

Not an official UN document. For information purposes only.



World Chronicle

UNITED NATIONS

PROGRAMME: No. 984 recorded 18 July 2005

GUESTS: Richard Jolly
Co-Director, UN Intellectual History Project

MODERATOR: Tony Jenkins

“THE UN’S FUTURE CHALLENGES”

The United Nations was founded 60 years ago on a foundation of great ideas, far-sighted vision and political realism. But does the UN still produce ideas worthy of the Charter’s lofty goals? What are the UN’s future challenges -- for which it will have to generate new ideas, and better practices, if it is to remain a vital institution? In this edition of World Chronicle these questions are explored with the help of Richard Jolly, Co-Director of the UN Intellectual History Project and former Deputy Executive Director for UNICEF.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the News & Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:32"
Executive Producer: Michele Zaccheo
Director: Tony Marshall
Production Assistant: Sheila Poinsette

ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an interview programme on major global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

JENKINS: Hello, and welcome to this special 60th anniversary edition of World Chronicle. I'm Tony Jenkins. In the beginning was the Charter, and the Charter was with the founders of the UN...but that was sixty years ago. Does the UN produce ideas worthy of the Charter's lofty goals? And what are the UN's future challenges – for which it will have to generate new ideas and better practices, if it is to remain a vital institution? Today we'll be seeking answers to these questions in a conversation with Richard Jolly, Co-Director of the UN Intellectual History Project – formerly Deputy Executive Director for UNICEF and Special Adviser at the United Nations Development Programme. Richard welcome to World Chronicle. When people think of the United Nations today, they tend to think of boots on the ground, blue helmeted peacekeepers, or perhaps of the diplomatic hi-jinx at the Security Council. They don't tend to think of the United Nations as an intellectual sort of place. But you argue that possibly the most important thing that the United Nations does is to be an intellectual pioneer. I wonder if you could give us some examples.

JOLLY: Well, over the last sixty years, the UN has made many more contributions to ideas and thinking than perhaps people realize. If you open the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, and you start reading some of the financial tables – particularly about developing countries – in fact, you are looking at data that has been prepared within the framework that the UN set out about 58, 55 years ago.

JENKINS: I smile because one of the first publication you've mentioned – the Wall Street Journal – is not exactly a big fan of the United Nations...

JOLLY: ...That's one of the reasons I quoted it...

JENKINS: Obviously not many people...you just mentioned one example, statistics. Obviously without data, without statistics....

JOLLY: Without a frame...the whole point was and if you go back and look at data that was issued in 1945, let alone in the 30's, it looks a bit like those maps of the 17, 18th century – terror incognita. And in fact, the miracle was that the UN set out a systematic frame for collecting

economic data and within about ten years it was promoted world-wide so that's how you can get the GNP per capital of India, of Nepal, of every country in Africa.

JENKINS: Obviously, that sort of thing is vital. I think one could compare it to the foundations of a structure you are going to build. But let's face it, statistics aren't very sexy. Have you any other examples of where the UN has been an intellectual pioneer giving the world something that is unrecognized, that people don't give it credit for? I assume the Wall Street Journal doesn't credit the UN for its statistical data.

JOLLY: Though it ought to. But if you like development goals...we've just had the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in Scotland and that focused on two big issues - poverty reduction and global climate change. Poverty reduction, in fact the UN way back in 1961 started setting goals for poverty reduction, economic progress of developing countries. Again, it's interesting that that grew out of President John F. Kennedy coming here to the United Nations making a speech, and saying if the United States is rich enough to put a man on the moon, surely we are also rich enough to tackle poverty in all the corners of the world. And he suggested that the UN needed to develop a global development plan – known as the development decade – over the 60's to make major progress. And since then all sorts of goals for eradication for small pox, for improvement for economic living standards in different parts of the world, getting children in school; these goals have been blessed – usually formulated by the UN – blessed by the UN, and as we make clear in the history have actually had more progress than again most people realize.

JENKINS: Well I keep saying but, but here. I don't know if you can hear the main but that I have in the back of my head which is that that...was more than forty years....must have been more than forty years ago that Kennedy...

JOLLY: Came here...yes.

JENKINS: And yet we're still talking about the same issues today....

JOLLY: Some of them.

JENKINS: Have we made much progress? If we're talking about ending poverty...I mean, the Millennium Goals only aim to halve poverty or halve the worst of these statistics that we're dealing with. If I'm not mistaken, it was about the same time – it might have even been Kennedy himself who came up with...if not, it was the UN at the same time as Kennedy – who talked about nought point7 percent of gross domestic product that countries were suppose to set aside for development aid. We're still no where near that target, so in a sense what I'm

saying is...it's all well and good to have these good ideas to be an intellectual pioneer, but if nobody is taking the ideas up, is it leading anywhere?

