

**Yale-UN Oral History**

Rolf Ekéus

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**Interviewer:** This is an interview with Swedish Ambassador to Washington, Rolf Ekéus. It is 28 April, year 2000.

What was your exact role as Executive Chairman of the UN Special Commission?

**Ekéus:** It was to supervise the setting up of the organization, UNSCOM, to recruit personnel, to identify tasks following the directive given in Resolution 687. I normally call it the cease-fire resolution because that resolution constitutes the cease-fire after the war between Iraq and the coalition led by the United States.

**Int:** Did your role turn out to be different than you expected when you first agreed to join UNSCOM and did it change over the several years that you were Executive Chairman?

**RK:** Yes, it did. Most of us, including myself, thought that task was a complex, technical arms control hardware task. We didn't believe it would be politically complicated. And the reason was that the cease-fire resolution offered a deal to Iraq that if on one side Iraq cooperated and came clean of all the weapons of mass destruction identified, nuclear weapons, biological weapons, chemical weapons, and missiles of a range of greater than 150 kilometers, if Iraq came clean, then the prohibition against

exports of all Iraqi oil which had been put into place, that prohibition would no longer stay. If Iraq gave up its weapons, it would get its oil and the money it could generate from selling the oil. So, that was to me a very simple deal considering that Iraq is one of the second or third largest oil exporters in the world.

We talked about before the war Iraq was selling some 3.5 million barrels a day, which amounts to at least 15-18 billion dollars a year. Our idea was that Iraq would like to get this 15-20 billion dollars and the price for that was to give up the weapons. I think that was the view of the Security Council members and by me as the innocent one opening up UNSCOM. We thought that Iraq would be eager to cooperate, that Iraq would be eager to get rid of them. Therefore, when I recruited the staff and structured the job, I focused on having a good arms control weapons expertise employed in order to get the task done quickly, to help Iraq out of this. However, it turned out the opposite after a month or two. During our first and second visits to Baghdad in the summer 1991 – we started in 1991 – it was clear that Iraq was misleading and giving false information and I would say, lying, about its capabilities. So, we were confronted with a totally new situation. This was no longer a technical task.

Int: What were the first signs that they were lying and not telling the truth?

RK: Really, the first sign came when we went in with our first chemical weapons team. That team went into Iraq in May. We had recruited international experts very quickly from headquarters in New York. I went with the team. I had worked in chemical weapons as the chairman of negotiations on chemical weapons in the '80s so, I had a

certain experience and knowledge in a more abstract way and I was very curious. When we went to the first known chemical weapons production facility installation, Al-Muthanna, we saw outside the labs that they had been burning documents just before we arrived. There were fragments of massive paper burning. And that was at least warning signal. I still didn't react completely, but to me it was peculiar, why burn papers? Why don't they allow us to look at them? Was it to hide something? At least I got warning signals.

Int: They didn't do that more carefully. I don't understand that.

RK: They were desperate. They were under time pressure. There were ashes and paper fragments. You could see that it was related to chemical formulas and such, how to produce them. This was nothing special because we knew that Iraq had chemical weapons. The second time was in June when we sent one of first teams to look at the nuclear installations together with the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency. It was a joint team. And there the Iraqi side suddenly and dramatically blocked our experts who wanted to enter into a facility where we suspected that components for the production of nuclear weapons were. We had good reason. We had some intelligence, I may say so afterwards, from satellite observations that had guided us to go to that place. But the Iraqi side refused us entry, our team; I wasn't there myself but the team was refused entry. The chief inspector, David Kay, a fine man, a dynamic man, insisted, anyhow, to go in. While they were quarreling at the entry to this big fenced in facility, two members of his team climbed up into a water tower. And from the water tower they

could see with their binoculars at the backside that trucks were leaving, a convoy of trucks were leaving the facility.

They threw themselves into sedans, old American sedans that we had hired in Iraq, because we had not yet gotten in our more modern equipment. They jumped into these big cars with no suspension and they tried to catch up with these trucks, which was foolish but very courageous. The Iraqi's demonstrated their nervousness because in the end the vehicles stopped and out ran personnel with guns who started to shoot at our inspectors. That demonstrated that Iraq was extremely nervous, taking those extraordinary steps. When David Kay called me and reported this event, an ongoing process, I ordered them immediately to withdraw because they were not trained commando soldiers. They were middle-aged nuclear scientists.

Int: They were in the wrong situation.

RK: The conclusion was simply that Iraq obviously was hiding something and was not prepared to declare the exact contents of its prohibited capability.

Int: Obviously. Why do you think you got the job? What kind of experience did you have in the area before getting the assignment? You touched on it a little bit but maybe you could elaborate.

RK: The broad answer to that is again that the Security Council was looking for someone who had the combination of diplomatic experience, obviously, but with a

special focus on weapons issues, arms control and disarmament issues. They were not looking for an Arabist, or a specialist on the region and the region's problems. I had some general knowledge but my specialty and my experience was that I was chairman for the chemical weapons international negotiations. I had been heavily involved in the negotiations as the leader of the Swedish delegation. I was the leader of the so-called global 21 in the Conference on Disarmament. I was heavily involved in the biological weapons convention. I served as the head of our Swedish delegation in Geneva and was aiming at strengthening the Convention by adding rules for better verification, compliance, and control arrangements. So, we had a leadership role actively in the disputes around that.

