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Interview with Dr. Raymond Mande
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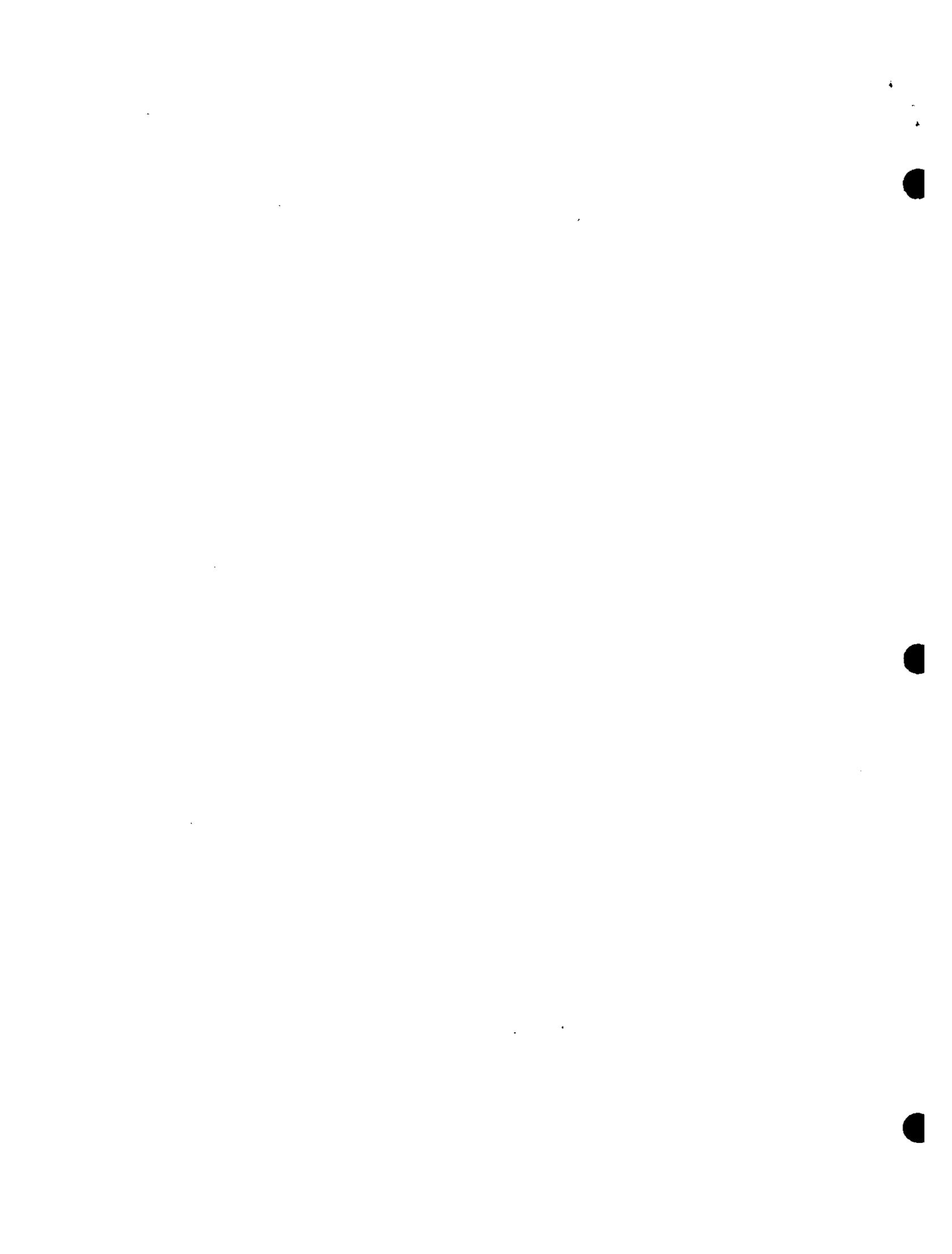
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Interview Dr. Raymond Mande by V. Tarzie Vittachi: Disease
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Mande early interest in disease control

TB/BCG

Vittachi: Professor Mande, I'd like to begin with asking you how did you get involved with UNICEF in the first place? What brought you to the interest in UNICEF?

