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Interview with Jules Perlstein*

Conducted by J. Charnow in New Paltz, New York

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* Jules Perlstein started with the UNICEF Mission in Poland in 1947 transferring from the UNRRA Polish Mission. A year later he came to New York and worked in the Programme Division until 1952 after which he worked in the European Headquarters in Paris in charge of the Programme Section until 1953 when he left UNICEF.

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From UNRRA to UNICEF in Poland

Charnow: Jules, I would like you to talk about your association with UNICEF in the early days in Poland and later at UNICEF Headquarters and in our Paris office. How did you get started with UNICEF in the first place?

Perlstein: I had been in Poland as a member of the UNRRA Mission to that country. And when the mission was winding up, I received an offer to stay on in Poland with UNICEF, which was explained to me as being in many ways a continuation of the UNRRA effort except geared to the needs of children, and particularly at that time, to the nutritional needs of children, with some attention to mass medical immunization programmes. I was happy to do that because I had gotten married in the spring of 1947 to a Polish national and therefore cheerfully accepted the possibility of continuing the work in that country on a UNICEF Mission.

Charnow: What was your background? How did you get started with UNRRA?

Perlstein: I started with UNRRA at the close of World War II. I had been an officer in the army and had been in the Pacific for the last two years through 1946. I had always been more interested in Europe than in the Pacific area and actually had never visited any of the mainland countries of Asia. So when I came back from the war and knew about the opportunities for doing UN relief work in Europe, I sought and was able to obtain a position through UNRRA to join the Mission in Poland as an observer and went there in the late spring of 1946.

I have very personal, warm memories of my time in Poland which was a full two years (1946-48), since I did get married and acquired two young sons through this marriage - they were my wife's children through a previous marriage. Of course, I had a certain sympathy for the way the Polish people were able to rebound from the war even before I came to Poland. I'd known about the vast devastation, physical and population-wise, that had occurred under the Nazi occupation and came to see and hear of it at first hand. These people were very vibrant, alive, knew how to make do under the worst of circumstances in their daily living arrangements and other family conditions, which were quite hard at that time.

Continuation and differences

Charnow: Was the work of the Polish UNICEF Mission pretty much a continuation of what UNRRA had been doing in certain respects for children?

Perlstein: Very much of a continuation. The work I did as an observer for UNRRA was on the one hand to have some familiarity with how the supplies of products/foodstuffs/clothing and other material objects for mass consumption were being handled, and what were the organizational methods for accounting for the supplies in warehouses throughout Poland. I had been assigned to the northern section of the country, operating at first from Gdynia and later in Szczecin as an observer. The job required me to visit warehouses and centers of mass consumption which were essentially mass consumption by children. If there had been any mass consumption centers for adults, they were, at the most, places like warehouses or distribution points where packages were handed out.

Child feeding

But the consumption of meals by children of course had to be organized by institutions, so I visited places where children are found: schools and especially orphanages where children were housed and cared for, and there were many of them in the aftermath of the war.

When UNICEF came, in that sense it was a very direct continuation of the UNRRA effort. At that time no new outlets were being established in the early days of the takeover of UNRRA by UNICEF to provide food for children and help to health stations for children. It was a continuation, and the accent became the standard UNICEF menu of powdered milk, whole milk for the infants and skim milk for the older children, some ration of fat in the form of butter and lard, which was a popular substitute for butter in the diet for Polish people generally, and was logical in the feeding programmes and schools, orphanages and similar institutions that were already working with UNRRA's help.

Charnow: Was the ration that UNICEF gave pretty much the same as UNRRA or did we modify it? I do remember there was a study in the early days of UNICEF by Dr. Eliot. From the UNICEF side, I saw that they were developing a formula for the balance of nutrients and so on. Was this an innovation by UNICEF or merely a confirmation of what UNRRA had been doing?

Perlstein: I would say, without being 100 per cent sure, that it was not simply a continuation of the same diet. There was a greater accent on and availability of supplies of powdered milk which could be concentrated for use directly by children. I believe that the powdered milk that had been included under the UNRRA supply formulas was much less significant than it became almost immediately when UNICEF came into being and started to operate.

