



# PROGRESS REPORT

UNITED NATIONS INTELLECTUAL HISTORY PROJECT / UNIHP

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## **AHEAD OF THE CURVE? UN IDEAS AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES IS LAUNCHED IN NEW YORK AND GENEVA**

The first volume of the project's book series, *Ahead of the Curve? UN Ideas and Global Challenges* by Louis Emmerij, Richard Jolly, and Thomas G. Weiss was published by Indiana University Press in May 2001. The book was launched by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the UN in New York on 30 May. A second book launching was held at the UN in Geneva on 16 July 2001, where remarks were made by Nan Annan and Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva and UN Under-Secretary-General. This introductory volume is available from the publisher, at regular and on-line book sellers, and at UN bookstores.



L to R: Emmerij, Jolly, Annan, Weiss

## **REPORTS ON THE NOVEMBER 2000 AND JUNE 2001 INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS IN GENEVA AND UPPSALA**

The third meeting of the International Advisory Council (IAC) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 16-18 November 2000. The fourth meeting was held in Uppsala, Sweden, on 6-8 June 2001, and was hosted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. Both meetings combined IAC business with substantive presentations on some of the commissioned books and oral histories.

The Geneva meeting was the first event to be held at the project's Geneva office. Presentations of the work in progress of the following volumes were followed by discussion among members of the IAC and outside experts: *The UN and Global Resource Management* (by Nico Schrijver), *Views From the Regional Commissions* (edited by Yves Berthelot), *International Development Assistance* (by Olav Stokke), and *International Development Strategies* (subsequently renamed

*Contributions of the UN to Development Theory and Practice* by Richard Jolly, Louis Emmerij, Dharam Ghai, and Frédéric Lapeyre).

In addition, a background note on the oral history component of the project was discussed to give project researchers, authors, and advisory council members a sense of the type of material being collected through the oral history interviews. This also served as the basis for a discussion about how the project might organize the interviews for the volume, *UN Ideas: Views from the Trenches and Turrets* with excerpts from the interviews. That volume is to be written in 2003 by Weiss, Emmerij, and Jolly.

During the meeting, Vladimir Petrovsky welcomed the members and guests to the Palais des Nations. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance of what he referred to as the inter-sectoral approach of the project, and announced the formation of a network of UN research institutions in Geneva to develop a common approach to UN research activity, in which he invited the project to take part. He also mentioned how much he was also looking forward to his own oral history interview.

Participants were invited to a reception at the Restaurant des Délégués to introduce the project's work to the UN community in Geneva and to inaugurate its new Geneva office. Welcoming remarks were made by Vladimir Petrovsky, Yves Berthelot, and Ambassador François Nordmann, Permanent Representative of Switzerland for the International Organizations in Geneva and Permanent Observer to the United Nations in Geneva.

The Geneva office, which is directed by Yves Berthelot, is spearheading the work on the volume on the regional commissions, and serves as a base of operations for project researchers needing to consult UN documents and archives in Geneva. Participants at the meeting were given an introductory tour of the facilities at the UN Library.

The fourth joint IAC-authors' meeting was held at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Uppsala on 6-8 June 2001. In addition to IAC business, on the agenda for this meeting was the peer review of the working draft of *Views From the Regional Commissions*. Yves Berthelot, Gert Rosenthal, and Leelananda de Silva were present to discuss their drafts while Adebayo Adedeji and Blandine Destremeau sent written contributions. A discussion was also held on preliminary work of the volumes on *Human Security* (by S. Neil McFarlane and Yuen Foong-Khong) and *Women Enrich the UN and Development* (by Devaki

Jain). Revised outlines for the volumes on *International Development Strategies* and *Contributions of the UN to Development Theory and Practice*, were also revisited.

