actually, let's spend a few moments on, you really should have another consonant in here, the UNFCCC, the Framework Convention on Climate Change. How did you move into that, I mean, you obviously had this experience earlier in environment and sustainability and you brought that back to UNCTAD at that point, which then became involved in it. How did you then move from UNCTAD into a new organization?

MZC: I'll answer that, but before that, a word about "UNFCCC." One of the difficulties there is trying to remember there are three "C's". The placard, the sign in the conference room 1, only has one, two, so I wasn't sure whether I should sit there. One of the "big defeats" of my

first year in this job, climate change, was to try and delete “framework” from the title. One of my big successes was to put the words “United Nations” in. So I succeeded in getting UN, but then I said to the chairman, “Framework, why framework? It sounds so weak; it’s much stronger than other conventions which don’t have this word in it.” He said “OK, let’s take it out. Anybody object? No? Out it goes.” Next day the Group of 77 chair came to me and said, “I’m very sorry but this thing slipped yesterday, but we have to have ‘framework’ back.” So you win some, you lose some. At least I got the UN in the title. And, although the legal office says it doesn’t mean anything because the “United Nations Barber” doesn’t belong to the UN, I still think it sends a certain signal.

How did I get there? I think that can also go into the category of accidents. I knew a little bit about climate change in that, at some point in 1990, Roger Lawrence and Edward Dommen in UNCTAD had picked up the issue of emissions trading from an economist by the name of Michael Grubb. (He is still working on climate change now with Chatham House.) And I remember Ken Dadzie had done a speech on emissions trading at one of the preparatory conferences for Rio in Bergen. And I helped fashion that speech. So I had a sense of the issue of climate and how one shares out the resource through emissions trading. And later that year there was in Geneva the Second World Climate Conference. I remember in one of the little meetings that we organized in UNCTAD for the NGOs, of which I was in charge at that time, I had said that there were two important games in town, in the town of Geneva, currently (this was November 1990). One was the Uruguay Round, the other was climate change, the second World Climate Conference. I had the sense this was a big thing. But that’s all.

In December of 1990, the GA adopted a resolution which launched an intergovernmental negotiating committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change. Climate had been put

on the GA agenda by Malta in 1988. UNEP and WMO (World Meteorological Organization) had taken it up; they actually had been involved before 1988. In 1988, they established jointly the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a scientific assessment body, which in 1990 produced its first assessment report. This was the scientific basis for launching a negotiation towards a convention. WMO (Professor Godwin Olu Patrick Obasi) and UNEP (Dr. Mostafa Tolba) were somewhat competitive but, realizing that they had to do it together, were going ahead with preparations for a convention. At a certain point, I think it was about September after this IPCC report came out, the Latin Americans—Brazil, Mexico in the lead—figured out that this issue was too important to them economically to be left to scientific agencies like WMO and UNEP to handle. Therefore, they said we want this moved to the General Assembly. And the negotiation was launched not under UNEP, or the WMO, but under the GA. So the director-general at the time, one Antoine Blanca, and his deputy, Enrique ter Horst, were faced, at the end of November and early December of 1990, with the prospect of organizing a negotiation. The first meeting of which was already set for February 1991 in Washington, at the invitation of President George [H.W.] Bush, and a secretariat had to be set up in Geneva. This was all in the GA resolution. The location was Geneva to be close to WMO and the European office of UNEP. I think that another motivation was to get away from the politics of New York. So, a secretariat in Geneva to run a negotiating process for a convention that had to be ready in time for Rio 1992.