Mande: It's really simple. I was in that time after the war in the fight against tuberculosis in my own country, France. At that time the Scandinavian Red Crosses sought to help the countries devastated or seriously affected by the war. They thought that one of the ways they could do that was to help these countries to fight against tuberculosis which was a very old companion of mankind. As it happened many times in history the wars were usually accompanied by a flaring up of tuberculosis. At that time I was approximately thirty years old. I worked on tuberculosis and I was very much affected and ashamed, I should say, that we couldn't do better. I knew that the Scandinavian countries had obtained a good result in the fight against tuberculosis using BCG in their own countries. And that was the reason for which when they thought how to help the European countries affected by the war, they proposed BCG. At the very beginning it worked, but at the end of two or three years they found they were not as many people, nor did they have enough funds to continue this work. At this same period, the United Nations were just created, and the Scandinavian Red Crosses proposed UNICEF to be what they called a "joint enterprise" always in hope to fight efficaciously against tuberculosis.

Vittachi: When you say joint enterprise, who were the other partners?

Mande: The three Scandinavian countries, UNICEF and WHO.

Vittachi: I see.

Mande: And then at that time, Professeur Debré was named as the French delegate to UNICEF. I was one of his assistants and he knew I was working in the field of tuberculosis, he proposed to me to enter this association, and to be what was called at that time, a technical consultant for the BCG campaign. And in answer to your question, it was by this door I should say, that I entered into this job.

Yaws

Vittachi: What year was that, Professor?

Mande: 1949.

Vittachi: 1949. Now, at the same time were not Professor Debré as well as yourself interested in other diseases that were affecting the poor world?

Mande: Sure. One of the main enterprises (and you recorded it a few minutes ago) was the fight against yaws. That was a tremendous success, and it is very curious how that was not better known and more widely known. And at the same time....

Vittachi: Excuse me, when you said tremendous success, did the disease of yaws, did it not get wiped out, eradicated very soon?

Mande: Yes it did.

Vittachi: Within months? Within a couple of years?

Mande: Within two to three years.

Vittachi: I'd like to ask you, Professor, how is it that a children's organization, and organization that was only intended to be an emergency organization, how did it take such a step as to eradicate the disease, because, you could not call that an emergency, this was a common thing that was ravaging the rest of the world for many, many centuries?

Mande: Yes, but nobody knew at that time that it should have such a success. That was a wonderful surprise.

UNICEF flexibility

Vittachi: But how did, how was it possible for UNICEF to get engaged in this? I mean, for instance, there was a World Health Organization which was responsible for the eradication of disease. How is it that UNICEF was so interested, that it was able to act in this matter?

Mande: It's indeed a very important, I should say, a basic question. The answer is, I believe, that UNICEF felt very early and very strongly the necessity, if we wished to work for a real improvement of the children's conditions, to have a global approach involving mothers and children and the entire community. The example of yaws illustrates clearly the necessity of dealing with the different sectors of the population if we wanted to have a deep and long lasting influence.

As that will become more and more apparent, with the development and the diversification of UNICEF activities, this "global" way of dealing with the problems of children, extending

progressively UNICEF aid to other sectors of the population, is one of the most outstanding marks of UNICEF's policy. And it seems to me that it is largely because its activity was not strictly reserved for children that UNICEF, when that looked necessary, adopted a global approach to the problems in a given population.

Owing to this flexibility UNICEF had, since the beginning, a closer relation with the governments and the populations and was able to realize programmes which had a real impact on the community life. Very early, it became apparent that UNICEF was wonderfully gifted for concrete action and that certainly is one of the main explanations of its achievement and success.