Int: But at this time, you had no idea about the biological weapons that later on Iraq would be shown to have?

RK: No, to answer the question, we had no idea at that time. But I also had a role in negotiating the non-proliferation treaty, as I had served as the chairman of the drafting committee in 1985 at the successful review conference, one of the few successful conferences. These were my credentials. There was also a political element. Sweden was not a war-fighting partner of the coalition, which defeated Iraq. So, probably one saw it as an advantage to have someone from a non-belligerent country, in this case.

Int: Neutral.

RK: Precisely. Logically, there were not many. I was one of a few that both came from a neutral country and had that experience.

Int: That's great. Were you at all able to prepare yourself for this, specifically?

RK: Not specifically. I was asked very quickly by the Secretary-General through the Swedish government and I accepted after a very short hesitation. I thought that this was going to be a very quick job. I saw it as tailor-made. As I indicated in your first question, I thought this was a technical, fascinating, but technical job, not long, winding, diplomatic security issue. I had the basic knowledge so now it was just to read and prepare myself for the position. I rushed into the job. Both the Security Council and myself felt initially that here we had these weapons and the longer we delayed, the more money Iraq would lose. With the current export situation at the time they could have earned \$30 million a day. Now they had an embargo of \$30 million a day. So, I felt that if I waited two days to take the job, that would mean that Iraq had lost \$60 million in the two days. I couldn't take that on my conscience, so I rushed to start as quickly as possible. It was on-the-job learning.

Int: That's incredible. How did you manage to keep UNSCOM independent? And why was UNSCOM's independence so important?

RK: The Security Council decided when UNSCOM was set up that it should be financed not from the UN ordinary budget but by money generated in the beginning by

voluntary contributions, secondly, by taking frozen Iraqi assets, Iraqi money in banks all over the world which had been frozen in connection with Iraq's attack on Kuwait. So, these frozen assets were declared to be used to finance our operations. The reason why the Council did not want the General Assembly involved was that –I take it the US especially but also some of the others – because they didn't want to have the question politicized. If it were UN financed, that is the General Assembly, which decides, and the process is there, the advice of the budget committee with the special Fifth Committee dealing with administration and funding. That would be cumbersome. This was the cease-fire after the war. Why should the General Assembly be involved?

The idea was to keep UNSCOM clean and that meant also that the General Assembly, or the UN Member States, could not poke their nose into the task or give directives to UNSCOM and say that it should deploy that type of people or another type of people. This gave freedom from the involvement of the General Assembly. That was the most important thing.

Secondly, it was important also that UNSCOM could be free to report directly to the Security Council and not necessarily go through the Secretary-General. Formally, it reported through the Secretary-General but in practice because it was sensed that the Secretary-General would have to take into account political considerations, soften and change the quality of the reporting.

Int: Were you reporting about two times a year?

RK: Yes, it was a main task to report twice, two times a year, formally. Obviously, in between if there were emergencies, we would also report.

Int: Do think that if the IAEA had been more independent would they have been able to manage the situation better than they did?

RK: Even there it was a special setup. The cease-fire Resolution 687 did not say that the IAEA should work with us as an organization. They said the Director General of the IAEA. Again, I think that the thinking was that the governing council of the IAEA, the general body, should not involve itself in the running of UNSCOM. The expertise and technique of the IAEA should be applied but not its political decision-making. So, that is why it said the “Director General.” The Director General, at that time Hans Blix, set up a special action team which was not directed by the governing board of the IAEA. There was an effort to keep it independent. I don’t think that was a problem for the IAEA.

Int: Do you think that UNSCOM lost some of its independence later on in the process?

RK: Later on, maybe. My effort was to keep all Security Council members involved so they knew what was going on, and especially Permanent Members because these were big power dealings. To be fair, all Council members should know. And in that sense, it was a delicate balance to keep involved, keep them informed. They hated to be surprised. They were even more upset if they had to read about a problem in the newspapers before

it was reported to them. I went to considerable length to prevent such things. I always kept them informed, even bad news, to warn them about it. That was one side of the coin, to keep them involved. But when they came with advice, individual members – it could be the US, Russia, any of the five – “You should do this and you should do that,” I listened to all this and I liked advice. But I didn’t say that I followed their advice if I didn’t find it good. I said, “If you want to force me to do something, then you have to take a joint decision, according to your rules. You have to put a decision in place.”

Int: And not come individually.

RK: Or join around a statement by the president [of the Council], so all 15 should be involved. If they could, then I was obviously obliged to follow what they were saying and would do it happily. However, I always defended the independence of UNSCOM. Later on, I don’t know, after I left in 1997, a lot of controversies turned up. My successor was accused of taking too much advice from the United States. The others were unhappy.

Int: Richard Butler?

RK: Yes, but it is difficult to put a judgment on that. He has put his own explanation in his book, so we shall see how he explains this and how he answers that question. But we had good cooperation and never accepted to bow to their advice. We said that we were grateful for their advice.

Int: But you weren't obliged to.

Could you describe your relationship initially with the IAEA and did that change?  
If so, how?

RK: Yes, there were two philosophies colliding when we started. That is my impression, anyhow. Mainly, I felt that we had to take it as a starting proposition of the events that I described before that Iraq was systematically hiding and misleading about its capabilities. And that Iraq, therefore, was obliged to come clean. The burden of proof was on Iraq. I would say that they were guilty until we had proven it innocent. The IAEA approach was linked to IAEA's own culture that has to deal with long-term cooperation, friendly and supporting cooperation with their member governments. So, the IAEA idea was a more classical one.