The project took the opportunity of being in Sweden to discuss Swedish contributions to UN studies. Presentations were made by Olle Nordberg, executive director, and Sven Hamrell, director emeritus, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, by Peter Wallensteen, professor, University of Uppsala, and Gerd Johnsson Latham, Department of Global Cooperation, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Welcoming remarks were made by Hans Lundborg, Director General, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS TO DATE

Since our last progress report, 30 additional interviews have been conducted, bringing the total oral history interviews conducted to date to 51. The following individuals were interviewed since our last report. A complete list of persons interviewed may be found on our web site at [www.unhistory.org](http://www.unhistory.org).

- ROBERT COX, Toronto, August 2000
- VLADIMIR PETROVSKY, Geneva, November 2000
- KURT WALDHEIM, Vienna, November 2000
- MARGARET ANSTEE, New York, December 2000
- GERRY HELLEINER, Toronto, December 2000
- CORNELIO SOMMARUGA, Geneva, January 2001
- GERT ROSENTHAL, New York, January 2001
- JANEZ STANOVNIK, Ljubljana, January 2001
- PAUL BERTHOUD, Geneva, January 2001
- DHARAM GHAI, Geneva, February 2001
- ALISTER MACINTYRE, New York, March 2001
- PONNA WIGNARAJA, Sussex, March 2001
- ADEBAYO ADEDEJI, New York, March 2001
- I.G. PATEL, Baroda, India, March 2001
- LEILA DOSS, New York, April 2001
- JOHN RUGGIE, New York, April 2001
- ELISE BOULDING, Needham, MA, April 2001
- BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, Paris, May 2001
- MOSTAFA TOLBA, Cairo, May 2001
- PAUL STREETEN, New York, May 2001
- JULIA HENDERSON, Venice, FL, June 2001
- VIRGINIA HOUSHOLDER, Venice FL, June 2001
- SVEN HAMRELL, Uppsala, June 2001
- GUIDO DE MARCO, Malta, July 2001
- SARTAJ AZIZ, Sussex, August 2001
- JAMES O.C. JONAH, New York, August 2001
- CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, Dublin, September 2001
- JUST FAALAND, Bergen, September 2001
- OSCAR SCHACHTER, New York, September 2001
- JUAN SOMAVIA, Geneva, October 2001
- ENRIQUE IGLESIAS, Washington D.C., October 2001

A final 25 interviews are being scheduled over 2001-2002. We anticipate completing the interview process by September 2002.

#### WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

Oral history is a method of research for preserving and creating knowledge of historical events as recounted by participants in those events. Personal testimony comes from an in-depth oral interview conducted by an observer knowledgeable about the individual being interviewed and of the subject matter under investigation. The interviewer seeks to inspire the individual to begin remembering, and records the testimony or life narrative of that individual and his or her interpretation and recollection of particular events. Although storytelling has been used worldwide by cultures to preserve—and by ethnographers to study—family and social traditions, the use of recorded oral history as a method of social science research only emerged with the advent of the portable tape recorder after WWII. Since then, oral history has become a method of data collection that cuts across social science disciplines. Like the earlier oral traditions, oral historians begin biographically. However, unlike the folklorist, oral historians locate the individual in a social context with a central research question in mind and explore constraints on the individual's life story as well as the impact of their decisions and actions.

Yet at the same time that it is a method, oral history is also a tangible research product. As a result of the interviewer's questioning, new evidence is created, in the form of a taped memoir and a typewritten transcript of that spoken memoir. That is, a new historical record is created which in turn can be analyzed much like any other written historical document. However, the value of oral history as a method of investigation is that it is qualitatively different from other written documentary sources such as reports, correspondence, and diaries. It allows the interviewer to ask for clarification and fuller explanations of matters referred to in these other documentary sources, and it relies on the memory, recollection, and interpretation of events of the individual being interviewed. In addition, oral history also allows for nuance and passion, and it gives future researchers the opportunity to hear the dynamic quality of the oral account.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY TO THE PROJECT

In our case, these interviews provide an opportunity to identify ideas that never made it beyond closed rooms at the UN and explore debates about and circumstances of their demise. Thus, the project uses the oral history method both to better understand the UN's contribution to global economic and social policy and to development discourse and practice; and to produce an archive of approximately 75 personal testimonies and recorded life narratives of individuals who served the world organization in key positions as staff members, consultants, researchers, or diplomats.