Training emphasis

- Vittachi: Now, how did you manage to get to everybody in the poor world, in the developing world, who was affected by this disease? Was it through the government? Did UNICEF have its own agents? Was it that you used the government's medical systems? Health systems? How did you get to the villages?
- Mande: In this problem of training the local personnel, the governments were happy we could help them.
- Vittachi: This intrigues me very much. The success of the campaign was evident within two to three years (the campaign against yaws.) Now, that these years involved training of health personnel, as well as administering.
- Mande: I do not know if I could say between one year or within two to three years. But it was of this order.
- Vittachi: Yes, that is the kind of time period.
- Mande: A few words on teaching. Yes, we have to recognize that the teaching was at the very simple level I should say. We didn't try to have them as doctors, well educated. But they were taught what they needed to know in their specific function.
- Vittachi: Now, was it at the same time or was it subsequently that you were also carrying out anti-malaria campaigns?
- Mande: No. It was a little later.
- Vittachi: No, I just want to ask one question in this connection; this, perhaps to realize that you don't have to be a trained medical doctor coming out of university in order to provide health services.

Mande: Sure. That's right.

Vittachi: I was going to ask, Professor Mande, whether this is not perhaps the first evidence that we know in UNICEF of what has now become a philosophy of basic health services, of using paramedical personnel, and so on. Because, evidently, this was already started in 1949 and it was already proved in 1951. And still there are parts of the system that are quarreling about the possibility of using experts - "none but the best."

Vittachi: Professor, let me say, that leads us to the next set of questions. But, I want to pursue that a little more. How was it possible to persuade the governments at that time, who were probably newly developing, newly independent at that time?

Mande: It was a very weak infrastructure of existing services.

Vittachi: No infrastructure, except the colonial infrastructure. How was it possible to persuade them that their village workers, people who were going to work in the villages, needed that training? And was the training given through personnel of the country itself?

Mande: No. It was given by some expert foreigners and disseminated by the local personnel.

French government/former African territory relations

At that time that was the relationship between the new African States, and French authorities. Their relations were good I should say. A lot of the African leaders were French deputies or had been French Ministers of Affaires. For instance, Monsieur Houphouet-Boigny, who is still President of Ivory Coast, had been Minister of Social Affairs in France. And a lot of them had occupied official function.

So, I think it was not too difficult at least for the French in Africa. I was not too difficult because the relations were not a result of war and UNICEF, helped by the governments, started, in good conditions, its collaboration with the newly independent African States. They were already at that time in deep collaboration. And that is the first time I think of this fact, we did not have real difficulties at this stage. The teaching of the personnel went very easily and the success was a very important step in the development of UNICEF activity and action. If we did have at that time a failure, I don't know what would happen in the future. (Laughter.)

Vittachi: But, unfortunately, it started with the first success.

Mande: Fortunately, yes.

Vittachi: Personally, what we have said so far illuminates many aspects that are already in my mind. For instance, the whole idea that you began to train local people in the developing countries. This has turned out to be now, thirty-five years later, the greatest boon, the greatest value - permanent value - to those countries. Because now, very little outside expertise is needed in many of the developing countries. So the process of starting the development of indigenous expertise began in 1949, at the very beginning.

UNICEF/WHO relations

Vittachi: Let me ask you, Professor, then, at that time what were your relationships, what were UNICEF relationships with WHO? What services did we get from WHO? What services did we give WHO to work co-operatively?

Mande: That was a difficult period in which the two of us had to choose and define their field of action. And then, there was a sort of risk of fight, a clash between UNICEF and WHO. But, WHO was since the beginning much more gifted, I should say, endowed than UNICEF.

Vittachi: In knowledge?

Mande: In everything. In everything. And at that time, I remember very well that Rajchman and Debré did not accept as an evident fact the supremacy of WHO. But, as I said before, WHO was much richer, had much more funds, much more money. With that money they could get experts and so on. Buy talent. That was the way by which the work was reserved to this organization or to the other.

But very soon it appeared that a fight between UNICEF and WHO would be quite a foolish thing. And they had to reach a sort of compromise and gentleman's agreement and for this was created a Joint Committee on Health Policy between WHO and UNICEF. This worked well and, alternatively, the UNICEF members and WHO members were presidents of the sessions. The choice of the topics to work on was on a common understanding and the evolution has proved that this way of communication was good and was not to the detriment of UNICEF.