JOLLY: Well first of all, countries have taken them up and if you go back to the 1960's, which is where we are at the moment, you'll see that there has been enormous progress in terms of say, child mortality – big reductions. About that time – a little before – 24 million children were dying a year. Now with a much larger population it's down to about 10 million. Still a scandal because many of these deaths, most of these deaths are readily preventable but still major progress as we've seen in major progress getting kids in school, bringing down literacy rates, improving life expectancy – many of the human indicators where the world is very different from where it was in 1960. But, if I can just [laugh] see your face, however the goals are now as you rightly say, to halve the levels they were in 1990, not to halve the levels of 1960. So, we've made in many areas impressive progress. Have we always gone forward? No. We've unfortunately gone tragically backwards with UNAIDS, with HIV/AIDS; and in spite of UNAIDS a big programme to tackle this on a global basis; we've seen we've gone backwards. In terms aid, finance to support poorer countries that was higher as a percentage of GNP in 1970 – even in 1960 when Kennedy made his speech - it went down very seriously over the 1980' and 1990's. Fortunately it has begun to come up and you may have seen it at the recent G8 meeting – barely less than a month ago – we've seen new commitments...

JENKINS: Lofty promises, we'll see if they follow through on them.

JOLLY: True, true.

JENKINS: You know...

JOLLY: I'm a realist so I enjoy the challenges and I think there needs to be more such challenges. Because I think the UN record is far from perfect but it is nowhere near as negative as some people often pretend.

JENKINS: I guess the point you're making is that even if you don't achieve the goals, if you set the goals out there, then they will help move the ball further up the field, which...

JOLLY: ..And I'm making another point which is these goals that are set at the global level have almost always been goals which individual countries need themselves to take seriously. So, for example if you look at the goals for economic growth in the Kennedy era, 60 individual countries achieved the goal or exceeded it. If you look at the goals for child mortality reduction in the 1980's and the 1990's I think it is something like 130 countries achieved one of the goals there. So each individual country needs to tackle it. One of the ironies and tragedies is the

nought point 7 percent goals for aid has been achieved only by five industrial countries to give a reasonable share of their income.

JENKINS: Why aren't these...I guess we should describe it as a success story...I mean after all millions of lives have been saved and millions of lives, I mean tens of hundreds of lives have been improved. Why don't we know more about it? Why is there not more credit given to the United Nations?

JOLLY: Well I think one – it's the understandably but erroneously people love bad news rather than good news. So if you say poverty reduction has actually had considerable success in reducing poverty since 1960, people say yes, but look, one point two million people – a billion people today – are living below a dollar a day. Can you say that's successful? Well, that's one reason. Another is that people don't really know what is going on in any of these areas because this often the UN more attention....

JENKINS: Is the UN bad at selling itself? What's the reason?

JOLLY: I think the UN has not been anywhere near at good at selling itself, although again, the UN has different parts. When I worked for UNICEF, we actually did get, we expected to get headline stories on the front pages of newspapers in terms of what was happening to children. Other parts of the UN are quite good at that. But still...

JENKINS: ...I wonder if there's another problem, which is that...many people figure the United Nations is a sovereign body with executive authority and an ability to impose its will on member states. The reality is of course that Kofi Annan has no battalion at his command, and on the diplomatic level, the United Nations is essentially a marketplace where people come to trade power and influence. Inevitably in such a setup, it's the most powerful nations that have the most to say, can influence the most and inevitably also, you need a leader. Now the leader of the world today is the United States and the United States happens to be governed at this moment by an administration that really doesn't think very much about the United Nations.

RIZK: Again and it's because it's within that local context that we support as a collective partnership what each and every country actually does. So we support that, we support others in Sudan doing what they feel, we support others in Syria or in Lebanon or in Egypt or in Jordan and like I said we are not ambivalent or ignorant of the context in which we live.

JENKINS: All right, so here's the next question. We are sitting in the United Nations. This is a building where people talk a lot. There is a lot of hot air in this building. It doesn't necessarily always prevent conflict. What do you say to people who say you are just a talking shop, you get

people together to talk but at the end of the day, you are not doing anything to stop somebody picking up a gun? George, have you got a specific example that- of where you have done one of your workshops, one of your programs, where you *know* that it actually has prevented a conflict?

