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IS A REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS POSSIBLE?

A political phenomenon

The criticisms regarding mismanagement of the United Nations and some of the organizations in the system have taken on the proportions of a political phenomenon; they are increasingly frequent and specific; they come essentially from the media in the major Western countries and from the governments of all "major contributors", including USSR; and above all, for about two years or so they have gone hand in hand with measures for financial stringency ~/and decisions or threats to withdraw. ~/ If the departure of the United States [rom UNESCO was merely a prelude to other measures of the same kind, the very existence of the world organizations would be called into question.

Differences about the exact significance of the phenomenon appear to have emerged, [or some take the view that such criticisms are warranted, while others suggest that they are simply a pretext to conceal political dissatisfaction in the wealthy countries at the line of approach set by the Group of 77's "automatic majority".

The signs that point to dissatisfaction include

- The very broad terms in which the criticisms themselves are levelled, with no supporting evidence and no fine distinctions;

- The fact that they relate only to the United Nations and some of the major organizations in the system (chiefly UNESCO, FAD, ILO), as if the small technical agencies (UPU, ITU, IMO, ICAD, WMO, etc.), which command a political consensus, and the large financial agencies (IMF, GATT, World Bank), which are generally regarded as carrying out the political will of the Western countries, were secure from any criticism of the way they are managed; 21

- The use of purely controversial contentions, such as the "exaggerated cost" of organizations which in point of fact have very modest budgets, or the "excessively high salaries" of the officials of those organizations, when the salaries of officials in other international organizations have not been questioned so severely (even if they are higher than those of officials in the United Nations); 11

- Lastly, the absence of genuine proposals for reforms and the near certainty that the very States which criticize the deficiencies of the organizations would not lend support to measures capable of remedying them.

It should be noted, on the other hand, that the case for the sincerity of the criticisms and the reality of the "weaknesses" can be supported by the fact that all those who are well acquainted with the organizations agree about specific deficiencies such as calibre of outputs, duplication, co-ordination, staffing, monitoring or evaluation.

The fact that there is certainly some truth in each of these two arguments is not very comforting. A more thorough scrutiny of the problem shows that there are indeed serious "weaknesses" in the management of the organizations in question, but management improvement within the framework of the present structure would not make for any marked difference in the effectiveness of the United Nations in the most important sectors.

This contradiction in itself prompts the thought that the present political phenomenon lies perhaps in a need for change that is more profound than might be inferred from the 'ayin which the criticisms are made; this requires a more audacious type of answer concerning structural reforms of the world organization.

The real weaknesses

It is correct to say first that serious deficiencies exist. The fact that UNO and the large agencies can put to their credit positive results does not make the criticisms on poor management inaccurate. It is possible to put to the credit of the world organization its positive contribution to the decolonization process, the establishment and the proper use of the peace-keeping forces, the effectiveness of numerous humanitarian interventions notably for refugees, considerable progress of international law (law of the sea, use of outer space, labour law), direct assistance to the definition of national policies in the field of education, health (primary health care programmes in particular), the improvement of the understanding of different problems (population, food strategies, etc.), and it would be possible to add numerous detailed examples of limited interventions which have been appreciated by recipient countries.

It is also possible to show that the United Nations and its system exert useful constraints on Governments and on public opinion, morally (human rights), intellectually (obligation to consider problems on a worldwide scale), and even politically (the universality of the organizations is such that it is now difficult for a Government to decide not to participate any longer).

Lastly, there are no objective criteria and opportunities for comparisons with other administrations performing comparable tasks (in the field of development, for example); the usable sources of information have little credibility; and there is, furthermore, no reliable system for evaluating the results.

But this argumentation goes almost against its objective: some good results warrant the idea that many more could be achieved with better machinery; "constraints", actually feeble constraints, on Governments, imply that better management would make them stronger; and the lack of an objective system of over-all evaluation can rightly be considered as one of the principal shortcomings of the present system.

On the other hand, for establishing an objective appraisal, the sources available are numerous and concordant, whether reports ~/ by the secretariats or by outside consultants, or opinions expressed by the delegations of Member States themselves in a large number of paragraphs of resolutions, or in regular reports by some subsidiary organs. ~/ The findings that everyone can reach for himself from an examination of some of the "outputs" of the organizations, some publications for instance, easily confirm this over-all view.

If the management methods used in the best national public administrations or in major private firms and the average quality of the publications of a good university publisher are taken as a point of reference, a severe assessment can be made without any great risk of error.

Absence of a definition of priorities

The absence of a definition of priorities is doubtless the most striking feature. Despite all the efforts in planning and programming, no choice is made whereby the ways and means of taking action can be concentrated in order to secure specific results on a few essential questions within a reasonable period-of time. The first thing to emerge from a perusal of the plans and programmes of the United Nations and the major agencies is a phenomenon of extreme dispersal, not only because, in the case of technical co-operation activities, the hundreds of field offices of the major operational programmes and the thousands of teams of experts involved are virtually unco-ordinated but also because the hundreds of units which deal with different programmes at the headquarters of the organizations are quasi-independent. //

In addition, the objectives of each of the programmes are imprecis.e, formulated in grandiloquent terms and with a seemingly universal and at any rate extremely diversified subject-matter, since they include disarmament, human rights, statistics, industrial

development, population, public administration and finance, struggle against illiteracy, marine sciences, earth sciences, preservation of the cultural heritage, copyright, communicable disease control and non-communicable disease control, animal production, fisheries, forests and the rest, far too lengthy an enumeration which gives merely a faint idea of the complete list.

The range of the functions taken on by each of these units adds to the over-all confusion : not only does each one try to cover every heading in its programme but it also endeavours to perform every function possible. Hence, the picture everywhere, in varying degrees, is one of research and studies, public information, support services for negotiations, dissemination of standards or methods, efforts to co-ordinate national activities, backstop services for technical co-operation projects, training, administrative management work, etc. All this leads in most cases either to meetings or to documents, and these working methods give international organizations an unhelpful image of somewhat elusive activities that have no clearly perceived impact.