Debré influence, enlargement of UNICEF's scope

Vittachi: How did a foreign agency, a young, infantile agency dealing with infants and children, which was known to be, and established to

be, mandated to be, a supply organization get into training of expertise and after that, into health, eradication of epidemics. How did you manage to do all that at that time? Was it that Debré did something extraordinary? Was he an extraordinary man?

Uses of streptomycin and penicillin

Mande:

He was an extraordinary man. He knew almost all the pediatricians in the world, and I think, that a tribute should be paid to his memory for that. Because he could, by himself - invite, with a little stipend offered by WHO or UNICEF, he could invite the pediatricians of the Mediterranean region, the Indian subcontinent, the South American people to come to Europe, and to participate in brief courses. They were taught the importance of improving medical and teaching programmes, and at the same time the possibility of using penicillin and streptomycin which just came on the market. That was an advantage I should say. By the way, I do not know if you remember that streptomycin was active against tuberculosis, work which was one of our main successes at that time in 1947, and I remember very well, that I was engaged in that work at that time. The pediatricians of Yugoslavia, Austria, Spain, Portugal, and so on, also of the Scandinavian countries, came to know how to manage with streptomycin. And through UNICEF, we could help them to get the new active drugs. So you see that was a mixture of intellectual process and luck and co-operation. Exactly.

Vittachi:

Now, I think that one of the things that was involved in that old process of the early days, while being a supply agency, and also of developing another dimension of UNICEF's work (which now has become its more important routine operation, what we now call the Silent Emergency or the development side of our work with children). Is involvement in long-term planning, not just supplies for an emergency which is a short term affair, but the beginnings of long term planning of UNICEF's programmes which must have begun at that time.

Social pediatrics

Mande:

Yes, but as I said before nothing was really planned. The UNICEF work benefitted from circumstances. The example of streptomycin I just quoted a few minutes ago is quite typical of this. But as time went on there were a lot of pediatricians who learned how to think about training in addition to helping in emergencies. They were eager to know a little more and they asked WHO to help UNICEF to organize what we called at that time Les cours de pédiatrie sociale (courses of social pediatrics.) that started around 1950 and that was a direct effect of the very first limited approach I quoted before. These social

pediatricians when they came back to their countries, changed their teachings, changed their way of working, and in a few years, I should say hundreds of pediatricians were converted to this new approach to their problems, which will constitute a few years later, the beginning of Primary Health Care.

Roots of primary health care

Vittachi: Were they willing to pass on some of their responsibilities to paraprofessionals at that time?

Mande: No.

Vittachi: How were they persuaded to do so

Mande: They were persuaded to do so by the necessity, which they did not feel before, to take care of all the children of their countries. Until that time the medical profession was quite elitistic, and the poor children were neglected. We tried to push them to take an interest in anatomy and health of rural children and things developed pretty well. Progressively the Primary Health Care took its roots in the villages.

Rajchman/John Grant

Vittachi: You mentioned that Rajchman had met Dr. Grant, Jim Grant's father, in China. When was that and what were the circumstances?

Mande: I do not know exactly, but I have taken that from a speech James Grant made last year. The father of James Grant was Dean of the School of Public Health in Canton or in Shanghai. At that time, Rajchman was a member of the Bureau of Hygiene in the League of Nations. Rajchman was sent to China, that was the time of the fight between Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communists. It was the time of "The Human Condition," the famous book of Malraux. And I remember very well, when I started having talks with Rajchman that he was quite fascinated with China. All the people who go to China are fascinated. And when he came back, he suggested to the League of Nations to create a bureau, an office in China with Chiang Kai-Shek, who was the master of China at that time. He lived a few years with Chiang Kai-Shek. He didn't tell me at all about the ideas of Chiang Kai-Shek. Chiang Kai-Shek was a typical Chinese of his time, educated in a certain fashion. And Rajchman thought with the help and the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek they could do a lot in a relatively short time in China...That was during that same period that James Grant and Rajchman met in China.

French Government view of UNICEF

Vittachi: I was going to ask you what was the French Government's view about UNICEF at that time.

Mande: The French Government was (especially, because of Debré's connection) not always very happy with the official relationship with UNICEF. They thought that, there was a certain tendency among the international media to consider that Frenchmen center around their own problems, and so on. They were very happy they could open the windows.

