

created. I guess the model was the Brookings Institution, a kind of Brookings-on-the-Hudson for the UN; and it was a good idea.

"When I came in late 1979, the function of UNITAR's research department, as it had been defined in practice, was to do studies of various global problems that might impinge on the future of world peace. For example, there was a major project underway, ... a sociological study of population movements in the Caribbean. There was a whole gaggle of projects underway on what came to be known as South-South relations, ways in which the Third World countries could help each other to help themselves, roughly under the rubric of the New International Economic Order.

"The major change I introduced was to try to get the institute away from those kinds of outward-looking studies and into inward-looking studies. I thought that our function ought to be to look at the UN system, rather than looking at sectoral and regional problems. That was not because I gave the UN system personal priority over the question of Caribbean population movements, but because there were lots of other institutions that had equally good or better access—including the IDRC [International Development Research Centre] in Ottawa. Our particular strength—and it was really our only strength—was the fact that we had access to all of the nooks and crannies in the UN system, and that nobody could refuse to see us or refuse to let us look at the documents.

"One of the surprising things that I found was ... that nobody from UNITAR had ever gone to the archives. For all practical purposes, the UN has no archives. It has a storage warehouse, several miles away, where boxes are stored. But there is nobody in the UN who is in charge of seeing to it that, when a particular operation—let's say, the Bangladesh disaster relief operation—has run its course, Sir Robert Jackson turns over all the papers. There's nobody who does that, even today.

"The only way they get papers in the archives is if somebody runs out of room in his office and, instead of throwing the papers out—which is what they usually do—he calls up the archives and says, 'Send a truck.' They put the papers in a box and it goes off. There is a rudimentary cataloguing system, but it's cataloguing in terms of boxes, and there is simply nobody in charge of making sure that, at the end of each chapter [of events], somebody catalogues and systematizes all of the available paper and makes it available to scholars and to people in the system who want to know what went before. So there is, in fact, no history. The UN is not leaving any history behind, except to the extent that individual outside historians want to go 'round doing interviews.

"Brian Urquhart [under-secretary-general for Special Political Affairs until his retirement in 1986, and biographer of Dag Hammarskjöld], who is the one person who does care about the history, and I tried to convince a group of ambassadors to the UN that, if we could get a foundation to pick up costs for the first year or two, they might commit themselves to getting the General Assembly to fund the appointment of a reputable historian with experience in something like the British Museum or the National Archives [of Canada] who would come and do a study of what it would take to get a systematized retrieval system going and establish a UN history section. But