The problem was how to translate rations described in so many grams per day per child into cooking formulas for the mass preparation of such food. The powdered milk and the butter and

lard that was included in the UNICEF supplies were rarely just given out to mothers to take home and prepare there. I think that what was unique about the Polish experience was the heavy concentration of institutional feeding, whether in schools or live-in institutions for children.

Attitude of people

Charnow: Were there any differences in the attitude of the Polish people about the UNRRA effort and then later the UNICEF effort?

Perlstein Probably to a large extent the Polish people didn't make a sharp distinction. The existence of UNRRA, its dramatic impact on supplying the Polish population with so many articles of mass consumption, lasted well into the period of UNICEF supply, so that very often people, local officials and others, didn't sharply distinguish between UNICEF and UNRRA. There was an expression in Polish that referred to UNRRA as being "Auntie UNRRA" and it took sometime for UNICEF to make itself known as a different, newer entity with the distinction of being aimed at mothers and children largely, rather than the entire population of the people that UNRRA had supplied through standardized packages, many of which were soldier rations, including cigarettes and other articles that didn't have to be supplied exclusively to children (e.g. clothing), certainly. It didn't contribute exclusively to the well-being of children but certainly contributed to making life a little easier after the hardships of war.

Charnow: What was your feeling about the aid that we were providing?

Perlstein: I think that it was a very important step without regard to the money value or even the material value of the food supplies that were being made available to the Polish population. It was a very valuable step to demonstrate that the UN was not completely stepping away from the massive help that Poland got from UNRRA and simply winding up with no help at all.

Psychologically it was important from that point of view and represented, certainly in the kind of supplies UNICEF provided, a continuity in the supply line and the beginning of concern for maybe developing medical care programmes, beyond immunization programmes such as BCG vaccination versus TB, which I knew about at that time. These things didn't get into full fruition during the time I was with the Mission because I stayed barely one year, from the middle of 1947 to 1948, and then left Poland.

Charnow: Were there any problems with the government people with what you did in the way of observation? Did they welcome it? Did they resent it?

Perlstein: I think that they welcomed it and certainly it was welcomed at all the lower levels of contact. They were always glad to see visitors, particularly visitors who worked for the UN or other organizations, but especially Americans.

In that sense, the doors were always open and my visits to institutions were quite welcome and there was no interference with seeing whatever I wanted to see, and nobody shied away from discussions with me about current matters, whether it was at the ministries, or especially at the lower levels of actual operations.

Charnow: Do you speak Polish?

Perlstein: I could not speak Polish. I could understand a fair amount of conversation in Polish, and at times when my wife accompanied me on a few trips was able to use her as my interpreter. I also had of course the help ... now I can't remember whether the interpreter also continued to operate in UNICEF. My recollection is not that good. Conversations with officials and lower levels were not as communicative as they might have been had I spoken Polish — many officials did speak some English.

Pate in Poland

Charnow: The Chairman of the UNICEF Board, its originator, was a Pole, Dr. Rajchman. Maurice Pate had a history of being in Poland. Did you have any feeling that because of this there was anything special about the UNICEF Polish operation?

Perlstein: I met Maurice Pate at the mission in Warsaw some short while after the official start of the UNICEF mission when he made a visit there. I had learned that he had experiences after World War I in Polish relief — very largely his career in these activities started at that time. I also knew that he had married a Polish woman and that he could speak Polish and that he had a fond spot in his heart for the Polish people as a result of those post-World War I experiences.