WACHIRA: Well, yes, I can talk about situations where we have done things and we felt it has changed the nature and the course and the intensity of conflict.

JENKINS: Tell us about it.

WACHIRA: I will give two examples. One, since 1992 my organization partnering with another organization in Kenya, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, worked under very very difficult circumstances, in a conflict that had both a political and ethnic content in it. It was very difficult because the government was not supportive of the initiative because the very fact of people working on that conflict did threaten the position of the government.

JENKINS: In other words the government likes to exploit differences between ethnic groups.

WACHIRA: Yes, it happened- it would be a long story. It happened within the context of a changeover from single party politics in Kenya to multi party politics and the government had a position that wasn't very inviting of multipartyism and they did certain things including inciting ethnic sentiments to slow down the move towards multipartyism.

JENKINS: So you came in? What were you supposed to do?

WACHIRA: We came in and helped the communities that had been caught in this, begin processes of dialogue of understanding really what was happening, first of all that change is inevitable. The country is moving forward and the world of moving forward, we are all becoming much more democratic and we cannot have a country in its own cocoon that refuses to recognize that we are democratizing. But doing that in the context of tremendous difficulty in terms of you have the intensity of conflict to deal with, people have died in their thousands, thousands more, hundred of thousands, have been misplaced and displaced and yet you have to watch your back because the government doesn't want you to do it. But creating the confidence of the communities up to the point where they were now able to recognize that indeed we owe it to ourselves and to the nation to move forward with this and eventually they are taking the ownership of the process and creating community based infrastructure that up to date continues to monitor any tensions that arise, have early warning mechanisms at community level that are actually functioning as we talk today.

JENKINS: Tatiana...you- again we were talking earlier about what it is that causes conflicts. When people think of the Balkans they usually call it a religious conflict now they are an awful lot of experts who say it had absolutely nothing to do with that. And, in fact, the people were right to be exploited but what made them right to be exploited was not because of religious or any ethnic differences but something else, usually economic. Has that been your experience? And is part of your effort to get people to talk about what's really causing them to be frustrated and angry rather than what they are being told by the people who want to manipulate them. Is that the sort of thing that you do?

POPOVIC: Yes, partly it is. There are many causes that cause conflict in the Balkans. To call it only religious conflict would be oversimplifying, definitely. It was only one aspect with which politicians played with, actually, and since we were Communist society for fifty years religion was not really influential any longer in early nineties. So if these were economical reasons, political reasons different interests of politicians, first of all individuals were also very important-

JENKINS: Do you get-

POPOVIC: but also- May I finish first? I also think that after the time the European Union didn't recognize what was building up in the Balkans and they probably didn't have capacities to deal with it immediately. No one actually believed that it would happen, that a real war would happen. They considered it to be some tangents and so on, so we didn't get the help from international community in a timely manner also.

JENKINS: You know, I want to ask you about the...specifically about the role of women and then I will follow up with another thought you just put in my head. How much, how valuable are women in this process? I mean typically we are told that women aren't the ones who go to war and that if women ruled the world we wouldn't have so many wars. Sometimes it's a slightly sexist assertion I think. But what- Has there been a specific role of women in this, in this process?

POPOVIC: I think that women were important in the re-building relationships in the Balkans and in the reconciliation process.

JENKINS: Why?

POPOVIC: Because they were first to dare to organize such organizations for trauma and healing for example, then for missing persons also, helping each other to find their relatives across the border, and probably because it was also easier for them to move in the region because you know male representatives would be forbidden to go to Croatia or to Bosnia or

wherever you know, so it was more accessible for women, and also they dared to do that first. They felt the need actually to reconcile society. I think that that emotional, if I may call it that, part is really very important for reconciliation.

JENKINS: George...

WACHIRA: Just a word on the...role of women and the recognition first of all that they form a big part of what we call civil society. In the global conference in July here at the UN headquarters, there were amazing stories that were shared from around the world, but I'm more familiar with the ones that came from Africa because in some way I'm connected with them. First of all in West Africa a group, known as WIPNET, doing tremendous work in the peace process in Liberia up to the point that where you can *clearly* say they were part of the solution to the conflict- to the head of the conflict to the departure of the former president Charles Taylor. In Somalia...

JENKINS: I remember the scenes of seeing women carrying the dead bodies of their children and climbing the mountains and it's against the US embassy.

WACHIRA: That's part of what gives women the authority and legitimacy to really engage from that perspective in peace building because they...bring us to this world and therefore they have the pain also of losing their children during conflict. They play a tremendous role in peace building.

JENKINS: A quick reminder: this is **World Chronicle**. We'll be right back after this break.