They were casting around for someone to do this job, to get it going. Enrique ter Horst rang my boss Ken Dadzie and asked if he knew anybody who would fit the bill. And Ken asked me. He said, “Michael, who do you think could do this job?” And I said, “If it’s at the ASG [assistant secretary-general] level, why not Roger Lawrence? He’s at the D-2 level; he knows

something about the subject, perfect.” He said, “Yes, indeed, but why not you?” And I thought, why not me? This fell into the adventure category. I was able to take a little time and consult people. I rang Mostafa Tolba, whom I knew, and asked him what he thought, and Maurice Strong and asked him what he thought. I spoke to Jean Ripert, who had already been designated as the chairman of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, whom I knew from his director-general days. I figured out that climate change was going to be seen as a blank check for nuclear energy so there would be some tensions in it. I had a sense of what the issues might be: efficiency of resource use, equity in distribution of opportunities or burdens. And I said OK.

I found out later that there were many candidates for the job. But, what the UN was looking for in a very practical way was somebody who was already a UN staff member—therefore no time wasted in recruiting—and was already in Geneva and had some sort of profile which matched the job. And it turned out, I discovered later, that in the consultations that were going on, the fact that I was in UNCTAD which had this image of being pro-developing country was a plus for the Brazilians, who were consulted. The fact that I had the UNEP and UNCTAD background helped to convince people that I had some knowledge of what it was all about. The fact that I was not a climate change expert didn’t seem to worry people. It was more important to have somebody who could manage an intergovernmental UN process. I haggled a bit about terms and eventually accepted gracefully.

Actually, I’ll tell you why I gave way because it continues to bring a smile. I was holding out for a D-2, as opposed to a special post allowance from D-1 to D-2. I got the D-2 later and then ASG—but at the time they said, “Well, we can’t do anything better.” I thought hold out, hold out. Finally, along came Monsieur Blanca, whom I didn’t know. He was the man responsible, his neck was on the block, and this meeting was to start in Washington in a few

days. So he called home in Geneva. He didn't find me, but found my wife. I was having dinner with Patrizio Civili and Peter Hansen, at Patrizio's place. M. Blanca poured out his heart to my wife. He said, "Look, I need this man, there's a meeting on in Washington. What can we do?" And so she called me at Patrizio's, and I was so touched that this guy, a big shot in the UN, should take my wife into the discussion that I called him immediately and accepted. And I was parachuted into Washington when the meeting had already been going for a week, not quite a *deus ex machina* but something *ex machina*. People were saying who is this guy, in whose pay is he, is he Strong's stooge, is he Tolba's tool? The rest is history.

TGW: What is not UN about it? You said this was a triumph of getting—

MZC: The negotiation was conducted under the auspices of the General Assembly. The result is a treaty which is ratified and is governed by the Conference of the Parties. The Conference of the Parties is a sovereign body; it is not subsidiary to the General Assembly. Consequently, the legal opinion from the legal office is that this is not a UN body, it's a treaty body; it's independent. Most treaty bodies, in fact, are constructed in that way. Some are, like the human rights treaties or the ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) treaties, run by departments of the UN. I got the UN into the title because I felt it was very important that this key subject, which was launched onto the international stage by the UN, should remain associated with the UN, and it still is. That's a success in terms of the label.

I also worked out, with the help of some key people in the UN, with whom I was on good terms, an arrangement whereby the UN administers the climate convention secretariat. In legal terms, this is like a managing agent contract. The parties entrust the Secretary-General with the responsibility of administering the secretariat according to the UN rules and regulations, so they do not have to get into the hassle of inventing new rules and regulations. The SG then delegates

to the head of the secretariat a very large degree of autonomy for applying those rules and regulations. It's a very neat arrangement. We have UN terms and conditions but our contracts are limited to service with the convention secretariat.

TGW: I see.

MZC: It's quite a neat arrangement; it's sort of a hybrid. It works well.

TGW: Is there any other equivalent?

MZC: I think the Convention to Combat Desertification, which followed us in time, followed our institutional example in many ways

TGW: This is not on the tape in my conversation with Jan Pronk, but he had, when I interviewed him, just returned from some preparatory something or other with you. And he mentioned that this UNFCCC is an interesting experiment in terms of the process of international negotiations. What would he have meant by that? Is it because the limited number of parties or—

MZC: No, it's virtually universal. It has 180-plus states as parties. I mean, there are very few UN member states not in. Turkey and Iraq are those of any economic size. The subject matter is very interesting in that you're trying to deal with a very distant issue, so the timing of the costs and benefits is something which is very difficult to deal with.