The importance of this archival collection of taped memories cannot be over-emphasized as there is precious little institutional memory at the UN and even fewer

resources to capture the historical record. Moreover, very few individuals have written memoirs and fewer still have focussed on the intellectual contribution of the United Nations. The world organization has no comprehensive written history, and unlike the Bretton Woods institutions, no in-house historians. This collection of oral history interviews, along with other efforts documenting UN institutional histories, is helping to make up for this woeful lack of attention. At the conclusion of the project, we will make the oral history interviews widely available to researchers worldwide.

### DESIGNING THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH

The first step was to design sub-categories of questions that relate to the historical question the project seeks to answer: *What is the role of UN economic and social ideas?* We identified the available data, which included locating records and familiarizing ourselves with the literature about economic and social development. Finally, we determined who would be interviewed, with the guidance of our International Advisory Council. The research question is what largely determines who will be interviewed, although resources and opportunity are important factors as well. We recognize the problems with faulty or self-serving memories and the shortcomings of concentrating on *elite oral history*. Later, and with more resources, it would be desirable to broaden the interview base.

In the meantime, we have invited anyone with a story to tell to do so in written form. Details are found on the project website. These, too, will be inputs into our work.

### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviews are being structured around the following five clusters of questions which will enable us to compare across interviews. The first is primarily biographical. Here we ask about influences on an individual's educational and professional interests and career choices, as well on his or her own ideas regarding social and economic issues. This intimate knowledge is in many ways totally absent except for a few individuals who have written their autobiographies. And even in these cases, the importance of ideas has rarely been a theme.

The second area explores an individual's evaluation of the extent to which particular global events had an impact on or generated particular key development ideas.

The third concerns questions about institutional adaptation to global events. For instance, what ideas emerged in response to particular problems or crises? What ideas were discarded as a result of specific crises? As part of this inquiry, we ask individuals to trace trajectories of certain ideas within the UN system and what factors may have affected their life-span.

The fourth section concerns the source and evolution of ideas and approaches and the interviewees' observations about their trajectories. The United Nations is not the

only arena in which crucial ideas were developed, but under its auspices many economic and social ideas received at least an important boost.

The fifth and final cluster of questions serves as a synthesis of earlier questions which asks individuals to identify particular UN ideas that have had an impact on international politics and why. Here we also provide interviewees with the opportunity to express their opinions about the most crucial challenges, conceptual and operational, for the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

### ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH AND PROCEDURES

Our usual procedure, once the interview has been scheduled, is to conduct extensive background research using primary and secondary sources related to the individual to be interviewed, and where necessary and possible, brief informational interviews with people familiar with the life and work of the individual. We also solicit suggestions for background reading from the interviewees themselves, and suggestions for questions from the authors of the project's book series. The interviews are conducted by project directors. Project researchers work closely with them to develop the questions for the interviews. Availability of written materials as well as exposure to the United Nations varies among interviewees. Between the research assistant assigned to the interview and the person conducting the interview, some 15 hours of research are required for each hour of actual interview.

Before proceeding with the actual interview, the interviewee is asked to sign a form noting his or her agreement to be interviewed on tape. The interview is conducted at a venue chosen by the individual being interviewed, usually a home or office. The duration ranges from 2 to 10 hours, depending on the person's experience and on prior agreement. Longer interviews are broken into sessions of 90-120 minutes and conducted over consecutive days.

Interviews are digitally recorded using state-of-the-art equipment, thus ensuring archival quality.