AUDIO IN:

"To move several bodies....."

AUDIO OUT:

".....**this world will do what we say.**"

JENKINS: You know there are a lot of cynics here at the United Nations, you wouldn't believe, but there are some, and I've heard one cynical comment about the sort of work that you do, which was, oh, sure, these guys, people, getting people to get together and traditionally Americans would say to sing "Kumbaya", wouldn't have prevented the genocide in Rwanda. Sam you haven't been in this conversation for a bit. Is that fair? Could your sorts of organizations have prevented a genocide in Rwanda, do you think?

RIZK: Well, if you understand civil society organizations role to mean that we are going to take over the role of government or the responsibility of government, no we are not looking to do that. Preventing violent conflict at such a scale continues to be the main responsibility of governments. I think we heard that from the government representatives who spoke at our Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Conference as well as from the Under-Secretary-General who spoke about, we can do all kinds of things but if governments do not have the political will and the responsibility to actually prevent these kinds of conflicts, continuous death and violence will happen. At the same time one of our roles is not only to cooperate with governments where we can to complement their work, but also to advocate, where we see that there are holes that need to be filled or in places where we think that the government should be going in one place and it's not doing that, that is the role of civil society organizations. Some people say that it's what is called the prophetic role, perhaps, but at the same time it's not the...

JENKINS: The government's conscience in a way really isn't it?

RIZK: Sometimes, yes, it's not always about advocacy, sometimes it's always complementary.

JENKINS: Is that how you see it, Tatiana?

POPOVIC: Yes, I think that a very important aspect of global partnership for the prevention of armed conflict is that partnership with different actors of society, and that is governments and that is regional organizations, international organizations and first of all the UN. The UN is really the most important for us. So it is very important to connect at a regional level and at a global level.

JENKINS: I'm sorry to put you on the spot but I've got to ask this again. If the sort of organization that you guys have founded and worked so hard to establish, had been around in the early days of when the tensions were rising in the Balkans do you think you could have prevented some of those wars? Is that what or is that too much to ask of what you do?

POPOVIC: Yes, I think that it could be possible really. I don't claim that we could have prevented the Balkan wars but if they had let us do some of the job that we wanted to do at the time then maybe we could improve understanding in [unclear]...

WACHIRA: I think for me if I think about Rwanda, that I am familiar with, I don't know so much about the Balkans, I believe the genocide, not the conflict, the conflict was already there, but the genocide in Rwanda could have been prevented. Part of what I see...

JENKINS: How would you have done it?

WACHIRA: Let me first say what I see as a problem. It's a way we understand peace building, peace making processes as residing in particular levels, usually the preserve of state actors. This whole process that we are part of is trying to say that you cannot leave peace making to just state actors because only particular things can happen at the level of the state. You need to involve the people that are the victims of the violence in the conflict. You need to involve civil society if you want to have meaningful peace making processes. So in Rwanda...

JENKINS: In the case of Rwanda specifically it was the state actors who were...

WACHIRA: Precisely, and before the genocide, my organization and various other organizations were part of a process that started the moment the former rebel movement crossed the border from Uganda into Rwanda. People are already saying that this is not going to be good, so a process started that was based on church leaders to begin with and it was spreading to bring in government actors from all the countries in the region not just Rwanda, but Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, it was coming together. But at that point what happened: state actors came, they constructed a new process, took it to Arusha, in Tanzania, arm-twisted the actors, they happily signed an agreement but they had no intention of implementing that agreement. If we had brought in a broader participation of all sorts of actors that have an interest in the conflict in Rwanda and then if state actors, including the United Nations, had acted as a resort of the signs that we are already seeing I think we could have all contributed to the prevention of the genocide in Rwanda.

POPOVIC: If I may add something in connection to the Balkans. A short example is Kosovo because my organization was working in Kosovo before the violence, the real violence, started and I really want to point out that its never too late to act in any pre-conflict situation. Even at that time in 1998 until 98, we organized dialogue seminars and many representatives of different levels, civil society, participated including representatives of ministries. And people wanted to cooperate and they were not afraid to come at that point, it started being dangerous to talk to the other side. They wanted to come, they wanted to cooperate, they wanted to try to organize some meaningful events but as George is putting out, we were simply, we were prevented by political representatives at the time.

WACHIRA: I was going to say we have a...method of peace making that actually peace agreements that we are seeing all over the world are being made on the terms of the same people that made the war in the first place. We have to begin turning things around where we're recognized, voices of peace and invite them to the negotiating tables and these are likely

o be civil society organizations, the women, the youth, and so on. And if we don't do that we continue to invite warlords to share power...