TGW: And the trading that goes on around that?

MZC: I mean the challenge of grasping a problem, which is a hundred years down the line, and dealing with it now; it is rare that politicians get into that. So, convincing them that there is a problem to be dealt with, at the minimum cost, but still to be dealt with at some cost, and that the burden needs to be shared, but the opportunity is cleaner development. That's a big

sales job, persuasion job. Secondly, it's an attempt to deal with an environmental issue through economic mechanisms, emissions trading of one sort or another.

TGW: Must have been that that Jan Pronk had in mind.

MZC: Because the economic approach is quite rational in that the source of the problem is the economy. Well, it's demography and economics, it's producing more goods for more people and the way we produce and consume them, goods and services. It's been, for me, a big learning experience, because I started with very little knowledge and gained quite a lot. Also a good managerial experience because my neck's been on the block too, in that I have only formal superiors and I'm out on my own.

One of the big ironies of it is that having in 1974 chosen not to accept the Nairobi adventure but to stay in Geneva, I found myself faced with exactly the same situation Maurice Strong had been faced with in 1972 about where UNEP was going to be. In the case of climate in 1995, there was a bidding war among five governments for the site of this secretariat, which came down to a finish between Switzerland and Germany. And I took the position then, learning from what I think was Maurice's position in 1972, that I would not intervene in this. This is a government decision. I'm not sure if this was a good stand or a bad one, but I felt it was right at the time.

The result was we ended up in Bonn. I'm not sure that secretariat intervention would have changed that, but I took it upon myself to instruct my colleagues not to try to intervene in this thing. So, I found myself leading the troops to Germany. We lost half the staff. It was a shakeout, perhaps rather savage but in the end maybe not unhealthy, and we ended up putting down roots there.

TGW: The secretariat, if not you?

MZC: Yeah, I'm too old to put down roots and learn German and so on, although I can grasp some of it. The problem there, if you're looking to try to generalize that experience, is that governments abandon all pretense of a rational approach, a logical approach, a coordinated approach to something and suddenly take a position of pure national interest. Germany wants new institutions, Switzerland wants to maintain Geneva, Kenya wants to boost UN presence, so they all bid. Uruguay, Toronto, they did too. And then it becomes pure hardball, I'm quite convinced—I hope this is going to be published in a long while hence, after I've retired!

TGW: Next week?

MZC: OK, next week. I'm quite convinced that Germany did a deal with the African countries to get their support for Bonn as the headquarters for climate, in return for an undertaking by Germany to bid to bring desertification to Bonn and ensure for desertification, terms, financial terms, comparable to those that we have. Because desertification feels, in a way, the poor relation, and if it's out on it's own it might get neglected. Therefore being close to us, gives it a yardstick, a comparator. So first, irrationality and then you get back into a coordination mode, and it worked for Germany. There was a sense in which Germany had to be given something. They wanted to be given the big things (WTO, UNDP) but didn't get those. So they were given small things, UNV (UN Volunteers) and two conventions. And since these sort of decisions are, in practice, irreversible, my plea now would be that Bonn be built up into a critical mass of UN activity, otherwise we're terribly isolated. It's quite pathetic, looking at myself, the kick I got out of being at UN headquarters for half a day this morning. I saw so many people I wanted to see just by standing in a corridor and being bumped into. In Bonn that would have meant days of phoning back and forth to fix a time for a telephone call.

TGW: I feel the same way being back in New York, as opposed to Providence, Rhode Island. People wander through.

MZC: In UN terms, Bonn is the sticks. Geneva is big compared to Bonn.

TGW: I have just one, actually two other things I wanted to ask. Just quickly, were you surprised by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet model? Besides eliminating group D in UNCTAD, how precisely has this changed the nature of international discussions and debates, with particular reference to the emergence of ideas, the inertia around old ideas, and in your own work at the UNFCCC? What has the disappearance of this model in this part of the world meant for international affairs?