I didn't know much else about Mr. Pate as a personality, and I was somewhat naive about how such a high UN official having a semi-diplomatic position acted in traveling and dealt with governmental officials . Also, of course, I knew very little about the responsibilities on Mr. Pate for UNICEF as a whole, let alone his visit to the Polish Mission which led to a very humorous incident that occurred when he visited the Mission office. The moment he arrived he was busy on telephones and dictating correspondence to the secretarial staff which was quite small and even less informed than I about UNICEF matters. Amongst the dictations that Mr. Pate made was a very long telegram to Mr. Herbert Hoover, ex-president of the US,

congratulating him on his birthday which had taken place during Mr. Pate's visit to Poland and it was quite a personal warm greeting from Mr. Pate to Mr. Hoover. When the secretary had taken this down in shorthand, she then questioned Mr. Pate about who was to pay for this telegram because it seemed to be a personal message to Mr. Hoover. Mr. Pate then proceeded to inform her that, amongst all the work he had accomplished on his current tour, the communication to Mr. Hoover was probably the most important one that he had ever sent. He told her about Mr. Hoover's interest in Polish relief in general from World War I as well as the fact that Mr. Hoover was a very influential person whose regard in political circles was so high that it helped to smooth the way for creating UNICEF as a UN relief body. Much chastened, the secretary ceased asking who was to pay for this cable.

Rajchman

Charnow: What about the influence of Dr. Rajchman? Did you feel any of that?

Perlstein: I can't recall just when I first met Dr. Rajchman, but I know that it was a very interesting meeting because he was a Polish citizen. He had been a high official in the League of Nations and a member of the UNICEF Executive Board. We talked very warmly at the time, particularly when he learned that I had married a Polish woman and we were living as husband and wife in Warsaw. We had some intimate conversation on that score. I was not privy to the more intimate connections that Ludwik Rajchman may have had with the Polish government, but it was obvious he was regarded as a very important figure for maintaining the standing of the Polish government in this new United Nations organization and he had entrée to the highest circles of government. But he didn't share any official concerns and interests of UNICEF with me when I met him.

Charnow: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about your experience in Poland before we go on to something else?

Work in UN Programme Division

Charnow: Then you were asked to come to New York?

Perlstein: I actually decided to return to the US because of the conditions - my being married and being somewhat concerned with being sure that the children could emigrate with their mother and myself. So at a certain point, because of that, I applied to return to the US with no firm promise whatever of further employment. That took place in March 1948.

Charnow: You then went to work in the Programme Division?

Perlstein: When I came back I, of course, was in need of employment and

asked whether there was any place in UNICEF HQ in New York and was offered a position on a temporary basis in the Programme Division, New York and I accepted it. Subsequently it became a full position in the UNICEF HQ.

Size

Charnow: Do you recall how big the Programme Division was at that time?

Perlstein: There were a small number of people. Mike Schmittlinger was the head of the Programme Division. He had an Administrative Assistant, Nancy Richards. There was myself, and I believe Newton Bowles was already on board at that time as a Programme Officer. That was about the size of that division other than secretarial help in 1948. It grew larger very quickly.

Charnow: It was small at that time because all the programme work was really done from our Paris office. Is that true?

Functions

Perlstein: The Programme Division was probably small for that reason and was actually a headquarters to communicate policy and decisions of the Executive Board to the Missions, whereas the close contact with European missions was maintained by the Paris HQ.

The principal work in the Programme Division was to translate decisions of the Executive Board, i.e. the allocations voted for countries, principally in Europe at that time.

The biggest technical problem was translating the Board decisions which were made in terms of rations and tons of food of one kind or another, rather than in money terms. As a result, to keep track and to be sure that the Board decisions were followed, there was a shifting scale of working out the apportionments so that no country received less than it really had been voted, but at the same time the value of these products stayed within the limits of the money amounts being received from the donor governments that provided either the actual allocations of food and other things, or their monetary values. It was a bit tricky. There was a time when there had to be a working group set up between the accounting people, the programme people and certain others in the staff, e.g. the supply people, as to how to keep track of the decisions on the actual shipments and whatever that were necessitated by these decisions. I think that the first rational record keeping in this sense, which would also be testable by formal accounting procedures, was worked out. I was proud at that time of having been part of the working team that was able to straighten out this situation.

Charnow: It sounds kind of complicated. Could you give an illustration let's say with Country X?