The phenomenon is even more striking in that the number of staff to cope with these broad-ranging ambitions is ridiculously low. For the same problems, national administrations have hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of staff, whereas most of the "programmes" have 5 to 20 staff members in the Professional category.

For example, the Centre for Disarmament, which provides support for disarmament negotiations, prepares studies and publications, issues general information to the public, arranges seminars and training courses, has 25 professionals.

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UNCTAD's programme on insurance has 5 professionals, the transport programme of the Economic Commission for Europe has 11, and the environmental programme of the Economic Commission for Latin America has 3.

Again, the far too common overlapping of the activities, of the various organizations or even of various departments within one and the same organization is endemic, a fault that is always condemned but never corrected. Such overlapping is frequent and all too well-known; very many programmes deal with the same issues the sea, agricultural education, economic co-operation between developing countries, information systems, science and technology, energy, copyright, and so on. The studies conducted on this problem at the request of the Member States ("intersectoral studies", "cross-organizational programme analysis studies" or COPAS) try to explain that each body co-operates with the other and deals with questions from different angles, without ever succeeding in convincing anybody or eliminating the slightest duplication or overlapping.

Generally speaking, co-ordination - on which Article 58 of the Charter requires the United Nations to make recommendations - has been a complete failure since the outset. Co-ordination machinery has been developed unceasingly and led to nothing but further bureaucratic complications. In addition to the original bodies (General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) new ones have been created over the years, notably among others: the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination (1962), the Committee for Development Planning (1964), the Joint Inspection Unit (1968), the World Food Council (1974) on food and agricultural programmes; and in 1977, in the "restructuring" operation, the Office of the Director-General for Development, the Planning, Programming and Co-ordination Office, the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions. All these organs have permitted to spotlight the scope and the difficulty of the problem, but despite serious efforts, no start has been made on a solution.

Nor do the system's structures afford any opportunity for centralization in a single body with sufficiently clear authority, for the purpose of solving issues on which there is worldwide consensus. Indeed, for important problems such as desertification of the Sahel at the regional level, or population or environmental issues at the global level, a considerable number of different decision-making centres exist, something which, despite repeated assurances of co-operation, only creates confusion and inefficiency. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination - comprising heads of agencies under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations - in no sense ensures co-ordination of any kind. 21

"Patchwork problematics!!" *

Last, but certainly not least, the search for an intellectual link between the various issues has done no more than produce extremely disappointing results.

At first sight, the over-all problematics of the United Nations system seems so fragmented that it is possible to speak of a "patchwork problematics".

When it is presented in global terms, as in the "International Development Strategies" for example, or in the reports whereby the organizations try to take stock of the situation, the worldwide problematics always seems to be a collection of platitudes.

* "Problematics" is used to convey the french term "problematique" which signifies a whole range of interrelated problems.

It inevitably includes the arms race and the consequent threats to mankind, the resources which are involved and could be released for economic and social development by "general and complete disarmament", poverty, sometimes described as "absolute poverty", hunger throughout the world, illiteracy, ignorance, infant mortality. It also includes the population explosion, the consequent dangers to the developing countries and to mankind as a whole, which does not have unlimited natural resources, human rights and the countless violations thereof. The vocabulary does vary from one analysis to another, but very little.

These lists generally conclude with advice to the Governments of the member countries, such as that in paragraph 12 of the preamble to the latest International Development Strategy, which calls for no less than an end without delay to "colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, interference in internal affairs, apartheid, racial discrimination, hegemony, expansionism and all forms of foreign aggression and occupation, which constitute major obstacles to the economic emancipation and development of the developing countries".

Still worse perhaps than the mediocrity of the analyses are the basic assumptions which end up by being turned into commonplaces that are quite simply false, such as the central idea underlying all the development strategies that, under certain conditions, the growth rates of the poor countries can be kept higher than those of the wealthy countries for several decades, thereby allowing them to "catch up" in standards of living.

On the other hand, the link-up between the list of problems and the programmes conducted by the international organizations is infinitely more difficult to grasp : there seems to be a large gap between this vague over-all problematic and the day-to-day activities of the organizations. Yet this gap is not filled by the texts which present the "strategies" of "major programmes" or "programmes" in the medium-term plans or in the equivalent documents. In the majority of cases they consist of an accumulation of commonplaces and general and vague formulas. "Too many passages in the medium-term plans are thus swamped in a flood of verbalism that this exercise was in fact designed to eliminate", says the Joint Inspection Unit report 82/10. This remark is unfortunately applicable to the majority of documents of the same type in the other organizations.

What is even more regrettable is that in the few cases where "strategies" give relatively precise orientations they lead, particularly in the field of development, to divergent theories and practices: in the field of public health, for example, between WHO and UNICEF, in the field of food security between FAD, the

World Food Programme and the World Food Council, in economic and social matters in general between UNCTAD, ILO and the financial organizations, etc. No intellectual authority capable of narrowing such divergences, other than by submerging them under an avalanche of vague formulas can be claimed by the United Nations.

The mediocrity of the "outputs"

Again, the general mediocrity of the "outputs" themselves, namely operational projects, studies, reports and publications, amply explains the inadequacy of the over-all analyses and the lack of actual results. No doubt, the quality of the "outputs" depends essentially on the competence and the talents of the heads of departments and the consistency and average standard of qualifications of the teams they have gathered around them. While it is true some units have maintained traditions that have guaranteed a certain consistency in performance since the outset, and some examples of quantitative and qualitative progress could be cited, the disparity in abilities is too great and the changes in the persons holding management posts are too frequent to produce an adequate average calibre.

In the case of operational projects, numerous studies highlight the fact that, in the main, they should be better planned, with objectives that are better defined and more easy to evaluate, that the experts should be better qualified and better acquainted with the problems of the countries concerned, that they should be appointed within the periods scheduled, 101 etc. In the case of publications, the sales figures, which are ridiculously low in most instances, show that as "publishing houses" the organizations in the system are neither profitable nor efficient, and a perusal of some of these books intended for the public at large easily explains why they command such little success. II /

The shortcomings of the countless documents and reports which clutter delegates' desks day after day have often been criticized but never remedied, despite guidelines intended to make them more interesting, less impenetrable and easier to read: the ponderous style, the presentation, with little or no concern for graphs, charts or summaries, the undue space given to descriptions, the paucity or lack of analyses and precise conclusions or recommendations, make them difficult to use for the people for whom they are intended.