Int: Obviously more trusting of each other.

RK: Yes, saying innocent until one could prove that they were guilty. So, there were two different philosophies. I think that created some problems in the beginning. The IAEA was also anxious to keep its independence from UNSCOM. You know that UNSCOM was tasked to give support and advice to the IAEA and also had some other responsibilities in the nuclear field even though IAEA was in the driver's seat on nuclear issues. UNSCOM alone was responsible for biological and chemical weapons and missiles. It was a bit problematic in the beginning because of our more suspicious attitude.

Int: How was it that Iraq was able to develop weapons of mass destruction to the extent that it did without anyone doing anything before this?

RK: First of all, they had the capability through money because of the oil exports. They had plenty of money. During the eight-year war with Iran, unfortunately, the West for political reasons was supporting Iraq. This was discretely because the West was very much against the fundamentalists' rule in Iran. That opened up for the export of high quality technology and also expertise and advice from the advanced, industrialized countries. But it was done in a very clever fashion. It was hidden inside so-called civilian programs. There was technical thing made possible: a systematic effort to provide alternative storage. Say, you import chemicals for the production of chemical weapons, you said that this import is for producing pesticides and fertilizers for agriculture.

Int: So, they imported things that had dual uses.

RK: Exactly.

Int: Do you mean that the Western countries actually knew about this a just sort of looked through their fingers and pretended not to see it?

RK: We have to remember that there was plenty of money involved here. The West suspected, I am sure. Even we in Sweden had our suspicions. We were not involved, I am glad to say, but most of us had our suspicions. The suspicion was clear when Iraq actually used chemical weapons against Iran and its own people. Toward the end of the war, at the end of the '80s, there was an improvement, especially on missile technology, which had been flowing quite generously toward Iraq. It was an unfortunate political overlooking.

Int: What criteria would determine the decision to carry out an inspection and had you ever carried out similar inspections previously? Had the IAEA or any other organization carried out inspections in the way UNSCOM did?

RK: No, these were totally new methods that were applied here. First of all, there were two types of inspections. There were the more soft type which were more to identify Iraq's production capability, in general, industrial capability, chemical, pharmaceutical, veterinarian, because there are a lot of poisons introduced in that area. That was mapping out Iraq's capabilities. However, in this process of establishing the knowledge base of understanding Iraqi capabilities, the inspectors because of the quality of their skills and brilliance as scientists detected things that didn't fit the overall picture. That gave signals back to headquarters that we had to do something else. There these findings were analyzed very carefully which led to UNSCOM establishing more pointed inspections toward suspected facilities.

Int: More direct, active.

RK: Yes, it was generated inside the process of mapping Iraq. These anomalies helped to pinpoint directions for the inspections. Secondly, we established very early on systematic over flight. We had a so-called high altitude, reconnaissance plane.

Int: Is that the U-2 plane?

RK: Yes, the U-2 plane. The press called it a spy plane but I didn't like that because we had the right to carry out these inspections under the resolutions. The U-2 turned out to be of the highest value. We had our own leased U-2 from the United States. So, it was flown by an American pilot but the pilot was formally under the command of UNSCOM. That was important because if it had been shot down, he would be arrested and hanged as a spy if he had not been under the UN because he was an American. It was a UN operation, so he was protected by that. These images from the missions that took place once or twice a week gave the analysts in UNSCOM, the photo analysts and the specialists, great help. You could see a factory where some new ventilation system was added to the roof. Why do they need a new ventilation system? Maybe it is a more advanced system. Or we would see an inordinate amount of heavy traffic going someplace. Then we could target our inspection team to go to these places.

Int: According to the photos the U-2 planes took.

RK: We also had helicopters inside the country that were stationed there. They were first run by the Germans for us and then later on by the Chileans. These helicopters could go out and take close range photography and look closer at what had been taken by the U-2. That was very effective and could reach a lot of places very quickly and with surprise. I would say in 90% of the cases it was purely innocent, natural civilian activities when we looked a bit closer. But in 10% there were serious matters. We had contacted foreign intelligence services and asked them to provide us with information. That information was added to the pictures and to our own findings. Putting all this data together, then we decided where to go. So, it was an active dynamic search for evidence. The classical safeguard inspections by IAEA, to take the second part of your question, were aimed at visiting facilities that had been declared by the country in concern, in this case Iraq. It was only declared facilities that they had visited. Saddam decided which facility they were allowed to visit. They had to give ample notice, weeks in advance. The inspectors were to be scrutinized and accepted by Iraq before they could go in. They had to be the right nationality, not unsympathetic to Iraq. UNSCOM had none of this. We went in without screening our inspectors. We decided to go to both declared sites and to non-declared facilities.

Int: I wanted to ask you about the U-2 planes. From where did they fly? Did they fly from the United States or did they leave from somewhere else?

RK: No, we fortunately had an arrangement with Saudi Arabia. They were stationed in Saudi Arabia. We notified Iraq about their flying in. We didn't want any accidents. We

gave Iraq some days notice. From my office we notified Iraq, saying, "In two days time, the U-2 will fly in within a certain window of time." We gave them 14 hours and we also gave them the entry point, the point where the flight would enter Iraq. We told them when it should leave Iraq in order to not give Iraq any reason to attack. We did not tell them where it would fly inside or what were the targets.