Perlstein: The Executive Board voted in terms of child units and each unit was related to an official ration of commodities, so one could determine so many hundreds of thousands of children multiplied by the size of the ration, what the quantity should be. On the other hand, it was necessary to reconcile between the donating and receiving nations what the Board thought it had allocated. In many instances countries, even including the US which was the chief supplier of the commodities, also actually voted money to UNICEF (shipping and administrative costs had to be paid for).

Charnow: Were you also involved in the raw materials programme and in the medical programme?

Perlstein: I was involved with the raw materials programmes and the medical programmes which first started to blossom in 1949-50. The BCG programme and the tuberculosis vaccination had been under way for some time. The important medical programmes that dealt with other needs of children were clinics for expectant mothers, health care for infant children and action against disease entities other than tuberculosis (e.g. anti-malaria, syphilis and yaws) which were being implemented during this period of time. This, of course, involved contact with WHO.

Relations with WHO

One of the sidelights on the operation was the tendency of the UNICEF material, money and medical products to be somewhat downplayed versus the WHO contribution, which was a contribution of high-level medical advice, but at the beginning not too much on-the-scene help by its medical personnel. Nevertheless there was, as far as the general public would be concerned, a sense that it was a WHO programme with UNICEF being hyphenated and listed second. Of course, it doesn't matter in the long run, in history, how it was phrased, but it was a very interesting aspect at that time. Subsequently, later on and over the years, WHO did get involved with teams of medical personnel to a large extent. The credit then was due and publicly known for WHO and was fully justified. But in the beginning UNICEF didn't get the full credit for providing lots of these supplies directly to the nationals and medical personnel of the recipient countries. At least that is my recollection.

Charnow: Did you sense any friction between our approach and WHO's approach? You were at HQ during the period when Borcic was the Deputy Executive Director, and my impression was that he felt that some WHO people were asking for fancier equipment than was justified by UNICEF objectives.

Perlstein: I don't have a clear recollection of this. Nevertheless, I do think that WHO was looking more towards longer-range and more sophisticated programmes and required more sophisticated equipment and assistance for them. I can't say whether they had it clearly in mind that the way that the problems should be tackled was by giving the national health and medical personnel of the needy countries the tools to do the job and assisting them to devise appropriate programmes, or whether they rather were leaning towards employing medical personnel on the staff of WHO missions per se to go into countries and organize the programmes and do a large part of the work themselves.

Charnow: I think probably my comment applies more to the developing countries than to Europe.

Perlstein: Yes, because in developing countries, the big thing was going after disease entities that might be knocked out by the magic drugs, penicillin, streptomycin and so forth on a mass basis rather than at that stage developing programmes down at the grass-roots level which would have continuity after the initial efforts of international assistance had diminished.

NY/Paris relations

Charnow: What was the HQ relations with the Paris office in tone and in function?

Perlstein: In tone there was more than a minor element of friction between HQ telling the Paris office or in some way influencing what was being told to the missions in the various countries what to do, what was right and what was wrong, and a feeling somewhat in Paris that HQ in New York was too remote to try to talk at that level. There was period of some uncertainty as to the role of the NY HQ and the Paris HQ vis-a-vis the European countries.

Charnow: You then later went to Paris. Did you feel that the Paris office was justified in this view?

Perlstein: Yes, when I got to Paris and saw close up what the problems were trying to develop and assist programmes in recipient countries, I realized that the NY HQ could not really have a useful close direct role with these missions. It had to be done through a regional office where communication was quicker; personal visits being made much more frequently from Paris to the other European countries, which again, at that time, were still the predominant beneficiaries of UNICEF help but also began to include North African and Middle Eastern countries.

Paris Office assignment

Charnow: When did you transfer to the Paris office?

Perlstein: I transferred around May 1952 and worked there for one year.

Charnow: Also in the Programme Division?

Perlstein: I was the Programme Officer of the Paris HQ. I had that opportunity because the person who had been occupying that position, had decided to come back to the US after some long period of service in Europe

Charnow: That was Jean Simmons Gradjansky, who then came as my assistant.