Bad methods and inadequately qualified personnel

That such poor results can largely be explained by deficiencies in administrative management is hardly contestable. Studies by experts to diagnose the shortcomings and to make constructive proposals show that the specialists in these fields may adopt differing approaches on points of detail, but in the main they all condemn the lack of method, the organization of the work and the inadequate qualifications of the personnel in the secretariats.

The lack of method is especially notable in planning and programming and in monitoring and evaluation. Admittedly, some progress in form has been made in these matters since the United Nations and most of the agencies approved the principle of a planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation cycle and devised tools for that purpose : six-year medium-term plans and biennial programme-budgets with harmonized cycles, the development of monitoring and evaluation services, programme implementation reports, regular evaluation studies, acceptance of the principle of inter-agency consultation to harmonize the preparation of plans and programmes, recognition of a "joint planning" objective, adoption by the General Assembly of regulations and rules for the planning cycle, and so on.

These purely formal exercises have ultimately led to some improvement, namely in the description of activities, but they have not been used for the purposes for which they were intended : better definition of priorities, definition of attainable objectives, consideration of alternative solutions, concentration of ways and means on a few paramount objectives, better organization and better division of labour among the executants, and drawing lessons from successes or failure ascertained in evaluation exercises so as to establish better programmes. Existing activities are now better described, but neither the way they are conceived nor the way in which they are executed has been improved.

As for the auditing machinery, it is still so generally ineffective that virtually no accurate appraisal of the situation can be made from the documents and reports available in this regard.

Unquestionably, the explanation for such a situation chiefly lies in the generally inadequate standard of competence of the personnel in the secretariats. The situation in this respect is one of the worst, and it is far removed from the principles set forth in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. 121

The average standard of the qualifications of staff in the Professional category engaged in programme design, in management, in research and drafting bears no relation to their responsibilities. In the United Nations, for example, 25 per cent of such professionals have no university education and 10 per cent have pursued less

than three years of university study. 131 In the case of UNICEF the statistics for 1982 show : 30 per cent without a university qualification, 32 per cent with a first degree, and only 38 per cent with a second or higher degree. This situation is comparable in most of the other agencies. But the lack of competence or the unsuitability for the duties actually performed is probably most serious of all in the higher posts. The percentage of staff members without a university education is roughly the same in the D-1/D-2 grades. A sense of responsibility and management or analysis capabilities at the highest levels (Director, Under-secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General) are a matter of chance, depending on appointments which are often made without the slightest consideration for qualifications or professional and administrative experience. The virtual lack of a definition of the skills required for recruitment and promotion to higher grades, the scarce consideration given to standards of work and competence, the absence of any in-service training system, create in most circumstances a deplorable work environment in which the best staff members themselves no longer find the motivation needed to dedicate themselves to their tasks.

A situation of this kind could only be reversed by shaping and resolutely applying a staff policy aimed essentially at enhancing occupational skills and a sense of responsibility. The types of mission officially entrusted to the United Nations system - peace, protection of human rights, development - are among the most difficult of all and hence it should logically follow that the only chance of making a worthwhile contribution would be to assign staff of exceptional calibre. Yet today there is nothing to show that systematic efforts are being made either to demand a very high level of qualifications or to train professional staff for the specific tasks they will be called upon to perform. On the contrary, the laxity that prevails in this regard seems destined to foster mediocrity.

In the United Nations, some efforts have been made to begin shaping a recruitment policy (competitive examinations in the starting grades for professionals) and to institute a career development policy (definition of occupational groups). But these measures, which have not been adopted by the other agencies, are still timid, have not even been properly applied, and nothing has been done either to spread objective recruitment methods to all grades, or to vouchsafe a suitable climate of employment and responsibility, or to set up a training system or to develop an "esprit de corps" and spirit of dedication in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Charter in an environment where cross-cultural communication is difficult.

In short, it is a kind of vicious circle. Better management methods are needed to enhance the calibre of the secretariats, but the current inadequacy makes it impossible to define and apply such methods.

Lack of political will and a profound malaise

Obviously, this situation has proved possible only because sound management has not so far been the major concern of Member States themselves and it is still a fact that today, despite some criticisms on the part of the richest States, there is no genuine political will for improvement and reform.

Generally speaking, this lack of interest among Governments, both for sound management and for effectiveness by the system's organizations in the economic and social sectors, can be ascribed to the fact that the world organization does not, in these areas, impinge on the vital interests of the wealthy countries, that for most of the developing countries multilateral aid is quite often only a very small fraction of total aid, and when all is said and done, that there is a tendency to view the United Nations as a political organization which, although of little help in resolving security problems, is nonetheless a very useful forum for propaganda.

This assessment is far from being untrue : it explains in particular why the management of the organizations is assigned to diplomats who are not greatly interested in management problems, on which moreover they are not usually very well informed, and why the staff supplied by the Member States of the organizations, especially for the senior posts, are more often appointed for political reasons or for bureaucratic reasons peculiar to the administrations of the ministries of foreign affairs in each country, rather than for the purpose of making a worthwhile contribution to the efficiency of the organizations.

The explanation would still be incomplete, however, if one were to ignore an even more important phenomenon, which is none other than the malaise experienced by public opinion and by Governments themselves with respect to what the world organization itself does or could do - in short, what it actually is. It is ~~t.ht~~e malaise that can alone explain why the increasing criticism regarding management is consistent with such a lack of genuine political will.