Int: Did anything ever happen?

RK: Well, we had some. Our rule was that we notified Iraq and we demanded from the Iraqi that they had to accept formally the notification. That was the assurance to our pilot. It happened on some occasions but rarely that Iraq did not accept the notification. Then we came into a very dramatic situation because the United States government was not prepared to allow its plane to fly in without protection from so called combat air patrol. That meant a very heavy military umbrella would be established over Iraq. Or we could cancel. But if we canceled such a trip, it would mean that by Iraq just not accepting the notification could stop all the overflight. We couldn't take that approach. There were some nervous moments when that happened.

Int: What was the toughest part of your job, personally? Was it the work directly or was it the insecure and unstable situation you were in? Was your job frustrating?

RK: It was not frustrating in the sense that the job itself was. On the contrary, the job was extremely fascinating and stimulating. Because it was like a puzzle, a very complex

puzzle, where you could play against a very shrewd opponent. The Iraqi technique was to refine the method to hide, to mislead, to frighten the opponent, threaten the opponent. That was us. In a sense there was a certain adrenaline run when you had these tremendous stresses and challenges.

No, the frustrating thing the sense that this kept the Iraqi people under such hardship. When we knew that the answer for them would have been that Iraq would just give up these weapons. No one should have such weapons. The Great Powers have some of them, but no one should have nuclear weapons; no one should have biological weapons. Nuclear capability is with a limited set of States, as you know. Major powers like Germany, Japan, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, and even the Nordic countries, we have all said that we shall not have nuclear weapons. There is no reason why we should allow Iraq to have them. Unfortunately, that was frustrating. They insisted on trying to trick us. Sometimes I felt a little angry. Do they believe that I am so stupid so they can trick me, when this is a game that will hurt their own people? If we could clean up these weapons...

Int: It would be better for everyone.

RK: Yes, we could lift the sanctions, provide relief, in every aspect.

Int: Was it difficult to work in this unstable situation, this insecure situation where you actually were?

RK: Well, there were times where there were threats against our personnel. They were frequently shot at. One favorite thing was to drive up against our vehicles in which the inspectors were traveling. But it was not systematic. It came and went in short periods of time. The same with my personal security. There were barrage of attacks in the Iraqi media, in the Iraqi press.

Int: I was going to ask you to tell us about that a bit.

RK: Well, they went at great length. The son of Saddam Hussein, Uday, had his own newspaper.

Int: He still has, right, doesn't he?

RK: When he wrote about me, he always added the prefix, the 'damned Ekéus' even if it were a purely technical article. "Next week, the damned Ekéus will arrive in Iraq," not referring to a specific statement or anything. That set a path that was supported by very aggressive accusations about me and my responsibility for the suffering of the Iraqi people. Also, there was a tribunal set up which was run in Spain but inspired by Iraq, accusing President Bush and me for committing crimes against international law in our policy of starving the Iraqi children. That type of psychological warfare was disturbing. Through counter intelligence on repeated occasions it was picked up that there were preparations to eliminate me under certain circumstances, and I was concerned to some degree but I thought it was politically unwise to do it. I felt there was a certain guarantee

in that it was not in Iraq's own interest to do. I think it was more psychological warfare to terrorize me and get me more humble and friendly. Also, there were rumors and information about the decision to or discussion about poisoning me. At one occasion there was one poison mentioned and I asked my biological weapons expert how does it affect you. Well, he said it would kill you but first it turns your hair white.

Int: And it is already white.

RK: I said, "Oh, that is interesting."

Int: Maybe you already had some of it.

RK: Yes. [laughed] But I don't think the government was really serious. I did not take them seriously. I had been working positively, to some degree within limits, on this relationship. With Tariq Aziz, we had a very good dialogue. He didn't agree with our basic tasks and I didn't agree with his tasks, to hide and mislead us. And he didn't agree with my task to find out. But I think that we respected each other and tried to be fair to each other. And I think that was a certain protection. The final observation of that was, however, there is a risk to the hatred that is built up in the press and the media against someone because it could be that an individual would act on his own without government approval. So, it was unnecessary and irresponsible behavior.

Int: The inspections and the work that your team did took a very long time and was a very slow process. What was the most frustrating thing with the work you did? We talked about what you thought was frustrating about the work. I know that they made it so difficult for you because they kept everything mobile. They kept moving everything.

RK: Yes, that was really frustrating, especially towards the end. In the beginning, I think we had considerable success in identifying the various programs and in destroying their big production facilities and the big storage areas. However, our task was to clean up all the weapons in Iraq. That meant that even if you didn't see any more weapons, that did not mean there were no more weapons. In order to answer that question, we had to understand their weapons programs, their decisions, the resources they had put into them, and where these items were. If Iraq imported 819 SCUD missiles from the Soviet Union, our job was to see that all these missiles were accounted for. Some had been used in the war against Israel and against Saudi Arabia. So, we had to count how many had been used in the war. We had to go to the allies and to the Israelis and to count how many missiles were used. Then we could subtract them from the 819 and that left 500 or something. Then we had to count that every missile was destroyed. Iraq tried to say that, "We had lost them. They disappeared." We couldn't accept such answers. We had to see each one. If they said they had tested it, then we wanted to see the order to test and the program for testing. So, that we could be sure that we could take off that one from the list. The same for when they imported highly sensitive machines, the big fermenters which they used for biological weapons production. We had to see all of them and supervise the destruction.