Perlstein: I was in Paris HQ for a year and then left. During this time I was concerned with programmes versus malaria in then French North Africa, Egypt (feeding and child health and maternal health clinics) and Turkey (child health and BCG vaccination) plus the milk plants in Yugoslavia.

Charnow: You were in Paris at the time Charles Egger was there.

Perlstein: Charles Egger was head of the Paris HQ when I was there.

Charnow: At that point we were beginning to talk about winding down in Europe?

Perlstein: There was discussion of perhaps not even continuing to have a Paris HQ for Europe but to have some other organizational means to save money, because the Paris HQ had a large overhead of staff and travel costs to missions were high.

Key UNICEF persons

Pate

Charnow: What was your feeling about some of the principal UNICEF staff people? Let's begin with Maurice Pate, his style of work, the way he carried out his role, the kind of person he was.

Perlstein: The contacts I had with Mr. Pate that might throw light on your questions were, first, the meeting with him in Warsaw when UNICEF first started up; meetings with him as the head of UNICEF who conducted rather widely attended staff meetings in the HQ; and of course observing him at the formal sessions of the UNICEF Board in the new and very imposing chambers of the UN building in New York. Actually when I first came back to New York the only building that was available was a building which later became the library The bigger administrative building wasn't occupied until somewhat later.

Mr. Pate to some extent could be austere but in reality was quite a kindly person in personal dealings. He did not convey his style in larger meetings by long or particularly witty or

sharply defined speeches, but on the other hand, he did convey a warm impression and an ability to be a moderator and someone who knew how to bridge whatever political agendas were being carried on at the Board meetings. To the staff, I think he was a very approachable figure. I didn't have too many occasions to directly deal with him, but whatever dealings occurred, there was no sense of his being remote or on a higher level. He was very businesslike and pleasant.

Heyward

Charnow: What about Dick Heyward?

Perlstein: Dick Heyward turned up a little later at least to my attention and was quite a different person altogether. Dick had a very strong leadership sense in the development of programme work at UNICEF derived from wherever he had been trained, whether at university or in other governmental positions in Australia during the war.

He had a very sharp sense of the essence of problems. He wanted facts to be the basis for programmatic statements by UNICEF. He knew how to ferret out and have others ferret out information and data that were realistic at the programme headquarters, after the initial phase of measuring pounds of milk and bales of cotton in relation to repairing war-caused deficits. There was a need for more precise economic and other social information to guide UNICEF's new role in underveloped countries outside Europe as well as the many new health programmes. Realistic quantitative, qualitative data on programmatic needs had to be submitted to the Board to justify programme requests. Dick was very well organized and knew how to demand of the staff professional work.

Schmittlinger

Charnow: And Mike Schmittlinger?

Perlstein: Mike became a warm friend as well as my boss in the Programme Division. I first met Mike when he came to Poland with Dr. Rajchman. He gave me an initial, more realistic and deep perception of UNICEF as an organization (versus UNRRA); the personalities as well as the role of UNICEF in providing aid for the war-torn countries of Europe. Mike was very soft-spoken. He was not as much of a taskmaster as Dick Heyward had been later on in regard to the programme activity of UNICEF.

Mike did start up the framework of the organization of the staff in HQ for programme work and Mike, in his visits to the European HQ in Paris and to some of the Missions, probably conveyed to the personnel in these places a favourable picture of HQ personnel. Mike never came across dictatorially or snobbishly but rather as someone who was fluent, easy to get along with as a colleague and gained his respect in that manner.

Mike had a flair, based on his work in the US government during World War II, for the organization and presentation of data. He had a good education in economics and, above all, a mature and well-developed sense of what one calls collegiality in dealing with people. He was never overawed. He always had something to offer in connection with his relationships. He particularly was looked upon very fondly by Maurice Pate. His entire staff got along extremely well with Mike, as I did. It is unfortunate that he left UNICEF about the same time as I did. He later on had a successful career in the chain store department retailing business but developed an incurable illness from which he very prematurely died. I'm sure he is missed by all who knew him at that time.