The reason for the absence of agreement on the ways and means of improving the results achieved by the United Nations and by some of the agencies in the system is doubtless because nobody can tell very clearly what the degree of effectiveness of the organizations might be, and what it ought to signify. _!il Again, the lack of agreement on the remedies reveals that there is no agreement about the nature of the illness or even about the state of health possible. For a better grasp of the extent of this malaise and the true nature of the phenomenon of the increasing criticisms of administrative performance, it is essential to go into the question of what better management could mean.

Sound management - for what purpose?

If all the shortcomings diagnosed above could be rectified, it is by no means certain that the United Nations would be in a position to perform much more effectively the essential tasks assigned to it.

Peace is undoubtedly the area in which it is easiest to measure the gap between the concept of administrative performance and the concept of effectiveness. The fact that the Security Council is not required to deal with problems of military balance between East and West, or that the United Nations has not been able to implement the relevant articles !21 of the Charter in connection with the Iran-Iraq war, obviously has no bearing on "the administrative performance" of the Departments for Political Affairs Or the Department for Disarmament Affairs. Activities in connection with peace - including the Security Council, disarmament and peace-keeping activities - account for slightly less than 5 per cent of the total expenditure of the United Nations system. 16! A cost-effectiveness analysis in a field, in which the world political situation, the personalities of the Secretary-General and the political leaders of the major countries play an obvious role, would be somewhat absurd. If there is a contradiction here between the degree of effectiveness of the United Nations desired by part of public opinion and the degree allowed to it by Governments, then plainly the problem is not chiefly an administrative one.

The same is roughly true as regards protection of human rights. Undeniably, the United Nations - through the circulation it gives to information supplied and statements made by the advocates of human rights ~/ - helps to exert a not unnegligible moral constraint on Governments. Yet actual respect for human rights in different countries seems to bear no very direct relation to better calibre secretariats in the various competent Commissions.

But the situation is not very different in the case of the economic, social and humanitarian sector, which accounts for more than nine-tenths of total expenditure by the system. The idea that activities in this sector are more easily comparable with those conducted by national administrations is not entirely incorrect, but it leads to the conclusion that, in this field too, higher calibre management would in actual fact have only a very limited impact on the effectiveness of the organization.

Operational and humanitarian activities, although they represent only a very small proportion (approximately 8 per cent in 1983) of over-all expenditure on official development assistance, are much the most important part of the economic and social sector in the United Nations system: approximately 70 per cent. 181

While for humanitarian activities in favour of refugees (UNHCR, UNRWA), which represent less than one-fifth of the total of operational and humanitarian expenditures, the multilateral character is essential to guarantee their successful implementation, such is not the case for the developmental activities. Political independence and the fact that they have no strings attached have not for the recipient countries such importance as to compensate their small over-all amount, their scattered distribution among all the economic and social sectors, the lack of a programming framework, the slight proportions and the nature of the projects, which do not in most cases reach the pre-investment stage, the clumsy bureaucratic apparatus that accompanies it.

In reality, in the field of development, the United Nations should have mainly contributed to the definition of the most efficient strategies, facilitated the co-operation between donor countries, helped the recipient countries to make the best possible use of bilateral aid.

Concentration on this task would have required a considerable intellectual effort and an administrative structure designed to produce strategies and programmes rather than projects. On the contrary, the United Nations system has multiplied the number of organisms (organizations, departments and services in each organization, operational programmes, centres, special funds, etc.) and it has not been able to co-ordinate its own activities, to assist in the co-ordination of bilateral aid and to provide an intellectual framework for a common approach. The notion of "country programming" officially adopted by UNDP has remained purely formal. Individual efforts made by certain agencies or operational programmes (for example WHO through primary health care strategy, UNICEF through the "basic services" approach, WFP through the concept of "food for work", ILO through its world employment programme) to provide an intellectual and programmatic framework have not been co-ordinated and are not without contradictions. This has increased the difficulties of recipient countries. The situation described above lends some credibility to the idea that recipient countries would not lose much if the volume of official development assistance now managed by the United Nations system was, for example, channelled through the World Bank. 191

In any event, improvement in the quality of multilateral operational projects under the present administrative structure, without further changes in their actual design, would come in an area in which the organization simply plays a subsidiary and complementary role.

As to economic and social activities at the headquarters of the organizations, a proper grasp of these is required in order to try and determine what increased effectiveness can mean. They are not joint activities of the kind conceived by David Mitraoy 20/ when he drew up the theory of "functional" activities intended to help build up gradually a "system of peace". They do not, in other words, involve joint construction of research laboratories, international roads, industrial consortia Or space stations. 211 They are much more modest activities, not so Visible, not so easy to define, their characteristic being, as we have seen above, that they cover virtually all sectors, consist of purely intellectual "outputs" (information documents, studies, reports, publications, organization of meetings) and respond to ambitious and vague objectives usually aimed at better harmonization of the policies of Member States or defining a common conceptual and legal framework, with very scant resources available for these purposes.

A large proportion of these "programmes" are either chiefly operational (support fOr technical co-operation activities) or "functional" programmes aimed at gathering, distributing or exchanging information, or programmes to study and weigh up a sector or identified world problem. Only some of them are intended mainly as support for negotiations (for example, law of the sea, use of outer space, code of conduct for multinational corporations, stabilization of commodity prices, international development strategy). Most of them are mixed programmes which cover a little of each of these kinds of activities.

Improved administrative performance should definitely lead in these areas to better "cutput.e" : better information, better studies, reports which are more relevant, better presented, better written, more easy to use, more interesting publications with sale figures worthy of a major publishing house, and better documentation for the negotiators.

Obviously, such results, supposing they can be achieved in the present political context, would be far from negligible and the world organization's image would be enhanced.

Intellectual impact and negotiating framework

Yet better "outputs" would not enable the world organization to come closer to its ultimate objectives of better international co-operation in these areas - a better conceptual and legal framework, better development strategies, better solutions to the major issues regarding population, the environment, education, health, the campaign against hunger and social scourges, better cross-cultural communications, etc. - unless:

- The intellectual impact of the studies and the research was genuinely crucial in shaping government policies; and

- The organization could provide a universally accepted negotiating framework for a larger proportion of the problems that concern all countries as a whole,

However, from any examination of the ways and means of achieving these two objectives it has to be acknowledged that they ought to entail much more thorough transformations in the world organization than transformations in administrative management alone.

