

The World Intelligentsia and UNESCO

by ALFRED DE GRAZIA

UNESCO, seen by some as the instrument of an intelligentsia in the management of the new world, has come to be a highly official, bureaucratized body, encumbered by its complicated organization and a lack of defined purposes. The roles of the Communists, the new countries, and the Western countries are described, along with major trends. Several radical reforms of attitude and structure are suggested. The author is Professor of Government at New York University and a member of the Delegation of the United States to the Eleventh General Conference of UNESCO, November-December 1960.

To those whose lives are aimed at searching out important truths or beauties there sometimes comes a vision of a world governed by their kind. Plato, Jefferson, St. Simon, and John Dewey were typical apostles of Intelligence in governmental leadership. Marxists have often verged upon the same idea. The founders of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization were probably in the throes of a similar vision, which is especially likely to occur after the Peyote Seed of war is eaten.

On a recent Saturday evening, delegates from some ninety countries joined employees of UNESCO in a dance on its fifteenth anniversary. If all had appeared for the occasion, space would have been insufficient, for the delegations to the mammoth General Conference, the agency's legislative and executive assembly, total over five hundred, and the employees now twice as many. Only several years ago, UNESCO moved into beautifully designed quarters in Paris; yet a principal item on this year's agenda for the General Conference was a request for funds for a new structure to house the overflow of employees. Incredible as such mistakes in planning may seem, they are in keeping with the awesome planlessness of the whole operation from its inception fifteen years ago to the present, and, indeed, into the visible future.

THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Without much difficulty, it may be demonstrated that the intelligentsia as such can never govern the world of the twentieth

century. Yet it may also be shown that an international grouping characterized by the indicators of an intelligentsia does exist. A scholar, a serious journalist, a musician, a painter will find in any country of the world some sympathetic souls who, if they do not fully comprehend his work, wish to do so and are persuaded that they appreciate it. A world-wide identity of minds and spirits does exist, which cuts across national, linguistic, racial, class, and ideological boundaries. It is as intense and sometimes as pathetic as the sense of common lot that workers around the world have felt for one another from time to time. It is as solid as the feelings of coreligionists of, say, the Roman Catholic faith of different countries.

It is a firm and enduring tie for several reasons. The intellectuals initially believe in the intrinsic equality of all men. Intellectuals usually do not believe in racism, the intrinsic superiority of any existing group over others, the sacredness of a given political institution in any given country, a kingship, a constitution, a man. They are almost everywhere deist or irreligious, with the exception of a Roman Catholic, a Brahmin, and a few other elements. They believe in intelligence with a capital "I" and in the possibilities of progress and planning everywhere.

The obstacles to a complete solidarity of the world intelligentsia are nevertheless numerous. Nationalism is a strong sentiment in many quarters. Generally, the newer the nation, the more blinded by nationalism its intellectuals. Communism is an even stronger anti-intellectual sentiment in others. Indeed

tions; the organization feels honored by UN assignments. One should add that now the UN will pay for technical assistance and education programs about \$27 millions of UNESCO's total biennial budget of \$60 millions.

Several scores of international organizations of a private character are affiliated with UNESCO. They are often agencies, created by UNESCO, that remain as satellites. Examples are the International Social Science Research Council and the International Sociological Association. There are numerous regional centers for research, information, and education, in India, Germany, Brazil, Chile, and elsewhere; these are often locally dominated but created and partially financed by UNESCO. A constant pressure is exercised both to create and to dissolve such centers. Usually they are inadequately financed, staffed on a part-time basis, and founded without careful regard to the ranking prior needs of an area. Around the Paris headquarters, the field liaison offices, the centers, and the affiliated organizations circulates a meteoric swarm of seminars, conferences, regional gatherings, and professors and technicians in process of exchange.

Many nations retain permanent delegations at UNESCO to watch, report, consult, and then assist the delegation to the General Conference. It is difficult to see why this instrument alone should not be sufficient to exercise a nation's powers and to implement its policies at UNESCO.

The United States and many other nations also have staffs assigned to maintain contact with UNESCO directly or through permanent delegations.

Then comes the Executive Council, an executive board of limited membership on which the larger countries are represented most of the time. It is elected by the biennial General Conference, and assembles in semi-annual session. Its members are generally officials with some intellectual credentials. They are something like a corporate or governmental agency board. They have more powers than the Conference or the Permanent Delegations.

The national commissions are huge groups activated in each country to promote

UNESCO. They are a way of involving some sort of organized public in a governmental and international activity. From all of the above groups, save the Secretariat, there is formed each two years a delegation that attends the General Conference. This is a real legislature whose powers, realistically speaking, are only sporadically exercised.