Charnow: Very few people at UNICEF even know the name any more, perhaps half a dozen or so people. That's why it's important to get down someplace his contribution to UNICEF.

System for currency use

Perlstein: I would like to comment on an achievement by Mike I thought was very impressive. There came a time when many countries besides the original donors, US in the lead, were giving money and support to UNICEF programmes. The principle involved was that many of these countries, having weak currencies, could only offer help if the use of their funds was made in the country that was giving it rather than regarding it as an international currency exchange. There must have been 20 or 30 countries that made contributions to UNICEF, some in kind and others in their own currency, and it was necessary to organize this help pragmatically or in some form so that UNICEF knew what it could draw upon. Mike devised a table, a matrix whereby all of the funds and all of the possible uses of these funds could be put down, and it was easy to find with the help of the matrix he laid out what funds might fit into what programmatic slots. For example, in Poland, they gave zlotys, but what could you do with them? Mike worked out the mechanism whereby these 30 different countries' contributions could be really handled by a programme entity, which in turn could offer to the Executive Board proposals that were workable.

Davidson

Charnow: What about Al Davidson?

Perlstein: I didn't have an awful lot to do with Davidson. My impression of him was that he was quite a high-powered individual, very bright. At the time, I knew about him working in the Paris HQ, I never met him in the Paris HQ. I only actually met him when I came back to New York. He was regarded as a brilliant star in the UNICEF firmament, if one can use that expression. Beyond that I have no real insight into his achievements.

Egger

Charnow: Are there any other people that stood out?

Perlstein: Charles Egger. Charles, of course, stayed in service in UNICEF for quite a good many years. When I first knew him, he was quite a young man, just married, an occasion of much congratulations by other young people on the staff. I had contact on a daily basis in Paris HQ with him. Charles had a very good logical, however, a Swiss logical mind, a little less scintillating, a little more pragmatic and down-to-earth approach toward his responsibilities as head of that office.

Bridgewater/Richman

Charnow: Were there any other individuals who stood out either at HQ or in Paris or in the field? Generally, what would you say about the caliber of UNICEF people and our field representatives and the general morale and tone of UNICEF staff?

Perlstein: Starting in HQ, I think that there was a strong group in the Supply Division. Ed Bridgewater was a very strong figure in dealing with governments and particularly in the stages where more than just a few governments had to be dealt with for the purchase of supplies. He organized a well-run department for handling the procurement of supplies and devised tight systems for getting good buys, so to say, for making use of the currency funds to their best effect, to tight bidding procedures and to well-defined paperwork for the procurement of supplies.

Jack Richman, who was under Bridgewater and had a great to do with medical supplies, was a particularly, in my opinion, outstanding professional in that area, responsible to a large degree for the well-earned reputation that UNICEF didn't squander money or play favourites in placing orders. These could have easily occurred with someone with less integrity and professional ability to handle that role, and I think Jack was outstanding.

Sabin

Of course, Don Sabin whom I first met in Poland in UNRRA, is another individual who I think made a lasting contribution to UNICEF programmes in the field of assisting countries to process their own milk supplies. He had taken over as head of the Polish Mission of UNRRA to Poland after his predecessor, a Canadian ex-general had left. Don came back to UNICEF HQ together with another person whose name I can't recall, who was an engineer and expert in milk-drying plants and dairy plants. He created almost singlehandedly that widespread programme for UNICEF in those years. It was a very important programme whereby

countries, particularly in the underdeveloped parts of Europe, learned modern methods of dairying, drying of milk, conservation of milk supplies generally. Don was outstanding in assisting countries in such programmes and also in schemes for milk nutritional substitutes in countries where dairy livestock were weakly developed (as in warmer climates).

Ehrenstrahle

In the field a person whom I had a lot of respect for was Hans Ehrenstrahle, a Swede, when UNICEF got involved with its relief work in the Middle East in the Palestine area. I went on a trip with him to Egypt and Lebanon, and I found that he was a very good person to have in that area, a fully professional international civil servant of neutral political persuasion.