A genuine intellectual impact means fulfilling conditions other than improving the calibre of the personnel in the secretariats. The fact that such an improvement is absolutely essential in order to escape from the mediocrity described earlier is obvious. But it is not enough. The point is not merely to obtain better documents : the analyses of the issues that really affect the Member States should be of exceptional quality; they should profit from being prepared in a unique place in which all the most varied ideological, cultural and national standpoints can be compared; they should not hesitate to underscore contradiction~ and contrasts so as to reconcile them in the full light of all the factors involved; and lastly, the search for consistency should, despite the difficulties, be systematic and even obstinate, and the solutions suggested or proposed should be sufficiently persuasive for them to be taken into consideration by Governments.

In addition to the individual calibre of the staff assigned to such work, this requires a climate of freedom of expression that does not now exist within the secretariats (indeed, self-censorship is one of the most direct causes of the superficiality of the analyses submitted). Similarly, in the work of scrutiny and reflection not only must it be possible to consult and call on the participation of the most competent figures outside the secretariats, but above all direct assistance must be obtained from qualified representatives of Governments or public or private organizations genuinely concerned with the problems examined and responsible in their countries or regions for the policies which will be worked out or applied. Yet this presupposes facilities for discussion which such representatives will agree to come and use.

All these conditions should, a fortiori, be met if the organization is to be in a position to provide an appropriate negotiating framework that commands worldwide acceptance.

If the present system is not satisfactory, it is precisely because the system does not make for negotiations on all the problems of concern to the various categories of Member States or concrete identification of issues for the purposes of worldwide negotiations.

The world organization's negotiating forum is in fact confined to the discussion of problems of international law relating essentially to the common heritage of mankind (law of the sea, space law), humanitarian law (human rights, conventions against torture, etc.) some aspects of labour law (ILO conventions), and some economic issues identified by the developing countries, such as stabilization of prices, commodity prices, code of conduct for multinational corporations, development strategies, etc. The system has to some extent been efficient in problems concerning the "heritage", but it has either produced geographically limited results (ILO conventions) or been virtually ineffective for almost all of the problems identified and raised by the developing countries. A fortiori, when the latter countries have tried to make the negotiations "global", the result has been total failure. Major worldwide economic problems are seriously discussed and sometimes negotiated essentially between the richest countries, either in bodies where the Western countries dominate (IMF, World Bank, Bank of International Settlements, Western "Summits") or in bilateral or multilateral negotiating forums which are confined to a few partners, either between the Western States themselves or between the Western and the Socialist countries. The role of the third world countries in negotiating monetary issues, problems of international trade, energy or scientific and technological development is thereby cut to the minimum.

The superficial, verbal, ideological discussions which take place in the world organizations, in which the third world countries have the majority, contribute to hide reality and, in these conditions, lead to results which are contrary to the interests of these countries. Lastly, the superficial and ideological approach to the whole range of problems facing the United Nations - in the field of peace and disarmament as well as in the field of development - is ultimately harmful to the interest of all countries, rich or poor, Western or Socialist. Such an institutional system is not equipped to identify, pragmatically or scientifically, the risks resulting from the evolution of medium-term or long-term problems: for example, given the present population growth rates the risk of a massive development of migrations towards rich countries of an increasing number of inhabitants of third world countries, or the risks resulting from the emergence of cultural, religious or ideological movements which do not share values heretofore universally accepted. In addition no institutional mechanisms at present exist for the systematic study of prevention of potential local conflicts.

If the world organization is to be effective in this area, institutional change should be envisaged. The scale of this question is totally different from that of administrative management.

Change in concepts to justify a world organization

In short, it is as if the question of devising a new type of world organization was actually raised without anyone daring to formulate it clearly.

The increasing criticisms of the management of the United Nations are merely one of the signs of increasing malaise among the Western countries about the role and the usefulness of a world organization. It is relatively easy to understand the purpose served by the "technical" organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization or the Universal Postal Union. It is easy to acknowledge that the world needs a system to act as a setting for monetary relations or international trade, one which is operated by the financial institutions of the United Nations (IMF, GATT, World Bank) in conditions which are doubtless imperfect but more satisfactory than those which brought the world to the great depression in the 1930s. However, in a world enamoured of efficiency, it is more and more difficult to find sound reasons to justify the role and the methods of the United Nations and the major non-financial agencies dealing with international co-operation.

The United Nations and these agencies are the historical product of a hazy but potent ideology: peace. Governments in all countries, while attending to their security with military resources, have all, without too much belief in it, paid sacrifice to this ideology of peace by taking part in the world organization and using it for their propaganda. This mixture of idealism and cynicism, which thus serves as the foundation for these institutions, has of course changed over the years.

Between 1945 and the end of the 1970s a quite substantial change took place in the constituent elements of this mixture. The idea that peace could be imposed by institutional machinery such as the Security Council was gradually abandoned, and a broad change occurred in the idea that a system of ending peace could gradually be built up by developing economic and social co-operation between countries. New ideas did emerge: that it was essential for the United Nations to act as a universal meeting-place for all countries, irrespective of their size, ideological stance or the nature of their regime; that the organization, which had played a useful part in decolonization, had a major role in the development of the third world, in terms of both theory (development strategy) and practice (increasing the proportion of multilateral aid channelled by the United Nations and the agencies in over-all official development assistance expenditures). And while the universities were trying out theories on the role of the organization's economic and social activities by their thoughts on functionalism, neo-functionalism and the conditions for political integration, Governments for their part were all agreeing with the

idea that the organization was above all a forum for ideological propaganda, in which the West was endeavouring to rival the Socialist countries; at the same time, the countries of the third world, confident in the majority they held, were securing official adoption through the organization of the ideology of the New International Economic Order, in spite of many reservations by the wealthy countries.

