Unesco: A Glimmer at the End of the Tunnel?

Reforms and budget proposals hammered out over the past few weeks may be sufficient to prevent the organization's collapse

Paris. The future of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco) could well be decided at the general conference of its 159-member states, which is due to open in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia at the end of October.

Two items concerning the short-term survival of the 39-year-old organization top the agenda, which is formally focused on its program and budget for the years 1986 and 1987. The first is whether consensus can be achieved on cuts made necessary by the withdrawal at the beginning of this year of the United States—previously the source of 25 percent of the $165-million annual budget of its regular program.

The second, considered even more fundamental, is whether changes that have been made in both administrative practices and program priorities are sufficient to persuade the United Kingdom not to follow the United States' example, which it is threatening to do. Such a move, many fear, could precipitate a walkout by several other Western nations (such as Japan, West Germany, Canada, and Denmark) and thus the eventual collapse of the organization.

On both these issues, decisions made recently by Unesco's Paris-based secretariat and its 51-member Executive Board give the agency's supporters some grounds for hope. William Dodd, Britain's representative on the Executive Board, says he is "guardedly optimistic" that program changes recommended by the board after a 6-week meeting in May and June will help convince the United Kingdom to stay in. Even though Britain's decision will not be made until the beginning of the year, Dodd says that "on balance, the position is slightly more positive than it was at the end of the year."

Much, however, depends on what happens at Sofia. In particular the Soviet Union—now the largest contributor to Unesco's budget—will be closely watched to see if it retracts its somewhat reluctant acceptance of reductions in several programs, such as "peace education," which it has staunchly defended in the past. Several developing countries have also objected to the concessions that they are being asked to make to the Western view of how Unesco's funds should be distributed.

Yet even if the Soviet Union and Third World countries agree not to rock the boat at Sofia, the long-term problem of restoring Unesco's credibility in the eyes of the Western donors, who still provide over 50 percent of its funding, remains daunting. In this context, attention is being given to opportunities that may arise in 1987, when the term of office of the current controversial director general, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, expires.

> Unesco's science programs fared relatively well in the shakeup.

Although much has been made in the press of Unesco's administrative shortcomings and M'Bow's autocratic management style, many Western observers share the view that its problems stem equally from the inherent difficulties of trying to achieve consensus among a diversity of member states holding differing views of the agency's role in international affairs.

Some countries, particularly in the West, see Unesco as an agency that should primarily be concerned with intellectual, as distinct from political, debates. Others, notably in the Third World, see it more in terms of an important channel for development assistance. A third group, dominated by the Eastern bloc countries but also including several Arab and other Third World states, argue that the distinction between intellectual, developmental, and political issues is false, and that the agency should explicitly address all three simultaneously.

Even the science programs, often quoted as the most effective of Unesco's activities, are not immune from the difficulties this split personality can cause. The U.S. State Department, for example, in a 1984 policy review, commented that although these usually resulted in a "good technical product," Unesco's support for science was often "diffuse and misdirected," with scientific meetings "marred by the injection of extraneous political issues."

Last year, the Soviet Union suggested that a project on the environmental consequences of the arms race should be included in Unesco's Man and Biosphere (MAB) research program. The move was successfully contested by several Western states who argued that it did not meet their own conceptions of MAB's primarily scientific goals.

Some programs, however, manage to thrive despite the nonscientific responsibilities placed on them. One example is the highly regarded International Geological Correlation Program—of which the United States still remains a member—which manages to impose strict quality control on the original research it supports. This is despite what a recent report of its scientific committee described as "strong pragmatic pressures for more work devoted to resource evaluation techniques and for studies for, with, and in the developing nations" which, it said, some members feared might compromise the basic science content.

Unesco was founded in 1946 by Western nations in what amounted to a virtual intellectual crusade. In its early years, the structure of the postwar world made it possible to discuss intellectual, developmental, and political issues in a single, shared language that expressed both the international neutrality of ideas (epitomized by Britain's insistence that the "s" for science should be included in what was to have become Uneco) and the mutual recognition of diverse cultures.

Two decades later this consensus had exploded, shattered in the West by the criticisms of the student revolts of the late 1960's, and in the Third World by the militancy that followed the success of the Arab oil embargo. Unesco adapted uneasily to the new environment, but its Western members were reluctant to step in heavy-handedly, either to keep it to the original course, or to map out a new one. "We all share responsibility for what has been happening," says the member of one Western delegation. "Things started to slip a long time back, but no one cared to do anything about it until it was almost too late."

Little might have changed if the Reagan Administration had not announced 2

U.S. Promise Falls Through

Before the Reagan Administration formally withdrew from Unesco at the end of last year, State Department officials promised Congress that funds would be made available for some Unesco-sponsored international programs that are considered important to the United States. The promise, however, fell afoul of the budget deficit.