I am trying to remember who else there was, a chap who was an Armenian from Iran who worked in the Middle East, a very pleasant colleague; he knew his way around the multi-national network in UNICEF's work in the Middle East. He was not someone who operated on a programmatic level but a sort of person who could introduce you to the proper local national personnel.

Sachs

In the Paris headquarters another individual who stands out is of course Dr. Michael Sachs of WHO, whom I had first met in New York but had not much to do with while in New York. In Paris Charles Egger, the head of the Paris Headquarters, Michael Sachs, the WHO representative, and I were the principal people who had programme responsibilities. Mike Sachs was our main source of knowledge of the detailed requirements of health programmes and, in particular, how they might be organized personnel-wise, whether through national personnel or international personnel. He had not only the normal M.D. degree but a degree in public health and was indeed very knowledgeable with such matters.

Mike had, through his length of stay in Paris, trained himself to speak and understand French fairly fluently, and contacts that we had with the French Government about health plans in northern Africa took a fair amount of the time of the programming division. These programmes had much to do with insect-borne diseases as well as other drastic health problems that result from unsanitary effects on health in underdeveloped countries.

Mike was a very good liaison officer from WHO to UNICEF. You did not have the feeling that you were dealing with a person who represented another organization, but rather that he was part of the team, and he in turn regarded UNICEF as part of the WHO resources for dealing with health problems. Aside from that, Mike was a good colleague, a good friend and a vivacious companion at all times.

Keeny

Charnow: Were you there at the time of Sam Keeny?

Perlstein: Yes, I remember Sam Keeny who represented a strain in UNICEF of earthy American personalities. He had a very broad background of experience in international and political matters, and while I didn't know him intimately, his knowledge, his ability to phrase comments on affairs of that kind were very penetrating. He was a very realistic person.

Bowles

Another colleague in the Programme Division of New York Headquarters that should be mentioned is Newton Bowles, who came aboard when health programmes for Asia began to be developed and who was a very steady worker and well organized. He had had a background of experience in China. He came on board just when the civil war in China was reaching a crescendo that resulted in 1949 in the replacement of Chiang Kai Shek coming on the mainland. Newton, a Canadian national, was pretty adept in decribing programmes.

Health allocations

I had been somewhat influenced by the earlier period (1947-51), when the programmes were all food programmes and each additional allocation simply added more food to that previously voted for food. In the medical programme the allocations were for distinct programmes as such, which had beginnings and endings; staff and equipment and were well defined to specific objectives, unlike food programmes. Newton had a style, which blossomed further under Dick Heyward, for being able to categorize and keep abreast of the medical programmes, which soon multiplied into many different ones.

The approach on allocations for the food programmes didn't mean new programmes, so I simply added the numbers on to previous numbers. Newton, however, developed a system of numbering his programmes and I almost thought it was bureaucratic, but later I realized that it made a lot of sense to keep them distinguished because they were distinct.

Richards

And last, not necessarily the least, was Mike Schmittlinger's administrative assistant Nancy Richards, who came from an old New England family whose female forbears were leaders in the anti-slavery movement in the middle of the 19th century. Nancy was a New Englander through and through and a very enthusiastic, likeable person. One did not at any time think of Nancy as being part of a secretarial staff, as an administrative assistant, but as a co-equal colleague.

Sroka

Charnow: Did you want to stay something about Stanley Sroka, our Comptroller?

Perlstein: Yes, Stanley Sroka received and accounted for the monetary contributions, particularly the big "liquid" ones from the United States and all the other smaller ones from the other countries. He was a very dapper, business-like character, lively, of Polish origin, with the personal audacity of the Polish people but very sober as a financial head.