We could get information from countries that had exported to them. We had to be in touch with all the countries outside. Our technique was in that way was hard work. Then, however, some things were left. We needed documents in order to read them to see if we had seen everything. The list of what they had imported, we wanted to see that list. That way we could go to the Security Council. This happened all the time but especially in 1996 and 1997. That continued even after that. They put the things on trucks, on big caravans, and were moving them around in the country. When our team arrived, they followed our team, sending signals. They would say, "Now the team is going there or there; now it's turning left; now it is going on another road in that direction." Their caravans were moved away from us all the time. We tried to cover that with the U-2 and also with the friendly support of American satellites, but the satellite is not always there. We tried to time our time our trips so we could get signals from the satellites, or from the U-2, or from our helicopters.

Int: A major operation!

RK: It was frustrating them in the sense that in a few cases we managed to corner them, then they blocked us entry. We had no weapons. We could not force ourselves on them; we couldn't shoot. We were a handful of scientists. They were not cowboys or commandos. We had to complain to the Security Council; that created unnecessary frustration. In a way, though, it was fun. It was a big adventure.

Int: What methods did the Iraqis use to hide their weapons programs? Did they try to confuse the UN by other means?

RK: One way that we had developed was to interrogate, not the politicians but the workers, the scientists. Our team went in with Arabic translators and we tried to cross-examine. Our scientists were not trained in this tactic. They had sharp minds. So, I employed a man from Scotland Yard, the British police headquarters, an expert in cross-examinations. We brought in an expert of that quality to be with our teams to help them with cross-examination. These examinations were highly successful if we took one at a time. We interrogated one officer and then we would send him out of the room and then we took in the next. We put to them the same questions. If they were lying, of course, it didn't work because they would contradict themselves. If they immediately told the truth, it would hang together reasonably well. So, we detected their lies and that led Iraq to try to block these interrogations.

We had another major crisis I think it was in the summer 1996. I had to work very hard on Tariq Aziz and tried to mobilize the Security Council. It was not easy. They wondered why it was so important to do these interviews. You had to explain everything in order to pump it into their brains. "Yes, it is important." They wondered why we should make such a fuss over this. Well, I wanted to make a fuss. We often had long arduous discussions before we forced Iraq to agree on a system for interrogation. They insisted that high officers should be present in the room when we investigated low-level personnel. They were frightened, coming in to see this guy there who could send them to jail or kill them. That made them very nervous and that would undercut the quality of the

interview, obviously. The stopped interview when it became dangerous, when we caught them. The officer would jump in and say, "Stop this, stop this!" They would block the poor man or they would try to coach him. They would say, "You remembered wrong; it was not so." He would answer, "Yes, sir." So, it was impossible.

Int: What led to this crisis?

RK: I said that this was unacceptable. "We must be able to freely talk to these individuals who had been involved in the weapons program." We were trying to make what I called a 'coherent picture.'

Int: It was a development problem.

RK: Yes, it was. That was one example. There are many others like that.

Int: Did Iraq try to manipulate other members States of the UN? Did that work? Did you ever discover that they were doing that? Did other countries simply volunteer to help them?

RK: It was a systematic policy of Tariq Aziz, who is a brilliant diplomat, as you probably know. They had some other good people, but he was in a class of his own. He traveled frequently to capitals, to Moscow, Paris, where he was well received. He would travel to Rome, to Madrid. He traveled to China, Beijing. He traveled to India, to many

places, even to Bonn, Germany, occasionally. All the time he spoke badly about us. He said, “Look how they behave. They are insisting; they are not civilized; they are not respectful towards us.” He would say, “Our program looks like this and we have accounted for everything, year in and year out.”

My problem was that I had to follow his travel schedule. When he went to Moscow, I had to go to Moscow after him and sit down with them. I had to call up their ambassador in New York at the minimum and ask, “What did he say?” If it was serious enough, I had to go myself to have a session with the same people and explain and ask them if they were concerned. “Tell us what you are concerned about.” It demanded dynamic diplomacy. It was always searching and counting.

Int: It was like guarding a child.

RK: Sort of, yes, he was an unruly child, in that sense. You had to countlessly see that he didn't do damage. That was more problematic. It was possible, anyhow, because we had the truth on our side. We had the facts on our side. So, I think we won every such incident or competition. The problem was when a matter of economy came into it. Iraq very clearly stated to countries that, “If you support us, we will see to it that you will get part of our oil wealth when things get better. You will get rights to export and set industries in place and work with us.” Iraq is a country you can't ignore because of the rich cash flow they have. It is potentially enormous as one of the oil rich countries. After a while you had the feeling that some governments took the money issue into account rather than these obstacles. That was very frustrating and problematic. That demanded a

lot from me as chairman. You are up against promises of hundreds of millions of dollars.  
It is not easy.

Int: Couldn't the UN do anything?

