THE UNESCO
Courier

Special issue

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Celebrating the legacy of

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow

1921-2024

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THE UNESCO Courier

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Editorial

A humanist and a true intellectual, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow left a lasting imprint on the history of UNESCO, of which he remains one of the most illustrious Directors-General.

He was the first African to head an international organization, and at a time of decolonization and the Cold War, he consistently defended the need for solidarity and equal dignity among individuals, peoples and cultures, convinced that "humanity has an obligation to live in the age of solidarity, if it does not want to experience an age of barbarism". By striving to ensure that every State found its rightful place at UNESCO, he embodied the goal of multilateralism.

During his two terms of office (1974-1987), he launched the International Programme for the Development of Communication in 1981, set up the World Heritage Committee in 1976, as provided for in the 1972 World Heritage Convention, and launched the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme in 1975. It was also during his thirteen years as UNESCO's Director-General that the first three volumes of the monumental *General History of Africa* were published. This pioneering, collective work was compiled with the help of historians from Africa and around the world, allowing us to revisit the great history of this continent.

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow's enduring legacy is that of a visionary leader who, more than any other, was committed to the great causes of his time. *The UNESCO Courier*, the Organization's flagship publication, often echoed his views - as illustrated by these articles, published in the magazine between 1975 and 1986. May this selection of articles, which bears witness to an era, serve as a tribute to his memory and shed light on our present and future.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

AMADOU MAHTAR M'BOW

A PROFILE OF THE SIXTH DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

by Pierre Kalfon

NINETEEN fifty-three. Senegal is still a French colony. In the village square at Badiana, deep in the bush of the Casamance region, a man addresses the villagers.

He speaks of the need to learn to read and write, to observe simple rules of hygiene in order to prevent disease; he explains that green manuring yields more rice, that animals should be vaccinated and that infant mortality is not inevitable. He tells the villagers not to be ashamed of Africa's past. He speaks of dignity and hope...

If the assembled villagers listened so intently, it was not only because they were fascinated by his words. It was because this time it was a black African, and not a Frenchman from the town, speaking to them about themselves in clear and simple terms. This Senegalese, a graduate from the Sorbonne, was a school teacher of a new kind. His name was Amadou Mahtar M'Bow. On November 14, 1974, he was elected Director-General of Unesco by the representatives of 135 countries assembled in Paris. He had jumped a century.

Shortly after he was born in Dakar, in 1921, his parents took him back to Louga in the Sahel, where the rest of the family lived, the extended African family of uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins. There he grew up, "learned about life", had brothers and sisters to whom he was the elder brother and, above all, first learned from practical experience and later from books, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau once proposed. Louga was at that time a small rural community with a population of hardly more than 5,000, situated at the cross-roads of the Wolof, Peul, Toucouleu and Berber settlements of Senegal.

His father, who came from a village near the coastal town of St. Louis, was, like many other villagers, an artisan and farmer. He worked hide and made leather goods, cultivated his field, and kept a few sheep, cattle and horses. A devout and highly esteemed Moslem who read the Koran and strictly observed the fast of Ramadan, he was respected as much for his moral uprightness as for his imposing physical stature. Visiting Senegalese political leaders always stayed at his house, and as a prominent local figure, he had been a member of the Senegalese delegation invited to Paris for the Universal Exhibition in 1900.

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow spent his childhood and adolescence in a protected yet liberal atmosphere: he played to his heart's content with the other children of his age to the rhythm of Wolof fable-songs, absorbing his cultural heritage in this way: he listened spellbound to the legends and tales of marvellous happenings whose animal characters parodied man, his faults and his qualities.

He was brought up in the time-honoured way by his mother and aunts, until the age of seven or eight, when the responsibility for his education fell to his father and maternal uncle who initiated him in crafts and farming skills, taught him to raise animals, build huts, repair tools and, above all, to discover and to love nature.