He established a very professional system of accounting of the monies, of which many, many millions of dollars passed through the hands of UNICEF and which were quite independent of the central finances of the United Nations. I think that he made a very good contribution in establishing a business-like financial organization (investing temporarily idle funds as well), one that did not have scandals on auditing. I think that he made it possible through his professional abilities to know at all times where the money was and to account for its expenditure. An important thing really.

Control of supply use

Charnow: Did you feel that we had pretty good control of knowledge of where UNICEF supplies were going and control over their usage?

Perstein: That has always been something that I look back on and wonder. As all kinds of events since that time show, when you put foreign personnel into a country to try to track down where things come and go, particularly when it is not just money, but where there are supplies of all kinds involved, it is indeed very difficult to do so, no matter how good your staff is and whether you have the best of relations with the national government in power, the authorities.

Nevertheless, I think the nature of the supplies that were provided by UNICEF were not the kind that regularly lent themselves to black marketing, in contrast to UNRRA, which provided supplies that could get on the black market - cigarettes, soap, canned foods, clothing which could be used anywhere, could even be sold by retail shops, and who would know? The supplies that were sent by UNICEF were different with the exceptions later on of medical supplies and especially antibiotics, which could be used in all kinds of ways. But the average adult had no use for powdered milk in any form which was the main supply, and supplies of raw cotton don't lend themselves to being sold at retail; they have to wind up in textile mills, factories. So that I would say that supplies might have been not used quickly enough and gotten stale, or that they got lost or they got damaged in transit; but I don't think that there was any absconding or misappropriation of UNICEF supplies themselves in the first post-war decade.

UNICEF length of life

Charnow: What was your feeling or the feeling of those around you about UNICEF's length of life? Was it that it was just a continuation of the emergency and for a while longer, or did you have some sort of feeling that it would go on?

Perlstein: That's an interesting question because it did pass through my mind whether, after the countries in Europe who were the original main recipients got on their own feet, there would be any need for UNICEF. The medical programmes became the first step to a more permanent type of help organization through the UN because both need an ability to acquire drugs and medical equipment and so on. That kind of thing is always secondary to food supplies, but it became a step in the direction of more permanent activity in countries other than European.

And the other thing that really began to make it apparent that it could become permanent was the occurrence outside of the continent of Europe in North Africa, the Middle East and then Asia - as through there was an all-seeing eye in charge of things - of catastrophies of all kinds which took place all over the world, where either natural catastrophies or wars or what-have-you occurred; and the ones who first suffer from this are the helpless children and the mothers of these children. So that after a while it was apparent that UNICEF could remain a permanently functioning organization, and it would not have to be seen as a body that was maintaining itself in existence artificially long after World War II had ended. And I think history has justified that whole development.

Calibre of staff

Charnow: What can you say about the general atmosphere among the staff in doing the job? Obviously it consisted of a high proportion of young people, a few of whom, through some form of selection, having already been involved in some sort of humanitarian work.

Perlstein: Well, I don't know whether at any time the personnel file was searched out and categorized to show the background of employees both of UNRRA and later of UNICEF to determine what qualities in their background would have indicated that they would want to work for such international organizations. At one time, I had a feeling that there were many people who were just simply interested in working that way because it was exciting, that the post-War World II atmosphere was one part of it, and the international comings and goings was another part of it.

Some people who didn't have, if you want to call it, absolutely stable home lives, whether they were single or whether there

had marital troubles, and a certain number of those got onto the staff.

However, by and large, in the field and at Headquarters, one had mainly the sense of dedication in the work. There was a congenial atmosphere in all of these places. I don't think the proportion of people who were there for an easy ride was very high.

In later years, as you say, younger people kept coming in and this is a long period of time we're covering, 1947 to the present. I would imagine that one could later on have a staff that was recruited out of a wide field of applicants, rather than grabbing whoever was available out of previous organizations, more of an opportunity to choose from, I would think, a pool of well-trained and motivated persons. The personnel staff record is pretty good.

Charnow: Well, Jules, I think we've covered an awful lot of ground and I want to congratulate you on your memory. You have added insights and perceptions that we haven't had from any other source, and I would like to thank you very much indeed.