The State Department requested $47 million for the programs, which are mainly international scientific endeavors, but the Office of Management and Budget slashed the figure to a mere $2.75 million before sending the budget to Congress. The House Appropriations Committee has taken a further chunk out of the request, chopping it to $2.1 million. The final figure is expected to come out at about $2.5 million.

State Department officials, who like to emphasize that the funds will not go to Unesco itself, say that when the money is eventually appropriated, it will support primarily five international scientific programs: The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the International Hydrological Program, the Man and Biosphere Program, the International Geological Correlation Program, and a collection of programs on natural hazards. Some money is also expected to go to the International Council of Scientific Unions.—COLIN NORMAN

years ago that it was withdrawing from the agency, quoting a list of charges from administrative mismanagement to excessive politicization. This was followed, somewhat unexpectedly, by Britain's announcement last year that it, too, would withdraw at the end of 1985 if certain changes were not made in the way that Unesco operates. And since then, several other Western countries—while not yet going as far as Britain—have added their own complaints and threats.

The secretariat's response, whose aggressively hostile tone has diminished as complaints have mounted, has been at two levels. Director general M'Bow has now agreed to meet a timetable of 117 administrative changes that had been put to him by a small group of 13 member states known as the "temporary committee." Some, such as more critical evaluation of internal activities, have already begun to take place; others will be implemented over a period of several years.

Responding to criticism from member states that too much of Unesco's budget has been spent on overheads, for example, the secretariat is proposing, as a step toward increased decentralization, that there should be a 16 percent rise in 1986–87 in the proportion of program activities conducted away from its Paris headquarters. In some fields, such as the social and human sciences, the increase will be considerably higher.

As far as the programs are concerned, the main demand of Western countries is that there should be a greater concentration of effort on the core areas—science, education, and culture—and thus implicitly less support for more explicitly ideological projects, such as aspects of peace education or human rights, which are seen primarily as Soviet vehicles for attacking the West.

The first significant signs of a change in direction can be discerned in a weighty document which will be submitted to the Sofia meeting. This lists all the programs that would have been carried out if funding for the 1986–87 biennium had been at the same level as in 1984–85—and then designates a proportion of these as "second priority," to be placed in "reserve" as a result of the U.S. withdrawal.

Science has fared relatively well. "There is no question that the 'North' at Unesco supports the scientific programs as much as any other, if not more so," says the head of the Canadian delegation, Ian Christie Clarke. "This is one of the dimensions of Unesco that must not be sacrificed."

Despite heavy cuts overall, the secretariat's own proposals contain significant increases for several of its more successful scientific projects. It is asking the general conference, for example, to increase by 22 percent its support of science education. And one of the biggest increases in the whole budget—40 percent, to a 2-year total of $1.2 million—is being requested to support work in applied microbiology and biotechnology, in particular for the consolidation and extension of research and training programs at designated microbiological research centers, known as MIRCEN's.

"Overall we will lose about 30 percent of our funding," says Abdul-Razzak Kaddura, Unesco's assistant director-general for science, pointing out that the staff in his section has already been reduced by this amount, mainly through attrition. "However, so far the core of our activities has not been damaged."

According to several observers, the single factor that has dominated the Executive Board's approach to the 1986–87 budget has been a desire to prevent Britain carrying through its threat to withdraw, not so much for budgetary reasons—the United Kingdom only contributed 4.61 percent of the budget prior to the U.S. departure, half that of West Germany—as to prevent a weakening in the Western bloc's push for reforms. (No one believes there is a serious likelihood of the United States returning, at least not in the short-term).

Britain intends to keep people guessing until well after Sofia. British Minister for Overseas Aid and Development, Timothy Raison, told a recent meeting of the "Keep Britain in Unesco Committee" that although there had been several "positive aspects" to what has happened over the past year, "we have to be confident that promised reforms will stick, that the will is really there."

Nor will internal reforms alone determine Britain's position. Much will also depend on political pressures, both domestic and international. The United States is said to have put considerable diplomatic pressure on the United Kingdom to withdraw; however, counteracting pressure from several European partners is expected to be increased by the heads of Britain's former Commonwealth, including Australia and India, at their biannual meeting in October—only days before the Sofia meeting—many of whom fear that Britain's departure could bring a shaky edifice crashing down or deliver it into the hands of the Soviet Union.

As for the long-term, many Westerners both inside and outside the agency speak enthusiastically of ideas recently put forward in a newspaper article by Alexander King, former head of the science directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, currently the chairman of the Club of Rome.

King suggests that a small three-man study group should be set up to chart a way forward that would identify new practical targets for the organization and ways of implementing them.