MZC: I was surprised, somewhat disturbed, by the novelty of the unipolar world. I had a sense of security in the existence of competing superpowers because I thought that one on its own would be too heavy handed. So, when that went, I felt insecure for awhile, and I was quite surprised by the fall of the [Berlin] Wall and was, again, worried by the unification of Germany. This goes back to my identification with the Second World War. But I think I've got over both those feelings, though I'm still concerned by the consequences. By the mess in Russia, the apparent chaos, and by the big imbalance between East and West Germany, about which we don't hear too much, except when some neo-Nazi violence flares up. I'm not part of Germany, since I don't read the language I'm not reading the press, so I'm not aware of how much of an issue that is in domestic politics. In general, the fall of the USSR has taken a lot of unnecessary noise out of the international discussion because there is much less posturing going on now.

There is another effect, perhaps. Certainly in my perspective China looms very large now. When we were in UNCTAD, China was quite small; it was just coming in, not so important. Now, Russia is, well, there may be some resurgence, but for a while it was just

another country, whereas China is very big, and you can see the climate negotiation as a proxy for the U.S.-China struggle, whatever you want to call it, who's going to be top gun in the twenty-first century. That's one change that has happened. Somehow China, India, but particularly China, loom very large as the counterweights to the U.S. The EU [European Union] is somewhere in the middle. The D group, otherwise known as the Eastern European, still exists in a diplomatic sense for rotation of chairmanships and so on. It comes into play there, but with the fact that most Eastern Europeans are joining the EU, or want to, really there's not much differentiation, except for Russia, which is *sui generis*.

There may be even a dangerous tendency to neglect Russia, which was possibly the case in the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol. It's the second biggest emitter of greenhouse gases of the North, yet the negotiation was conducted essentially between the U.S., EU, and Japan. And the Russians felt bad about this. I think one has to make an effort to keep them involved, even though the way they represent themselves reflects the domestic chaos. They aren't always very coherent. One has to hope that time and reform will take care of that. Obviously the negotiation would have been different had the Soviet Union still been alive, had the Cold War still been there.

Climate change is a new issue but an old negotiation in that there is a very strong North-South element in it. An element of finger-pointing, or rather of sharing responsibility to put it positively, the historical responsibility for climate change lying with the presently industrial countries, at the same time the responsibility for future action having to be also with the developing countries because if it is not, then the emissions of greenhouse gases from the South will drown any limitations from the North. So it's a very interesting new look for me into the whole issue of equity in international relations, in access to resources combined with a search for

efficiency which is being driven by the market philosophy of today. So, it's very much the flavor of the moment and keeps the work interesting.

TGW: Flavor of the moment? What about the flavor of the future? One last parting shot here, what do you see as the main intellectual or operational challenges for the United Nations system in the next ten years?

MZC: To stay alive—an operational challenge and an intellectual one too. To find ways of remaining relevant and to avoid being gobbled up by a combination of the U.S. and the “private sector.” The push towards involvement of the private sector and the need to keep the U.S. on board are so strong, they boil down to one thing. The UN, based in the U.S., has this need to keep the U.S. on board, to look good in *The New York Times*, so to say, and that can, if not balanced, lead to the organization becoming quite skewed. There's always that danger. The U.S. is so strong now that the danger is even greater than before. The fact that the U.S. has ratified the climate change convention is really quite unusual. It hasn't ratified much else. And it only ratified that because it was so weak and so undemanding on the U.S. The chances of its ratifying Kyoto Protocol are sort of, well, the best I can say is fifty-fifty, quite a while ahead. Tom, I'm going to have to leave.

TGW: Well, this has been my pleasure.

MZC: Mine too, and I would like threaten you with something, that I'd be quite happy to come back and talk over certain things you haven't got straight.

TGW: This is the end of the second tape at about 8:15 on 26 April.

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