Once the interview is completed, the interview is transcribed and the transcript returned to the interviewee for his or her review. The interviewee has the opportunity to edit the transcript before we produce a final copy so as to permit him or her to modify and complete the historical record. At the time we send the transcript, we also send a copy of a release form governing the use of the interview in its final form. This release vests copyright with the project but licenses the individual to copy, publish, or otherwise use the interview for his or her own purposes. The delay in returning the manuscript has varied between a few days and a year (and counting). Once the transcript has been finalized, it is indexed and sent to the interviewee and to the project's book authors.

To ensure the continual improvement of the project's oral history component, project staff have had several training workshops with Columbia University's Oral History Research Office and have held useful in-house critical review sessions of the oral history interview transcripts.

#### PEER REVIEW SESSIONS FOR BOOKS

As is common practice in scholarship and to ensure critical and independent as well as well-respected studies, each project volume undergoes professional peer review. At the point where a clean first draft is available, a meeting is scheduled with a small group of reviewers, the authors, and project staff. Reviewers are drawn from specialists and are invited to give the author(s) critical feedback on the volume with a view toward finalizing the text for submission to Indiana University Press within two months.

In addition to the peer review session for *Regional Perspectives: Views from the Regional Commissions* held in conjunction with the IAC meeting in Uppsala in June 2001, the project conducted a review session for *Quantifying the World: UN Contributions to Statistics*, (by Michael Ward), in Sussex, UK in July 2001.

The project will again be hosted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Uppsala in June 2002, when we have scheduled a final review session for *The Contributions of the United Nations to Development Theory and Practice*. At that meeting we will also have mid-term reviews of three additional volumes: *The Eye of the Storm? The United Nations and Transnationals* (by Tagi Sagafi-nejad, in collaboration with John Dunning and Sanjaya Lall); *International Trade, Finance, and Development* (by John Toye and Richard Toye); and *The United Nations and Global Resource Management* (by Nico Schrijver).

#### UNIHP PARTICIPATED IN ARCHIVES CONFERENCE

The project was invited to participate in a conference of the Section of International Organizations of the International Council on Archives on 20 June 2001 in New York. Project director Richard Jolly, researcher Tatiana Carayannis, and author Tagi Sagafi-nejad discussed the work of the project. The meeting drew participants from about 25 international organizations to discuss ongoing or planned history projects of international organizations, and the role of archives. Since that meeting, the project has been in close contact with the UN archives in New York and is

encouraging project authors and researchers to make greater use of available archival collections worldwide.

"From the viewpoint of UN history, international archives are of the greatest importance in the modern world. Over the last 100 years, but especially over the last 55, we have been building structures of global governance--economic, social, even cultural, as well as political structures. We need to learn from this experience, from failures as well as successes, from first feeble efforts, as well as from mature systems. Archives are key to this."

—Richard Jolly, ICA/SIO conference, 20 June 2001

#### POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF PROJECT MANDATE

The UN Secretary-general has requested that the project also undertake an independent assessment of the UN's intellectual contribution to peace and security, noting that it is increasingly difficult to separate those issues from those of economic and social development. Ways are being explored to respond creatively, including the possibility of producing additional volumes documenting the ideas of collective security and peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and humanitarian intervention.

#### FUNDING UPDATE

We are pleased to announce contributions from two new donors:

Government of Norway  
Republic and Canton of Geneva

In addition, the Government of The Netherlands has renewed its very generous support for another two years. Other contributors, new and old, are considering the expanded proposal.

#### INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL TO MEET IN NEW YORK IN DECEMBER 2001 FOR A MID-TERM REVIEW

The project has scheduled a full IAC meeting on 11-13 December 2001 in New York, which will be a major stock-taking exercise mid-way into the project's estimated five-year lifespan. There will be a discussion of the project's preliminary analysis of the oral history interviews, and a mid-term review of *The Contributions of the United Nations to Development Theory and Practice*.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

We are grateful to be able to report that all the UNIHP staff and their families are safe following the events of 9/11. Our thanks to all of our friends for the phone calls and emails of concern.

#### The United Nations Intellectual History Project

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