JENKINS: All they're going to do is make war and not peace.

WACHIRA: Yes, precisely.

JENKINS: Samuel do you...I'm interested in the techniques that you use for breaking the ice between people who would probably rather not talk to each other. I've noticed at the recent conferences of civil society that there were workshops on things like the Arts and what have you...and again it might make people think that people sing "Kumbaya", but what techniques do you have to use when you talk about the arts? I mean do you- does it help to have a short play or theatrical piece? I saw a workshop on the use of cinema. I mean, what are these doing as part of this conflict prevention business?

RIZK: Well, people ordinarily think of conflict resolution organizations as those who invite people to dialogue, to basically sit at the table and do all kinds of things. But when you have young people what you want to do is to turn this dialogue into what is called diapraxis. Actually having something, building it together, working on it together so that the practice of dialogue is not just about talking to each other but doing things together that six months from now or one year from now, people can come back and say, 'I built this, we worked on this together', and you get it not only in you brain and your communication but often into your hands. And that I think works for a lot of people and that's why when people go to training seminars on conflict resolution or conflict prevention, it's not only about the two sides coming to the table but its about doing things together and it's about all of these techniques using stories, people interacting with each other, firsthand and it's not all about serious stuff but often it's about fun stuff and using the arts and music and other things.

JENKINS: We'll be right to say, in a way, you are asking people to fantasize to dream a little. If I had my way this is what things would look like. Is that what you are doing? I mean...

RIZK: No, it's about people thinking creatively of doing things together because often what we can do together is not only about the context of me being a Muslim or a Christian but it's about being Egyptian for example. It's about the culture...

JENKINS: Or about being young and unemployed, for example.

RIZK: Or young and unemployed but it's about...

JENKINS: ...something that crosses the differences...

RIZK: ...something that crosses the differences and something that people in conflict resolution training settings, those who have been trained in the settings, are able to do, to bring out the creativity in people and to show them things and ways they have not thought about because they were so involved in the conflict for the past years.

JENKINS: Do you- Is it the feeling of the three of you that the fundamental thing that underlies an awful lot of the drive to conflict is economic?

POPOVIC: Yes.

JENKINS: I mean is it, is that the cynical line...is that the basic thing in all of these conflicts that a lot of people hanging around without jobs, with too much time on their hands, without money so they are frustrated and angry and that is the raw material from which a conflict is built? Is that always the case?

RIZK: Much of it, yes, but not alone.

POPOVIC: It's not the only culprit.

WACHIRA: Yes, it's very difficult to generalize but it's always a mix of various things.

JENKINS: We don't have much time left. So I'll tell you, I'll explain why I asked that because the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, recently called for a new...what he calls a "New Security Consensus" built from the grassroots up to respond to threats whenever and wherever they appear on the horizon. And I'm just wondering, it seems to me that his constant messages, we have to focus more on development, lift people out of poverty and we will have more security, stability. You're saying it's not just that?

WACHIRA: Yes, but I'm largely persuaded that we cannot address the whole question of sustainable peace without also addressing the question of development and people's livelihood quality of the life of the people. I believe that the more desperate people are, the more hopeless people are, the more reckless they become in terms of how they deal with each other and how they also treat themselves. If you have nothing to lose really it doesn't matter, in fact people have said it, dictators in Africa have said, if I don't kill them by the bullet, they will die of hunger anyway. So we have to pay attention to that question of development and how it links to sustaining peace. You see politics becomes a place where we compete for the little that is available, and therefore if I become the leader it's in my interest that I stay there and bring as many of my relatives because the cake is small and I have the power to control it. The more I shut out the more people want me out and so they are fighting continuously.

JENKINS: Kofi Annan, I think, would have loved that, to hear you say that because that goes right to his message. Unfortunately that's all the time we have.

Thank you all very much for being us on this special 60th anniversary edition of **World Chronicle** dedicated to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Our guests have been George Wachira, of the Nairobi Peace Initiative – Africa...Tatiana Popovic, of the Nansen Dialogue Network...and Samuel Rizk, of the Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention. I'm Tony Jenkins inviting you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

ANNOUNCER: Electronic transcripts of this programme may be obtained free of charge by contacting World Chronicle at the address on your screen:

World Chronicle

United Nations, Room S-827

New York, N.Y., 10017.

Or by email at: poinesette@un.org

This programme is a Public Affairs Presentation from United Nations Television.

The views and opinions expressed on this programme are those of the participants, and do not necessarily reflect the official statements or views of the United Nations.