RK: No, not at all, the UN was scared stiff about this. I wouldn't say the Secretary-General. I had excellent relations with Boutros-Ghali and great relations with Kofi Annan and with Pérez de Cuéllar, in the beginning. All of them were great men. They had different styles and ways of acting, but they were very impressive persons. But, on the contrary, the culture of the Secretariat was not enthusiastic about UNSCOM. Because the UN is created as a body to support and help member States, for food, UNICEF works, education helps out, even peacekeeping operations are based on the approval and welcoming of the governments concerned. They don't want to irritate the governments, as a protection. But we were not asked in; we were not invited by Iraq. We were foisted upon Iraq. The culture of the UN is cooperation, help, support. It was the first time the UN had taken on interference, pressure, a confrontational attitude. We were forced to confront allies with our truth. In the UN as such, we had to base ourselves on the Security Council.

Int: But, UNSCOM was created by the UN. All the countries had agreed on something. It was a way of going behind the back of the UN by carrying on an agreement relationship with Iraq.

RK: Yes, of course, but money talks.

Int: During the time that you worked with UNSCOM, did you see any changes within the Iraqi people, the society, and the living standards?

RK: Yes, definitely. We have to recall that the living standard was very low when we came in. Iraq was close to taking off economically in the late '70s after the great oil price hikes which had taken place between '73 and '78. It was doing splendidly. It has a very hard working population. It was a relatively secular state in Arabic world. The women are liberated there much more. They are much more active, especially in medicine. But, you can imagine 8 years of war that what that did to the economy. The social structure was starting to collapse during the war because all the oil money went to munitions, to tanks, to airplanes. It went into buying technology for weapons of mass destruction. That took many billions of dollars. They used not only oil money, but they borrowed money, especially from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Their economy was really in pieces. That is why I think decided to occupy Kuwait in 1990. That was a quick fix, go in a take Kuwait that was swimming in money and oil, just take it.

Int: They claimed that it used to be an Iraqi province.

RK: Absolutely, and that was a quick fix for the economic problem. When he was thrown out, he didn't succeed in repairing the Iraqi problem. The starting point was low, however, the sanctions which were put in place as a consequence of the invasion of

Kuwait, as I indicated in the first answer, the Security Council kept these sanctions in place. That meant that the standard was low and bad and no real improvement came. It was a difficult situation and the Council recognized that and even said from the very beginning in 1991 that Iraq was allowed to export certain large quantities of its oil to buy medicine and food. That was an offer Iraq rejected for many years. It was not done until 1996. In 1996, one started to come to an agreement and in early 1997, the system of selling oil and getting food came into play.

It is very important for history, for the record, that Iraq had that offer from the beginning, but they rejected it. There was one year on modalities, from 1996-1997, on how distribution of the food should be carried out. The agreement was less than satisfactory in many ways, but it was better than nothing. We see now the result of the agreement between the UN and Iraq, Iraq was given the task to distribute the food. The UN only had the right to, hardly even observe, but to be present and see to it that it was reasonably distributed. Even though this program is going on, there are still serious health problems.

In northern Iraq where Saddam had no control, the UN was given the job to distribute the food itself. There the living standard is higher than it was before the war. It shows that it also the way it is done. You see a couple of UN officers in Iraq, a man called Halliday and another one, two leaders of the control program in central Iraq who came out highly critical of the sanctions. I think they were right because their heart was in the right place. They saw people suffering and they really became upset. But part of their attack on the UN was in part to protect themselves. They knew that they did not carry out the distribution well. We had the Kurdish case, which showed that if it were

done by the UN, it was very effective. In central Iraq it was not effective. One must remember that there is also blame to put on the Iraqi government.

Int: How much did the Iraqi people understand about what UNSCOM was doing? Did the Iraqi people help you in any way?

RK: No, not at all. There was a constant propaganda from the first day, saying we have nothing.

Int: But that is actually from Saddam.

RK: Yes, but the people read that and then they heard that we had detected something and they should think about it. "Didn't he tell us there was nothing?" That happened over and over again. It was proven that there was something. When I went to Moscow I said, "Tariq Aziz told you in 1994 there was nothing left and now in 1995, we have detected so much. Shouldn't you stop trusting him?" The Iraqi people only had access to Iraqi TV and to Iraqi newspapers, Uday's newspaper and others. They had very little to go from.

Int: Didn't they write about what you found? No.

RK: No, very little. It could have been beamed in by Arab speaking BBC, but it was a crime to listen to Iraqi news. The middle class was very hard hit. They had commodities

like carpets which they had to sell to get food. They had to sell refrigerators. If they had books, they tried to sell them. They exhausted everything. It was really tragic to see how their quality of life went down.

Int: You said the middle class was hit the hardest?

RK: Yes, I think so. The farmers came out better because when there was no food and medicine, then they could sell their stuff for enormous prices. They needed full horse drawn carriages to take home all the money. They have very violent inflation there. They had to transport home all the money when they came to the markets.

Int: It must have been a fascinating sight.

RK: Yes, but that changed with the UN program.

Int: The Iraqis gave you a hard time with your work. You have already talked about that. The experts that you had on your team had various nationalities. I have understood that it was very difficult to keep them from briefing their governments about their work that they did with you and that the information that they had ended up in the hands of the Iraqis. Is this true and to what extent?