At the end of the 1970s, it was possible to feel that this mixture of idealism and cynicism was finally leading to a stable situation, admittedly one which involved frustrations, but which served to sustain the day-to-day routine of the organization and even increase its bureaucracy.

However, such stability seems to have disappeared in the past few years. Confusion still reigns, but the nature of the mixture involved is changing rapidly, at least in the Western countries. Along with the spread in the criticisms of management that we have discussed here, the idea has emerged, to begin with, of challenging the decision-making procedures in the world organizations by means of proposals to replace the present system of one country-one vote, regardless of size, by a weighted voting system (in terms of various criteria: contribution, economic power, population). ²²¹ An idea first developed in the United Nations in 1968 has also -- resurfaced, i.e. the possibility of a special status for mini-States.

Again, for a few years now there has been a 'thorough questioning of the ideas regarding development of the poor countries. **It** already introduces the concept of the need to distinguish, in development matters, between types of countries and situations : above and beyond the distinction between the least-developed and other countries 23/ accepted by the United Nations in 1971, the World Bank intends to identify five categories of countries. 241

At the same time, the very principles underlying the methods of distributing official development assistance, namely organizing projects for the transfer of technology by modern equipment and techniques to the developing countries, are being greatly disputed. Emphasis is being placed on the need to develop national strategies, particularly in the case of the poorest countries, to promote food strategies, to make assistance conditional on the adoption of such strategies, and to endeavour to transfer more training and education rather than set up dams or factories. This new approach inevitably questions the utility of channelling official assistance through bodies which are already large in number and too diversified, with each one spreading its own concept of development.

By and large, there is now a more realistic attitude towards the world organizations, to the detriment of an idealism that is increasingly condemned as being responsible for the current confusion. University circles which, for decades, sought ingenious solutions to

the problem of gradually building up peace, are now using the notion of "regime" to try and explain the development of international institutions on the basis of national interests and their complementarities. It would be difficult to assert that such a system of analysis can justify the existence of the type of world organization we have today.

This quest for realism might be ascribed to a resurgence of nationalism in the western world if, precisely, it did not go hand in hand with a considerably greater interest in the sound functioning of the world organization. In short, what emerges is an increasing need for a world organization which has a grip on reality and can really be taken seriously.

Moreover, this is not only happening in the West: the failure of the "global negotiations" has caused many leaders in the third world to ponder on the value and the usefulness of the ideological approach to development problems.

In such circumstances, it is even possible to inquire whether the criticisms and suggestions by the Western countries regarding the world organization might not be viewed as attempts to open up with representatives of the third world negotiations of another kind about the concept of the institutions themselves, in other words, on the negotiating framework possible between North and South.

Yet nothing very specific has been formulated so far and it is as if everyone realizes that the problem does exist, but no one has dared to pose it in all its extent. Most commonly, the received idea in this connection is that a reform of the Charter of the United Nations is impossible, that it is totally unrealistic to dream of one, since all the attempts made so far have failed and have revealed differing and irreconcilable views among the advocates of reform themselves and resolute conservatism on the part of those who were opposed to it. ²⁵¹ Hence, the absence of any possibility of consensus on changing one single article would rule out the idea of replacing the Charter by establishing an entirely new organization. Nowadays, the sick joke in this regard is that another type of United Nations could be established only after a third world war.

Furthermore, no new type of world organization has ever been described, as if people were still convinced that the existing kind is the only one possible, even though it functions badly or should be improved. Indeed, there are excellent reasons for telling those who might be so tempted that they may well be accused of naivety and that it is more convenient for them to stay on safe ground of criticizing the management of the organizations.

In a word, we are faced with a set of contradictions, and the malaise is so deep-rooted that it is still accompanied by a refusal to try and make it disappear.

The possibility of a new type of world organization

It is quite easy to explain these contradictions and hesitations. The problem is not a simple one and it is burdened with history, prejudices, ingrown habits, vested interest and political and other ulterior motives. The ideologies that divide the world - the national pride and susceptibilities of the new countries, the force of nationalism in the older countries, the hegemonic ambitions of the powerful, the liberalism in the West, the socialism in the East, the New International Economic Order in the developing countries - are not ready to make mutual concessions, and the present system of a world organization, by its very weakness, affords a number of advantages. At the same time, it seems difficult to believe that the mixture of contradictions underlying the United Nations and some of the agencies can be withstood for much longer.

The demands of logic, if they could win out, would demolish some of the received ideas which constitute the major obstacles to clarifying the issue.

The first of these ideas is that the existing type of world organization is the only one possible, despite its shortcomings; and that under present political conditions no far-reaching reforms, and a fortiori no changes, are possible. Yet it should be made quite plain that replacement is absolutely indispensable, that the present type of world organization is an outdated model because it is based on ineffective machinery for collective security. That it is ill-equipped to study the major problems, that it is accepted as a negotiating forum only in very limited sectors, and that its chief activity of handling 8 per cent of official development assistance is not a task specific to its essential mandate. Besides, another type of organization is more readily conceivable in that the development of "Summits" between the major Western countries, extended occasionally to a few representatives of the third world, indicates a new and important trend; if these groups which now meet regularly set up a permanent secretariat or established organic links with existing organizations, such a course would be enough to produce a new type of quasi worldwide organization.

Nor is the definition of the exigencies to be met by this new type such a difficult and complex exercise as might be imagined. The examination of the problem of efficiency carried out in these pages tends to show that a world organization should be :

- A tool capable of furnishing high-calibre analyses to identify major world problems, particularly medium and long-term problems;

- A place for multilateral negotiations in demand by Governments because of the efficiency' of the machinery it offers;

- Lastly, a body which is as spare as possible, in other words, rid of any non-relevant activity which can find room elsewhere.

If these requirements are to be met, the problem of the representation of States and the interests of their population is definitely the most difficult question, and the present method of one vote for every country does not properly resolve it. The way in which the problem has been presented so far - the idea that the absolute sovereignty of States requires one vote for each one, as against the idea of votes weighted in terms of various criteria such as economic power or population - sidesteps the basic issue. It is not a question of establishing a decision-making organ in which the majority prevails. Today, no world organization could possibly be required to take major decisions in this way. The essential point is to have an organ for thinking matters out and for negotiations, an organ in which it is essential for sufficiently qualified representatives of the principal parts of the world, the principal regimes and the principal types of problems to be able to identify questions, determine the points at issue and find consensus solutions to situations of conflict.