Mande: Twenty years later when the UNICEF Office left Paris to go to Geneva they were a little bit touchy, not very happy. But, there was no real not long lasting problem.

Supply orientation vs. broader scope

Vittachi: I want to ask you, I've been told, Professor Mande, that because of your association with UNICEF from the very beginning, you were able to serve as the bridge or mediator on many occasions, on some occasions when there seemed to be conflict within the Board or between the Board and Secretariat. Are there any personal stories or incidents or events that come to your mind in connection with that?

Mande: Yes, there are a lot, but they are small stories and I don't think that it is worth remembering them. No, the problem was not a small problem, that was a central problem and this problem is always the same. Was UNICEF created to be a supply organization and be maintained indefinitely as a supply organization? Or, should we accept the idea that WHO was an expert organization with a big head and small hands, and UNICEF was an organization with a normal head and very efficacious fingers and hands?

We, the French delegation, we worked, we fought to get this second conception of the UNICEF work. It is mainly on that point we had a lot of quarrellings here mainly with the American delegation. That was one of our main ideas. I was much younger at that time and when the time arrived for the Board Meeting I was a little bit anxious as to how the fight would start again and how it would develop. I did not realize at that time that our dispute with one member of the American delegation became a sort of ritual scene which interrupted the monotony of the debate and was expected as part of the programme of the meeting.

Hard words were sometimes exchanged and we were publicly qualified as "betrayers" of the mandated original purpose of UNICEF.

But during the period things developed, the action started in Africa and so on, and we could already measure the real impact, and, I should say the real success of UNICEF. So that period of conflicts maybe was not perceived as such by many delegates. As you know, many delegates come to the Board not knowing anything of what was done or what should be done. It was not too difficult to change their minds. In four or five years that was done and as you know, the education, teaching of personnel, represents 26 per cent of the total budget which is a tremendous amount, which was the core of our difference with some of our colleagues.

Vittachi: But tell me Professor, at that time when such policy arguments took place, what role did the Secretariat play in this?

Mande: Ah, yes. We didn't speak about the Secretariat. But at that time, the first president of the Board was Rajchman. So for putting the machine on wheels that was a very good thing, and he did pretty well.

Pate/Secretariat

At that time, the first Executive Director was Maurice Pate, a man of very unusual stature I should say. You didn't know him. I should say a few words about him. He was a very extraordinary type of man and when I think of him I always have the same words in my mind. He was an American aristocrat.

He was a very exceptional personality. First, he was physically, a very beautiful sample of mankind. He was tall, handsome, he had wonderful curled white silvered hairs, very clear blue eyes. He had a sort of fascinating elegance as well in the way he used to be dressed as in his behavior. His voice was soft and his way of talking full of courtesy. Such was the man. He would certainly have made a tremendous career as a movie actor. If that was true as the rumour persisted during years that he had a personal familial fortune and did not receive any salary, the total was exceptionally high.

I think we should make a pause and admire how the destiny or the Providence was good for UNICEF in his starting period.

Is it not striking to find bending on the cradle of UNICEF such a gathering of outstanding persons? None of these personalities was young. All of them were more than 50. In spite of the fact that they came from different countries and different "milieux" they have been well "educated," as we say in French, by their family or their professional relations. And since the real beginning of UNICEF life, they, by their own behavior, gave to

the debates a tonality of courtesy and esteem for the partners which, fortunately, has been preserved until now. It is for us and for all those who have to work with us a real blessing and, maybe, it is one of the basic reasons of the friendly atmosphere which is one of the main characteristics of our sessions.

Vittachi:

Now, what, what attitude did he have?

Mande:

His attitude was always modest and he always tried to put his interlocutor in a position of trust. In addition to the exceptional qualities, we have reviewed he had the opportunity to be, very young, in contact with post-war miseries. He was, indeed, invited to join Herbert Hoover who was head of a mission created in order to help Poland in the different traditional fields (food, milk, shoes, clothing, drugs, blankets, and so on.) For a man of 25 to 30 years who had always lived in a country where all the needs are easily satisfied, that was a very emotioning experience and the possibility of being engaged in international help and acquiring a particular competence in this field which was for him a wonderful preparation to his work in UNICEF.