RK: Some, first of all we had top quality experts. Each one of them had to sign a contract with me where they undertook to report only to me and not to take orders or

instructions or inform their government about the work. If their government wanted to know something, they had to turn to me and I would decide how much they could be told. We gave out information but we protected highly sensitive information that we didn't give out to any government. If some government would say, in order to help us and to help their analysts to give advice to us, they wanted some piece of say an inspection report, they could get that inspection report but we would delete the sensitive things like names of foreign companies having exported to Iraq. We did that in order cooperation with them at a high level. We tried to keep them informed in a legal fashion, a structured fashion. That does not exclude that some may talk a little about their experience. But then they were in violation of what they had signed. I think most of them did not do it. We had concerns that some information was being fed back to Iraq, not details, but warnings like now the team intends to this or that. We sharpened our security arrangements for our own protection very much, limited information to extremely few people, especially our own targeting of plans for where we should go the next time. That was kept highly secret. It was kept solely for myself and the mission planner and the operations officer who knew. Not even the team was allowed to know until they came into Iraq. We had to train them in advance, of course. If you intended to make an underwater exploration.

Int: You did underwater explorations?

RK: Yes, we did because we suspected that some nuclear capabilities had been put underground and water moved them or they threw them in the water. They tried to hide

missile equipment that was smuggled through Russia. The Russians sold it to them in 1995, advanced guidance systems for long-range missiles. These systems ended up in Iraq and they threw them into the Tigris. So, we had to prepare frogmen and others to swim and pick up these things. Then they could figure out when we started train these people that there was something with water. When they flew in, they saw the packages in the airplane, heavy equipment and rubber clothes and so on. They understood that some water operation would happen.

Int: Incredible. During your tenure, were there any secret devices to pick up information on the activities of the Iraqi Special Republican Guard or the special security organization? If so, why did UNSCOM need such devices? Did the Americans or anyone else use this technology for other purposes?

RK: That is the \$64,000 question. We had the right, according to the resolution, to use means of investigative technology, high-resolution imaging, photography, and to use sensors. We had lots of sensors of various sorts. A sensor could be a chemical device, which you put around a chemical facility that picks up from the air and that goes into filters and those filters are taken to the laboratory that we had in Baghdad. There we could see what kind of chemicals were there. That was one. We could have water sampling regularly to see if there were nuclear signs. We flew with certain airplanes, taking gamma ray counts so we could find hot spots over Iraq from the radiation from the ground. We could map it out and then send out inspectors to go and see why there was

something radiating out there, in order to detect their various nuclear activities. We had these sensors and other types.

We had sensors that picked up signals under certain circumstances. Iraq was spying on us. Every word was taken down. We had to have strong rules inside Iraq about speaking. I decided we should counter that by listening to what they were saying. We had counter measures. However, I made arrangements that this was a multinational effort. It was not an American privilege, not at all. We had various nationalities involved in that. The lead country was not American. It was a serious operation. I did not want it to be American. That doesn't conclude according to some reports after I left, but that was more under the watch of my successor. One individual, specific person, broke his trust and tried to organize some undercover operation in UNSCOM. I don't know if it is true or not, and I don't say it is not true. I have been on record saying that if it took place it was "stupid beyond belief." But you don't get the truth with a sensor. You have to put it into the context, but this is a piece of the puzzle. Then you can decide if it is of any value. That is why I stand on my statement that it was stupid, if it took place. It was also stupid because it harmed UNSCOM. It made it possible for Russia and others to attack UNSCOM. That was not in the UN interest, I think. Secondly, they didn't get it, I can assure you. It was so amateurish.

Int: What did you think are the reasons that UNSCOM became less effective? Or is this not so?

RK: I think that UNSCOM was very effective, at least in technical terms. It became sharper and sharper. The teams were tough people; they knew better than anyone and were superior to any intelligence service, much better than Americans, Israelis, and Germans, etc., the British, in the full knowledge. No one knew more than UNSCOM. We got sharper and we could act.

Int: Because you wanted to get at it.

RK: Yes, and we were focused on one thing. We could pick up all the others' information and pool it. They didn't get the other information. We were the only ones. So, we were absolutely effective. Politically, after my time, UNSCOM became controversial. That was, of course, politically harmful and that made it less effective. It was blocked and there was no real support. I think the key for my job from day one was to keep the Security Council together; I repeat myself, but especially the five, to beg all the time. I know that if they didn't back UNSCOM, if they would break up – the US would give support but the others didn't – it wouldn't work. It was the only way. That was why I had to travel all the time, to counter Tariq Aziz, to take care of any misgivings. There was a newspaper story in Russia in 1995 or 1996, saying that UNSCOM was giving target advice to the US to bomb Iraq and I protested that. I worked on that so hard and they were forced to take it back. I never ignored an accusation like that. I took it head on. I went to the Russians and said, "Tell me what this is. Give me proof and I can assure you." So, they had to take it back. It took a long time.

Int: It was very important that you did that.

RK: What happened after that, it broke down, unfortunately. The Council broke up and they started to accuse things. The political effectiveness was lost. To answer your question in one sentence: it broke down because of political reasons.

Int: What are your hopes for UNMOVIC? What is its potential?

RK: UNMOVIC is written in a way, Resolution 1284, that is to say there is no presumption in 1284 that Iraq has anything left. It only really actively talks about preventing Iraq from acquiring nuclear capabilities, which is a good record for UNSCOM. It shows that the Security Council thinks that UNSCOM cleaned up everything.

Int: Yes, but now they have had a couple of years of rebuilding.