There can be no doubt in this respect that if, for example, USummits^v were to be institutionalized and become a permanent organization, a system inspired by the European Communities Treaties 261 could provide a more satisfactory solution to the problem of representation than the present type of world organization comprising a General Assembly (or Conference), an Executive Board (or Security Council) and a Secretariat directed by a Secretary-General or a Director-General. The Council-Commission structure in which the Council would be constituted by representatives of States or group of States and the Commission would be composed of independent personalities chosen by Governments but in charge of representing the general interest in full independence, would deserve to be considered. The two institutions could have a membership ranging approximately between 20 and 24. in which the most important countries would have one representative and the other be represented as groups. The establishment of such a world institution would not require the suppression of the existing ones, but would surely lead to a substantial reorganization.

In any event, a precise proposal for a new type of world organization answering the needs of the world of today and acceptable both to public opinion and to Governments will demand still much more research before the idea can even take concrete form. Intellectual clarification of this complex matter is the prerequisite for any political decision. Theoretical research of all kinds can be useful in this regard. But the construction of possible models can alone help to ascertain the objections and the obstacles, compare and collate the concepts and the interests of Governments, and permit a choice regarding the path of reform : reform by building an entirely new system, or reform by co-existence of the present system with a complementary system. Above all perhaps, public opinion should be mobilized to change over from the present negative attitude to one that is positive and constructive.

For this reason, consideration of ideas for reform should not be set aside as unrealistic; indeed, a systematic study of specific proposals might open up the only path to a solution.

NOTES

1. Application by the "major contributors" of the "zero growth" doctrine to the regular budgets; reduction of voluntary contributions to operational activities.

2. Withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO on 1 January 1985; threats of withdrawal of the same type by other governments; examination of the participation of United States in UNCTAD, etc.

3. The words "United Nations System" have generally two different meanings :

- the first one designates all organizations - including the "financial organizations" - represented in the Administrative Committee of Co-ordination (ACC) which brings together the Heads of these agencies under the chairmanship of the United Nations Secretary General;

- the second one designates only the "non financial" organizations.

In fact, the System includes three types of global or near-global organizations, with very different functions and types of activities, i.e. :

a) the "functional organizations", which are essentially in charge of establishing rules and facilitating co-operation of national services in fields of common interest like post, telecommunications or transport. They are: the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). With a few exceptions, all countries including USSR and socialist countries are members of these organizations;

b) the "financial organizations", of which USSR is not a member, which utilize a weighted voting system, do not accept the common rules adopted by the other agencies for staff management and salaries, and are in charge of providing a framework for monetary and trade relations and distributing development loans. They are : the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or World Bank) and its affiliates: International Development Association (IDA) and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

c} organizations with overall competence i.e. UNO and some major agencies which, although theoretically in charge of an economic or social sector, have a tendency to deal with all aspects of economic and social problems. It is possible to include in this group :

- the United Nations Organization, which constitutes a complex system including in particular the United Nations Organization for Industrial Development (UNIDO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the major operational programmes like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and some thirty juridically independent funds, institutes, centres, councils;

- the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO).

In the present document. the words "World Organization" are used to designate this third category of organizations.

4. Salaries and career development prospects are generally better in the World Bank and IMF than in the United Nations.

5. For example, on the inadequate character of the machinery for auditing and evaluation: *A/6343* para.60-67; on the inadequacy of working, planning and programming methods: *A/6343* para.18-52 and 68-79. *E/AC/62/9* para.104-133. capacity Study, 1969; various reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, in particular: *JIU/REP/69/7*, 7411, 76/10, 79/5, 81/7, 83/6, 84/7; on the absence of personnel policy: *E/AC/62/9* para.22 and 92-96, Joint Inspection Unit reports *JIU/REP/71/7*, 7616, 78/4, 80/9, 81/11, 82/3, 84/8, 84/11j on the very poor functioning of co-ordination activities: *A/6343* para.80-104, *E/AC/62/9* para.16 and 85-91, *JIU/REP/84/7*.

6. See in particular annual reports of the Consultative Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and on the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (supplement Nr.38 of official documents of each General Assembly session).'

7. At UNO for example. there are 24 "major programmes" with a wide variety of subjects like Drug Abuse Control, Environment, Human Settlements, Natural Resources, or Population, comprising 115 programmes (central or regional) which include 387 sub-programmes. The staff assigned to these programmes adds up to 3000 professionals. i.e. on average 26 professionals for each

programme and '8 for each sub-programme. The number and the diversity of subjects is approximately the same at UNESCO (Human Rights, Peace, Education for all, Mao and its Environment, Transfer and Exchange of Information, etc.), or at the International Labour Organization (International Labour Standards and Human Rights, Employment and Development, Industrial Relations, Social Security, Economic and Social analysis ...) and the links between the Departments in charge of each of them are as weak as in the UNO. At least, these major Programmes are included in the programme budgets of the organizations; but there are also several dozens of special funds, institutes, centers, offices, attached to each organization and juridically independent (13 for UNDP, 20 for WHO, 18 for FAD, etc.), in total more than one hundred individualized entities (cf. Annuaire franvais de Droit international, XXIX, Andre Lewin: Co-ordination in the UN System).

8. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This semi-independent organization (its budget is included in the United Nations budget) was created in 1965 at the initiative of developing countries in order to defend the positions of these countries on commodity prices stabilization and international trade.

9. Cf. Martin Hill, "The United Nations System", UNITAR, Cambridge University Press, 1978; Joint Inspection Unit report 1984/7 on Reporting to ECOSOC.

10. See on this point numerous Joint Inspection Unit reports, in particular 76110 on .Count.r Programming, 78/3 on the Role of experts in development co-operation, 85/1 on the UN Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.