"I knew the names of all the plants and how to recognize those that healed and those that killed", he says, "and even here in Paris, I often

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PIERRE KALFON, *French teacher and journalist, has lived for many years in Latin America, where between 1968 and 1973 he taught French language and literature at the University of Chile, Santiago, and was also correspondent of the French daily "Le Monde" and the weekly "Le Nouvel Observateur". Author of an essay, "Argentine" (Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1967), he is currently at work on a thesis on the literature of the pampas.*

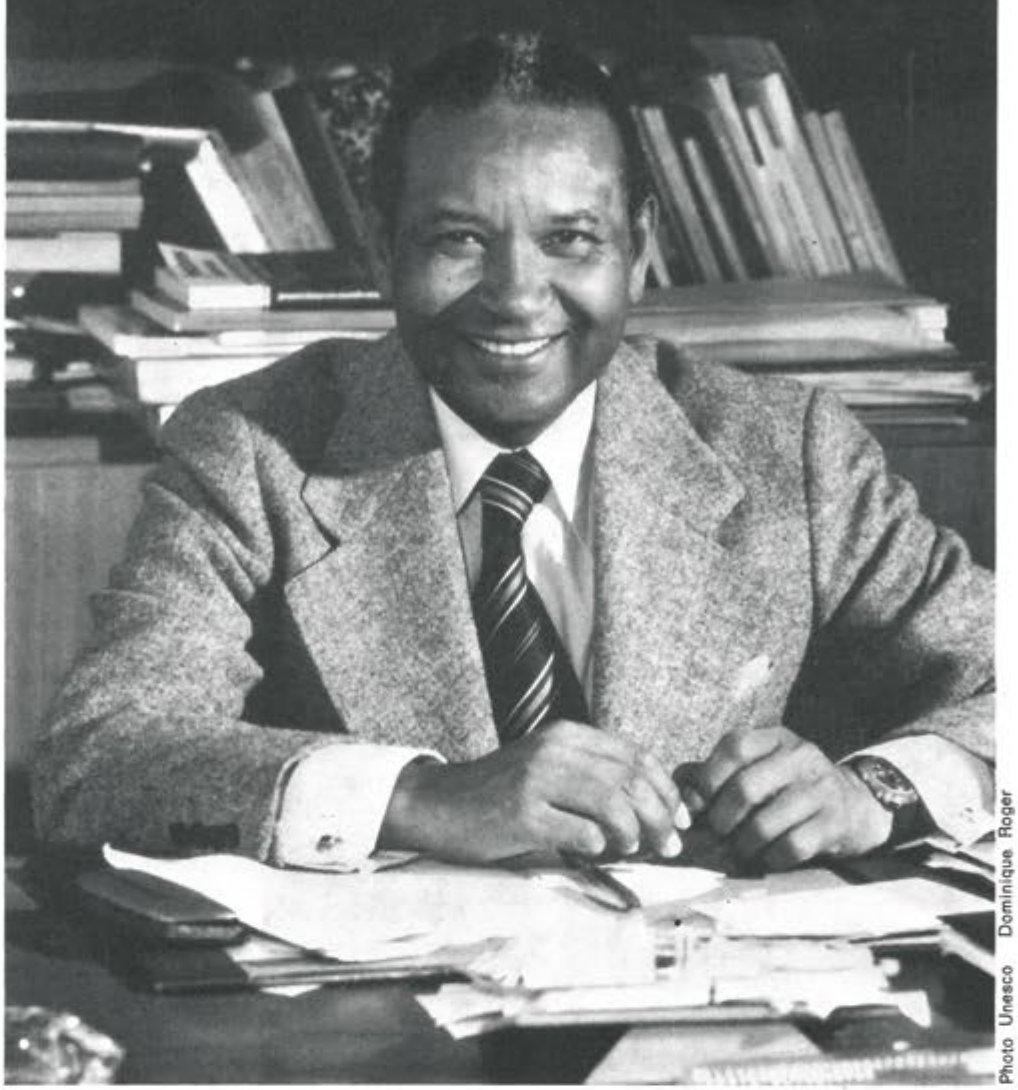


Photo Unesco Dominique Roger

make herbal tea from African plants which are sent to me." In fact, years later his knowledge of agriculture was to astonish many an agronomist.

The only constraint he knew was the systematic memory-training, from the age of five, which consisted of learning by heart and reciting verses from the Moslem Holy Book at the Koranic School. "It is a school of humility", he wrote. "Whatever his status or background, the pupil must be prepared to render such services as fetching wood and water, working the land or seeking donations for his teacher. . ."

Between 1928 and 1930, a terrible drought hit the Sahel, like the one of recent years, in which thousands died from starvation. But without radio or television, this appalling situation went unnoticed in the Western world. Even as an adult, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was never to forget what he had seen as a boy. He still talks about it: "As a child, I lived with hunger. I saw men and women die for lack of food. For me hunger is no rhetorical expression; one must have lived through it to understand its horror."