One limitation on the General Conference of UNESCO is the universal practice of instructed delegations. No delegation of any consequence has more than a small amount of initiative, because of the continuous work done by the Council, the permanent delegations, the home offices, and the Secretariat before and during the Conference. It would be fascinating to observe how the General Conference would behave if it were not strictly controlled. But that is impossible.

The Conference itself is a circus, a forum, a tedious succession of trivia, and a means of travel for poor bureaucrats and a few scholars, but its free decisions and thoughts, that conceivably would be of world-wide interest, are limited. Harangues occupy over half the meeting time of the General Conference—irrelevant outbursts or "canned" diatribes, as contrary to the notion of an intellectual congress as one can imagine. They consume so much time, and so much time has to be taken up with restraining and avoiding them, that very little time can be afforded the administrative work, much less the intellectual and aesthetic exchanges for which the General Conference is responsible. It is certainly a great irony that "intellectuals" should gather from all parts of the world to view the murder of mind.

THE PRODUCT

It is not my intention to appraise in detail the product of these several interrelated UNESCO organs over the last fifteen years. I am thinking of the many conferences, seminars, professorships, visits, books, art exhibits, subventions of research, fundamental education programs, and so forth. In general and in passing, UNESCO has originated little; it has however accelerated communications among intellectuals around the world. The content of such communications

to "basic human needs" of the moment a higher priority.

Moreover, a good case can be made for the impossibility of furthering higher culture, except in special cases, through an international official organization. Therefore, while the budget of UNESCO rose sharply for the biennium 1961-62, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and some of the other areas where the "higher" culture presumably resides received only modest increases. The major new sums went to education, particularly in Africa.

Operation Through Affiliates

A second trend has persisted for some time and its effects are likely to grow more prominent. That is the proliferation of affiliated organizations, the giving out of contracts for work that might conceivably be done within UNESCO itself, and the formation of centers in various parts of the world for research and teaching. Of these groups, the one that perhaps holds most general interest for social scientists at this time is the International Social Science Research Council. The Council is largely supported by a small grant of about \$30,000 from UNESCO, and is seeking other support. Its new director, as of January 1st, is Dr. Szczerba-Likiernik, formerly of the UNESCO Department of Social Sciences. The Council, and similar organizations, can work more freely than the Secretariat itself on projects that might engender political disputes. But the program of the Council is by no means definite. The "frontiers vs. fundamentals" question affects it too. Should it devote its energies to getting across the very concept of social science in the world? Or should it act on behalf of the advanced social scientists who may want to undertake joint activity on an international basis? I incline toward the former goal, because the fundamental misconception of behavioral science throughout nine-tenths of the world blocks not only UNESCO programs, but potential Council programs and a hundred other activities that would surge forward given an appropriate orientation.

Toward "Efficient" Bureaucratic Operation

If, as seems likely, UNESCO moves toward fundamental education, it is likely to grow more "efficient" because of the agreement on ends and the less complicated problems to be solved. The authorities will be duly credited with the more efficient workings, and the past will be buried or rewritten, a process facilitated by the fact that up to this time no outside agency has been charged with a management survey of the agency. (A Price-Waterhouse report on accounting procedures some years ago revealed scandalous conditions; several self-evaluating surveys of recent years are a little ludicrous.)

The change from intelligentsia to bureaucracy supports the transition to "efficiency," though owing mainly to other factors already mentioned—the change in program, the disillusion of intellectuals of the early post-war type, the entrance of the Soviets upon the scene in force, and the increasingly official nature of UNESCO. A general tendency is manifest to let nations, rather than individuals, speak in the organization. "Instructions" from the home state govern the determination of program and the settlement of differences. Sources of recruitment of delegates to the General Conference, the Executive Council, and even the Secretariat tend more and more to be government offices. A career service is planned for the Organization. Instructions are not only bureaucratic in themselves, but they promote routine problems at the expense of original ones, and inhibit group problem-solving. In the end, there may be nothing wrong with this since UNESCO tends in any case toward more pedestrian objectives.

But the question then becomes: why the whole structure of UNESCO? Might we not simply attach its educational and mass information functions to the UN Secretariat and then let a second section, operating under a council, generate contacts among the intellectuals of the world? Ideally, the schooling system (technical assistance included) should be located in some new structure in Paris or elsewhere, leaving the present UNESCO buildings for the *deuxième*

where Communists govern, intellectuals are rarest. It must be said that the Eleventh General Conference of UNESCO, which ended its month-long session on December 15th, was not really a congress of intellectuals so much as a congress of bureaucrats—and of the mass of delegates present those of the Soviet Union and East European satellite powers gave the slightest impression of intellectuality. Lacking the basis for an initial distinction between intellectuals and bureaucrats, the Communist lands cannot be expected to provide more. According to a semantics too commonly known to bear repetition here, they claim the largest corps of intelligentsia in the world when enumerating their own populations, but in fact ban those traits that history has ascribed to an intellectual class—that is, some degree of individual freedom, some access to new ideas, freedom from organization, and a right to live in a public state of disbelief and discontent.