11. Cf. Joint Inspection Unit reports: *JIU/REPIB4/5* on Publications in the United Nations System (A/391239, May 1984).

12. Article 101, para.3 of the Charter: "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

13. These figures are from Joint Inspection Unit Report 71/7 of 1971. The situation has practically not changed.

14. The ambiguity of the notions used to reflect the idea that it should be possible to do better clearly shows the existence of this malaise. The list of terms used : "weaknesses in administrative performance", "management", "inefficiency", is

further supplemented by the distinction between lack of efficiency and lack of effectiveness. can one say that only the methods should be changed, or is a challenge being issued to the nature of the intermediate or final objectives, or still more, the actual type of structure of the organization?

15. Notably Articles 39, 40 and 41 concerning "measures not involving the use of armed force (which) are to be employed to give effect to its decisions" (of the Security Council). Article 41 indicates that they may include "complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations".

16. For 1984 the annual expenditures of the United Nations system (regular and extra-budgetary funds) amounted approximately 5.5 billion dollars. Expenditures for political affairs (excluding UNRWA) amounted to 240 million dollars (cf. Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on expenditures of the United Nations system in relation to programmes *E/1984/70*, 6 July 1984).

17. Expenditures of the United Nations system for Human Rights are estimated for 1984 : 21.7 million dollars (*E/1984/70*), i.e. 0.4 per cent of the total expenditures of the system.

1B. Statistics concerning operational and humanitarian activities are presented in various ways according to various sources ! United Nations (Report on Operational Activities *A/39/417* of 1B September 1984; Report of ACe *E/1984/70*), World Bank (Annual Report); OECD (1984 Development Co-operation Report). Figures for expenditures do not always include administrative expenses (overhead costs). Operational and humanitarian expenditures of the United Nations system are estimated by the Director-General for Development, at 2685.2 million dollars for the year 1983 (of which 2092.20 for operational activities and 593 for humanitarian activities).

This amount represents 55 per cent of the total amount of United Nations system expenditures (non financial organizations only) which was for 1983. 4880.5 million dollar;. If overhead costs are taken into account the amount of operational expenditures should be increased by 328 million dollars. On the other hand, humanitarian expenditures are estimated at 710 million dollars for the UNO only by the ACC document; this would lead to add 117 million dollars to the previous figures. The total amount for humanitarian and operational activities, i.e. 3130 million dollars, represents 64.1 per cent of the total amount of United Nations system expenditures and 71 per cent of the expenditures of the economic and social sector.

19. The "non-financial organizations" provide technical assistance through small scale projects (the average amount of expenditures for a UNDP project is 393,000 dollars) comprising essentially the financing of expert manpower (the annual average cost of an expert being 100,000 dollars). The financial organizations provide either soft long-term concessional credit (IDA) or loans at market rate (World Bank). The majority of their projects are of an order of magnitude between 10 and 40 million dollars. They include a large part of equipment. The World Bank co-operates with UNDP as executing agency for various technical assistance projects but it finances itself a large number of projects of this type. The figures of contributions and those of expenditures are of different order of magnitude. For contributions the DECO document (Table VII.5) indicates :

	<u>Million of dollars</u>
Contributions to UN funds and programmes (UNOP, Population Fund, UNICEF, etc.)	1300
Contributions to specialized agencies and other organs including WFP	<u>1165.1</u>
Sub-total:	2465.1
Contributions to the World Bank group and to IFAD	<u>3586.4</u>
Total:	6051.5

The proportion resulting from this figures is 59 per cent for the World Bank group and 41 per cent for the non-financial organizations. For expenditures, the United Nations Director-General for Development (A/39/417) indicates:

	<u>Million of dollars</u>
UN operational expenditures (excluding humanitarian expenditures)	2092
World Bank group	
GROSS disbursements	9700
Net disbursements	7200
Net transfers	4200.
(of which concessional IDA : 1232 non concessional World Bank : 2968)_.	

The part of concessional of the World Bank group is in this case weaker (37.5 per cent) than the part of the United Nations (62.5 per cent).

20. David Mitrany "A Working Peace System", The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Oxford University Press, London, June 1943. 60 pages.

21. Examples of Joint activities of this kind exist between European countries: European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN), European Space Agency, Airbus Industry. etc., or between Western countries: project of US space station with the participation of European countries.

22. **Cf.** Decision-Making Strategies for International Organizations. The IMF Model, by Frederick K. Lister, University of Denver, 1984.

23. The concept of "least developed countries" appears for the first time in a General Assembly resolution of 1971 (Res. 2768/XXVI). The General Assembly has approved the General Programme of Action for least developed countries by its resolution *34/210* of 19 December 1979.

24. The typologies of developing countries are somewhat varied: in the World Bank, distinction is made between five categories: African countries South of Sahara, India and China, other low income countries, high debt middle income countries, other middle income countries. Other typologies (Economic Perspective of DECO for example) distinguish: OPEC countries, non-oil producing countries: new industrial countries, middle income countries, low income countries, China and other asian countries.

25. Cf. the works of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, created by the General Assembly in 1975.

26. The most important organs of the European Communities (besides the Parliament and the Court of Justice) are the Council and the Commission. The Council (Art. 115 to 123 of the Rome Treaty and Art. 1 to 8 of the Treaty of "fusion" of 1965) is composed of the representatives of the 10 Member States, each Government delegating one of its members. The Commission (Art. 124 to 135 of the Rome Treaty and Art. 9 to 19 of the Treaty of "fusion") is composed of 14 members, appointed in full agreement by the Member States, chosen for their general competence, offering all guarantees of independence and fulfilling their functions in the general interest of the Communities. Each of these organs has its own secretariat, i.e. 9200 staff members for the Commission (among them 3700 Professionals) and 2100 staff members for the Council (among them 660 Professionals). There is a clear-cut division of labour between the Council and the Commission : in the Council the Governments of each State defend their own views and their national interest, the Commission has on the contrary the mandate to find a common approach, to study compromise solutions and to formulate recommendations. In addition, the Commission executes the budget.