"One approach would be to develop a system of linking together decentralised research centres," says King, suggesting as a model the Consultative Group of

International Agricultural Research which has been organized under the auspices of the World Bank. He adds that Unesco could scan the horizon for future needs—typical projects, he says, might be an assessment of the population-carrying capacity of land, or the testing and evaluation of small-scale solar devices—and then proceed to pilot projects, perhaps in cooperation with other, more specialized UN agencies.

Unesco officials say that such activities are already being supported, albeit on a limited scale. What King has in mind is something more ambitious, a target-oriented approach sufficient to reassert the whole identity of the organization. Despite King's assessment that Unesco appears to be "almost at the point of no return" and that its chances of survival in a viable form "are still only about 50–50," it now seems possible to see some glimmers of hope on the horizon.—**DAVID DICKSON**

New Group Targets Political Bias on Campus

Student volunteers to monitor courses and expose anti-American teaching; university groups say the tactics threaten academic freedom

According to a new lobby—Accuracy in Academia (AIA)—there are 10,000 Marxist professors on U.S. college campuses who are instilling a leftist bias in young minds. AIA plans to recruit student volunteers to identify suspected leftists, audit their classes, and challenge them publicly if necessary.

The academic community is not thrilled about the avid new students it may have this fall. "The potential for abuse is immense," says Jordan Kurland, associate general secretary of the American Association of University Professors. "I can't imagine any way of having a code of conduct or approved procedures imposed on these [AIA] people. . . . God knows what's going to happen."

In theory, AIA will be an unbiased guardian of free speech. But in practice it is likely to reflect the views of its leaders, who see a greater threat from the political Left than from any other source. Some observers worry that AIA will spawn an intellectual vigilante squad, in itself a threat to academic freedom.

Since announcing its plans in early August, says AIA president Malcolm Lawrence, the group has been "networking," making lists of sympathetic contacts, spotting problem courses, and ordering college catalogs. Lawrence plans to get at least 100 course guides, covering all U.S. public colleges and a sample of private ones as well. Already $22,000 has been collected. A mass appeal for contributions will be mailed to 250,000 people this fall. On 15 August the newly hired executive director, Laszlo Csorba III, moved into his office. Lawrence hopes to build to a staff of 15 in 3 years. But at present, most of the work will be done by Csorba, a 1985 graduate of the University of California at Davis with a B.A. in political science.

Lawrence says hard science and journalism courses will be omitted from scrutiny, and the emphasis will be on political science, economics, history, and sociology. One example of the kind of professor AIA would monitor is Bertell Ollman, a Marxist political scientist at New York University who failed to get a job at the University of Maryland after citizens raised a protest. Lawrence recently picked up the World Future Society's list of "peace studies," courses at U.S. universities, which he considers fertile grounds for his research. He is particularly irked by courses that make Americans "feel guilty" about hunger in Ethiopia. The problem there, he says, originates in the government.

> "We don't see ourselves as a pressure group really going after people."

Csorba's list of typical candidates for monitoring includes Samuel Bowles of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Richard Fagen of Stanford, Salvador Luria of MIT, Cynthia McClintock of George Washington University, John Weeks of American University, John Womack and George Wald of Harvard, and Howard Zinn of Boston University. "A lot of these people should be congratulated because they're being honest," says Csorba, noting that they identify themselves as leftists, "but others are sneaking it by their students." His aim is to find out who the others are.

Lawrence says, "We don't see ourselves as a pressure group really going after people." Rather, AIA is "in the business of informing the public," which has been "intimidated by the higher education community." The group will seek to bring "truth and balance to the classroom" whenever it finds a teacher running down the American system, whether by misstatement or omission of facts. Lawrence has no intention of criticizing professors for stating radical opinions, but he does mean to see that capitalism is given fair treatment in class discussions.

Lawrence has had little direct experience in the marketplace himself, having worked for 33 years as a government employee. After a stint in the Air Force during the Second World War, he joined the foreign service in 1950, serving as a specialist on trade promotion, narcotics problems, East-West trade, and other European and Caribbean matters until his retirement in 1978. He has a B.A. and M.A. from George Washington University in government and economic policy. He founded and organized an American school in Bern, Switzerland, and has put nine children of his own through school. Since 1974 Lawrence has lobbied for greater parental control over sex and social education programs in the Maryland schools. He also co-hosts a weekly Christian-oriented radio show on education.

Lawrence explains that AIA is a spinoff of its parent group, Accuracy in Media, a watchdog that searches out and criticizes liberal bias in the press. AIM's director, Reed Irvine, is convinced that press bias has its origin in the universities, and for many years he has wanted to root out the problem at its source. Now AIA will begin the task.

Before he came to AIA, Csorba was the leader of a group at Davis known as Students for a Better America. It won notoriety this year for tagging a visiting professor as a socialist and provoking a furor over academic rights of speech. The trouble began during the winter term, according to Csorba, when he