RK: Yes, but the old Resolution 687 had the presumption that Iraq was hiding things, which was correct. However, I think the new resolution creating UNMOVIC as it is written is capable and has the right to do everything, including searching for prohibited items, not only prevent new things from coming in, but also to do a search. Hans Blix, in his statement when he presented his new report, indicates that very clearly and I am very happy about that. My sense is that UNMOVIC can do the same thing. The key there always boils down to two things: the political support and the quality of the personnel. If

you get good people you can get it done. That's it, the mark of leadership. If you have good leaders, they should take the best persons. That is the mark of success. It is not to say that UNMOVIC is not able to get the best people, but it depends on the leader.

Int: France has always seemed to have a special relationship towards Iraq. Why? Is it due to similarities in nuclear weapons policy, interest in increased trade relationships, or is it something else?

RK: I think that France would like to have a role in the Arabic world. Iraq now is isolated in the Arabic world but potentially it has a hard working population, which is good, oil richness, two rivers. It is a country with extraordinary possibilities, good people, good natural resources, and water. These are the key factors. But they have poor leaders. Otherwise, the country would be a paradise, extremely wealthy. In the long-term, I think it is wise to keep good contacts with Iraq. I doubt that it is wise to keep in good contact with the present leadership, which fundamentally undercuts and destroys these capabilities that it has. France is looking at the long-term economic gains.

However, to give France credit, I think they are very solid on the weapons issue. In the military circles in France, I think they are concerned that Iraq not acquire especially nuclear capability. They are supporting the prevention of that and have strong arms control. But they like to have both things.

Int: Do you think that will change in the present?

RK: In France? No, President Chirac was close friends with Saddam. He visited Baghdad once. But I think he has been very fair. I talked with him a couple of years ago, in 1995 I think it was. We had a conversation and he was very supportive. He said, "I promise we back you with support." And they did. They were very supportive. I never complained about them. I just always had to keep them in the picture. I liked that because they were critical; they asked questions. I liked that, instead of sitting at home and be sour. I know that my successor had problems, according to his book.

Int: Do you think that the French want a more friendly, trading relationship?

RK: They would like to come in first, to be responsible for the telecommunications. They would like to have their "El Fen Total," the oil company, involved in exploration and the enormous profits that can come from this. Of course, they are anxious to be number one. And they also compete with the Russians.

Int: Exactly, my next question was just that, what are the reasons for China and Russia for being so Iraq-friendly?

RK: China is not really Iraq-friendly. It is just hanging on. They never take the lead in Iraq-friendliness. They put themselves in solidarity with the Russians and the French, but they never take the lead. That is my experience. They have been cooperative and supportive during my time. However, it is clear that China had cooperated with Iraq earlier in helping them with missile technology. But during my time, we saw no sign at

all and I don't believe they did. I think that China has been quite fair and has not supported Iraq's missile program or any other programs. That was historically so, but many others did, also. China may have been less open about it.

Int: What were UNSCOM's major accomplishments? And what were some of its failures?

RK: The accomplishments are very simple, that was to identify the whole set of programs and the major number one was biological weapons. That was the most secretive, an ultra secret program. It was total denial, "We have nothing to do with biological weapons," written repeatedly, year after year until our inspectors with their skills tracked it. Their defectors, Hussein Kamal in August 1995, told us that that was not true. It is on record that we reported to the Council before the defection about the full Iraqi program. In 1996 when we blew up the big, sprawling biological weapons facility; that was on television. That was a wonderful thing and shows that we had an incredibly strong team of scientists and thinkers and a good combination of people.

Int: Where was this?

RK: It was not far from Baghdad, about 100 kilometers. It was about one hour and a half away, maybe two hours. Al-Hakam, it was called. We took biological samples in that area in 1991, but we didn't see anything. But with DNA technology that was developed during the nineties, that changed. It is fascinating what happened in the

nineties. In 1993 and 1994, we took the old samples back and continued to test them. With these new machines, you take a sample and even if they had washed or cleaned it with detergents to take away every remnant of bacteria, but still there are things left behind. The scientists who worked for us came and said, “Now, through DNA, we can see traces of Anthrax, which is one of the biological weapons. That was fantastic. Then we started with other techniques. It is a long, wonderful story. All these things together, it was a combination of things.

The failure? I don’t want to place blame on my successor. But I think that when I left we had been successful. The failure was, if not UNSCOM then someone else’s fault, was the collapse of the political backing. That was the main failure. On my watch, I don’t know if it was a failure because I think it was OK to start out with a certain innocence, not suspecting, believing that they should come clean. That was maybe a short-term failure, but we quickly corrected that. Maybe when started the search for mobility, I didn’t outline the limits of that. My sense was that what we needed to prove with Iraq was also this hiding through mobility. I thought it was important to catch it, but when we had them cornered, they wouldn’t let us go in. They just put the gun to the stomach and said, “You don’t go in.”

Then the Security Council said, “If you don’t do it [come clean], then we will bomb you.” And if you remember, that happened later on, after me. But I didn’t like bombing. I wanted to avoid bombing. If the bombing had helped us get our hands on it, maybe one has to. I was convinced that it wouldn’t work. So, I think maybe I should have put a limit on this before I handed it over to the successor.

Int: One last question: could a mechanism like this be used again in the future?

RK: I think definitely so. I may be relatively alone but I think I indicated in my answers, yes.