The Communists approach by their doctrine a perfection in un-intellectualism that most of the world only nears unconsciously, through the uncontrolled workings of institutions. The bureaucratic affiliation is the most frequent and persistent barrier to the functioning of a free community of intellectuals. The insidious development of an official role restricts the capacities of intellectuals to do creative and imaginative work. The conditions of participation in almost all organizations, including UNESCO, postpone, suppress, and abort the habits that support an intelligentsia of the first order. Consequently, the rise of a ruling intelligentsia is a contradiction in terms.

If, taking the criteria used above to define the intelligentsia, one divided men into more and less truly intellectual, then we might speak of an *intellectualized* bureaucracy, such as the Chinese *literati*, or, now, the UNESCO Secretariat and the many delegations and groups connected with UNESCO. Many particulars of UNESCO's operations reflect its intellectualized composition. Still one must ask constantly: how can its beneficial, intellectualized operations continue without abetting the decline of the "true" intelligentsia, which can only faintly be reflected in the organization? That is, as with

an American university or a research organization, the major question is how to keep administrative minds from running creative ones.

Perhaps the first step in this direction is humbly to recognize that UNESCO is not an intellectual operation but is a bureaucracy working on problems of concern to intellectuals and everybody else in the world. This realization is hard to capture if only because the original stimulus for the organization confounded the political with the intellectual aspirations of intellectuals, and emanated from the Enlightenment, Jefferson, and Marx, and in addition contained the drive of officials and educators toward fundamental education of the world masses. Putting UNESCO clearly in its place in this regard would permit the beginnings of many reforms.

THE TOP-HEAVY STRUCTURE OF UNESCO

The structure of UNESCO is clumsy, if its aims are to spread intellectual contacts, institute basic education in poor countries, and keep the world intelligentsia informed (in a mechanical sense). It consists of the Secretariat, a United Nations office, affiliated organizations and centers in Paris and around the world, permanent delegations, overseeing officers in the foreign or education ministries of various nations, an Executive Council, national commissions, and a General Conference. The Secretariat is presumed to be necessary, although its constantly growing staff seems about fifty per cent larger than would be required if the aims of the organization were confined to those just stated. (Here is where the Russians typically have been right and wrong at the same time. They complain bitterly about overstaffing and then insist upon UNESCO taking up a variety of political roles that would make it a little UN.)

The United Nations office is a small one, having liaison functions. But the UN and especially ECOSOC on many occasions give what are, in effect, orders, and UNESCO may assert (contrary to the myth of the autonomous intelligentsia) that it is bound by the political and legal actions of the UN. There is little resentment of UN imposi-

leaves much to be desired. Much of it has consisted of semantic noise and of substantively-void human contacts. Much has duplicated or engrossed developments already occurring. Some of it has gone into de-emphasizing Western civilization, apologizing for folk cultures, and appeasing Communism. Many hobbies of the world of education, arts, and sciences have been pursued, to little avail and small conclusion. What has been otherwise known has become a little better known, a little farther out socially and geographically from its sources. Intellectual currents move a little faster. A non-American and non-Soviet medium has been provided a few thousand people, and a few cultures (particularly the French) that have not been able to maintain their historical momentum in recent years have been aided.

Weighing these several intangible effects, who is to say that the fifteen millions UNESCO will be spending next year in its regular budget (the U.S.A. pays 30 per cent), plus the fifteen millions that it spends for the UN, which are equal to the cost of firing two rockets into space plus running a middle-size American university, are a waste? Certainly not this reporter. And economies and reforms are not impossible.

THE MAJOR TRENDS

My primary purpose here is to suggest the several major trends that appear to be carrying UNESCO along at this time. It is in these that the seeds of economy and reform are contained.

Expanding Size and Scope

The most obvious trends of UNESCO are toward greater budgets, more activities, more personnel, more office space. The list of projects has expanded greatly, though contained generally within the established rubrics of social sciences, natural sciences, mass communications, cultural activities, and education. I have suggested that this absolute fiscal growth, remarkable as it appears, is insignificant by the measure of any set of needs that one may decide that UNESCO should fulfill.