Pate/Debré

Working together with the same basic attitude, Pate and Debré became very close friends. They called each other by their first name, which don't do in France as you know. When I heard Debré telling Pate, "Mon cher Maurice," I was quite astounded, but that was a very good policy. Not only that, I think they did have a real affection for each other, and when Pate came to France, he came to Debré's country house, and so on. And then, Debré explained to him everything in advance. So we had a very strong ally in the person of Maurice Pate. And that's one of the explanations of the answer to your question, "How is it possible that so many things could be done in such a short time?" That was due to the presence of these people.

Vittachi:

So that in a vital decision like moving the original emphasis of UNICEF's work to its becoming a development agency for children the Secretariat and part of the Board who are concerned with that change, to make that change, participated and understood each other.

Mande:

We never had really the feeling that things could be sent down. We had to live a few difficult hours and sometimes days, or two days. But, we never doubted about the success of our enterprise.

Vittachi:

I like to ask, now when Maurice Pate was going to retire, how did the Board, as far as you know, how did the Board begin to look for a successor? What are the means they used?

Mande: I was not entirely in the picture, in on the secret at that time (laughter) but I remember the people speaking among themselves, and nobody was a supporter of Henry Labouisse. I do not want to say that people were against him, but he was not known by most of the people. But I never was asked by anybody to subscribe to such or such candidate.

Vittachi: I remember seeing a letter from Maurice Pate to Labouisse in which he said: "You should become director, and if I had the choice of being President of the United States, or the Secretary General of the United Nations, or the Executive Director of UNICEF, I will choose the last." (Laughter.) (Wonderful.)

Rajchman

Let me ask you Professor Mande, do you know the whereabouts of any of the descendants of Mr. Rajchman?

Mande: Yes, I tried to find some. First as you know, maybe you do not know, Rajchman lived the last years of his life in France. He was of this category of Polish men for whom France was really their second country. They were more or less persecuted in their country and so on. He spoke French very well, and he lived his last years in France. That was in a small village in a county called Chenu which is approximately 250 kilometres southwest of Paris and there he became a gentleman farmer raising apple trees and so on. He was a well known French peasant. He lived among the peasants. They adopted him and he is buried there. As far as I know he had two girls. We found the name of one, Iren, but I don't know where she is now. And this Iren had a son whose name is Baltinski. I found her, I started my investigation about ten or twelve days ago when I came back from my vacation. And I thought I could get in touch with her, but I think with two names we could find them more easily. (That's very interesting.)

Malaria eradication

Vittachi: I like then to close our interview for today by asking you just one question. During your intimate association with UNICEF, is there anything that you could think of that you might have done better? Or that you think UNICEF could have done better had we the experience we have now?

Mande: Yes, I think we shouldn't be too enthusiastic but my deep feeling is that UNICEF did very well. Except in one of the things you have mentioned and we could speak of it later. It is about the question of malaria. That was one of the things which didn't work. And I think we could say that if UNICEF had at

that time the experience it has now we shouldn't have embarked on this malaria eradication campaign. WHO was pulling us by the nose. WHO was eager to strike a big storm and attacking malaria was definitely really a major event. But that needed a lot of money. I can tell you (I quote from my memory), maybe it's not exactly right, but the order of magnitude is there. Our budget at that time was \$25 million, and we devoted \$5 million to malaria eradication, one-fifth. That was definitely too much. And if I could, I repeat what I said before. If such a campaign was proposed now, UNICEF has sufficient number of experience and friends who know the job who would have consulted them and not accepted the malaria. And as I said here it raised two aspects: a lot of money and a lot of prestige. Before starting this campaign there was a lot of drum beating to inform populations that we treated malaria, and then, when things started again in Turkey, we lost a part of our credit and the populations and all those who had worked with us for the eradication campaign got skeptical about the tremendous effects they expected of the new drugs.

Vittachi,

Thank you, Professor Mande, thank you very much. If I may we will pursue this interview in some other form at some other time. Thank you very much indeed.