Substantial savings would be effected by

reorganization and by eliminating activities for which financing is hopelessly inadequate: the latter drain off personnel, time, and money in many small amounts. Both are difficult in an organization plagued by confusion of objectives and political struggle, however. If the General Conference were eliminated as a power-holding body, a great deal of time and money would be saved, because months are devoted to its preparation by many of the Secretariat. In its place might be held a free international gathering of intellectuals nominated by some scheme in which the part played by governments would be minimized.

UNESCO is something of a "pork-barrel" too; some activities are created to advance local and regional interests without general belief in their merits.

As part of the same picture, skirmishing often occurs over quotas of personnel. The United States is under-quota, both in the number of ordinary posts held and in the number of Americans who will take on roving or temporary assignments abroad. Out-moded State Department clearance procedures account for some of the scarcity of Americans, but generally it is due to the abundance of opportunities at home. Other nationals not so fortunate guard the quota system jealously, and some of them who get jobs are far from being the best qualified.

A principal programmatic change, alluded to previously, has been a growth in emphasis upon fundamental education and away from the "higher" cultural pursuits. This trend is partly the result of recent annual subventions from the UN for special technical aid and primary education purposes. It could not have been avoided, if only because everyone agrees that literacy and water-wells are good but not on what is "higher" culture. An example would be the Nubian monuments salvation project. These magnificent creations of ancient man are destined to be swamped by the waters behind the Aswan Dam. Who is to pay \$60 million to save them when millions are illiterate and starving? If UNESCO were solely a "high-brow" organization, it might mobilize the effort better; as matters stand, it does what it can to interest outsiders, but cannot fail to grant

bureau. This second section, which would be autonomous, might be managed by a council of the present type, with members elected by the General Assembly of the UN. It should perhaps keep the name UNESCO.

The Decline of the West and Some Alternatives

Owing partly to internal changes, but more to factors apparent everywhere on the world scene, a decline of the West is evident in UNESCO. The Western powers, those few nations most developed by the criterion of the production of free brain-power, play less of a role in UNESCO than they did in the early days. New nations abound, and whether friendly or not demand more and more of a place. At worst, the situation approaches what Edmund Burke complained about in regard to the radical democrat of the eighteenth century: "In some respects his claim is more favourable on account of his ignorance; . . . he sues *in forma pauperis*." Certainly, much of the shift is merely from one type of program to another, from classical to vocational; but there is also a refusal to accept guidance or skills when offered.

Moreover, the countries of advanced achievement generally do not resist or redirect the flood of resentment and abuse. The resignation of many intellectuals from culture-defense has been observed often over the past century, in France, Germany, Scandinavia, the United States, and elsewhere. Yet never have the substitute alternatives been so ready or immanent. The affairs of Cuba and the Congo are travesties upon the civilized organization of the world. They and many another nation take the example of the Communists to heart. Abusing the advanced nations becomes a sport. Any pretext will set off a series of irrelevant denunciations and irresponsible actions.

These newer or less developed countries want help, but at the same time anything they do not like becomes capitalist intervention or imperialism or colonialism. Yet the most elementary appreciation of human transactions, whether by way of simple social

psychology or direct experience, says that two people cannot exchange a thing without influencing one another. If expensive decades of foreign aid have proved anything, it is that you cannot drop a bundle of aid and run away from it. A mass of people on the world stage today are so sick from miseducation and sad experience that they exclude by definition inter-racial or inter-national encounters except those that are destined to fail. Here is an absurd *apartheid*!

The Communist nations profess, of course, to see nothing illogical or harmful about any behavior directed against non-Communist nations or organizations. Rather, they lead. The political cries of anti-colonialism, disarmament, peaceful co-existence, and recognition of Red China (and Lumumba's Congo) echo through the meetings of the General Conference and wherever else a forum is offered. Sometimes one is persuaded that the stupidity, the danger, and the futility of such agitation are so apparent that they must be part of an ingenious plot. At other times one comes to think that the Communists behave as they do simply because they are so ignorant. I am inclined to combine both views; the Communist cadres are dangerous, but they are also by training, background, and organization stupefied. They are the intellectually underdeveloped; they are incompetent to provide world leadership; they will, just as the Communist Manifesto promised, destroy the old world before they can build a new one. They must do so; they are too ignorant to do otherwise.

If, as it appears to this observer, the obstacle is one of ignorance even more than malevolence, then there are two possibilities for the West. One is withdrawal into separate international organizations, a step worthy of serious contemplation. Or, the West might choose a policy of aggressive teaching and aggressive cooperation. The post-revolutionary totalitarian mind is like a great concrete pier, and the attempt to penetrate it is like rowing a skiff around the pier in search of a mooring; the task is grim and disconcerting, but there may be somewhere a ring, a rope, a ladder, or a berth.