One day, when he was nearly nine, "on a morning in November 1929, I was taken by my father, who did not know a word of French, to the French regional school at Louga." Wearing his long African *boubou* (he did not exchange it for European dress until he was seventeen), Amadou Mahtar M'Bow spoke only Wolof like most Senegalese. He also knew Pula—the language of the Peul people—which he picked up from his grandmother.

One wonders whether this is where he became interested in history. Did he learn it from a typical French history textbook of the time which always began, "Our ancestors, the Gauls. . ."? One thing is certain. Within his own family, his father and uncles took it upon themselves to teach him another history, in the oral tradition, of the feats of his ancestors. Louga, where his family lived, had been part of the ancient kingdom of Cayor where resistance against colonial penetration had been at its strongest in the 19th century.

Mr. M'Bow himself has stressed the vital importance of this aspect of his upbringing, and it explains his later deep-rooted need to affirm his identity as an African. "Many of us were brought up on tales which were a far cry from what was taught in the colonial or mission schools."

At fourteen, he was awarded his certificate of primary studies, no mean feat considering that nine out of ten African children dropped out of primary school. Told that he was too old to enter secondary school, he changed to a higher primary school, took a commercial course and got a job as a clerk in the Governor of Dakar's office. He was already organizing a youth movement.

Then came World War II. He was eighteen, thirsty for knowledge and eager to fight oppression. He joined the French Army as a volunteer. "I felt I had a duty to accomplish as a free man", he says. He embarked for France, where he later witnessed the horrors of war. He does not like to talk about this period of his life: "I am not a pacifist at any price", he says, "but to me war is utterly absurd. The next one will mean the end of mankind."

After the debâcle of 1940, he returned to Senegal until the Allied Forces landed in North Africa, in November 1942, when he again joined the French Forces and was assigned to the Air Force school at Agadir, in Morocco. He left there at the top of his class, and a specialist in electrical aviation equipment. At the time, he

From the family album of Amadou Mahtar M'Bow :

Teenager, in the Senegalese bush.

Young clerk in a government office.

Photos © Sénégal Photo, Dakar

Educator, during a nationwide literacy campaign in Senegal.

was the only black sergeant with specialized qualifications.

Demobilized in France in 1945, he was determined to go on studying. But first he had to find a way to get into university. For two years, working alone, he prepared both for his Baccalaureat and for the entrance examination to the engineering section of the Breguet School of Electrical Engineering, in Paris, where he was admitted as a first-year student.

There were then few African students in Paris, in the Latin Quarter. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was no run-of-the-mill student. He was convinced that he had to fight for the dignity of the oppressed, and in particular the dignity of the "black peoples", since they were among the most oppressed.

It was during this post-war period that Africans were discovering Aimé Césaire, of Martinique, who had coined the word "négritude" and brandished it like a flag, long before American blacks proclaimed "black is beautiful". At that time, the poet Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's future head of state, was the most listened-to apostle of négritude. Jean-Paul Sartre was writing a brilliant preface to Senghor's "Anthology of Black and Malagasy Poetry". Another Senegalese, Alioune Diop, was defending Pan-Africanism in the magazine *Présence Africaine*...

But for an African living abroad, in France, there were then three priorities crying for action: first, to rediscover Africa's true identity, second to rescue Africa's past from colonial disdain, third to proclaim the rich cultural heritage of the African people.

Senegal was sorely in need of technicians but it was even more in need of people to awaken the African conscience.

So, Mahtar M'Bow decided to return to his own cultural roots, though not empty-handed and not unprepared. Rather than become an engineer-technocrat, he chose as a Senegalese, to become an African geographer and historian. After taking his Baccalaureat at the age of 26, he entered the Sorbonne. "There I learnt rigour and method", he says, speaking of his Marxist and non-Marxist mentors.

He quickly established himself in the African community as an anti-colonialist student leader. With friends he organized a research group seeking to reconcile the quest for African cultural identity with Marx's principles and the anti-imperialist struggle.

In 1948 he became President of the Association of African Students in

Photo Georg Gerster © Rapho, Paris

Fishermen's boats on one of Senegal's vast Atlantic beaches between Dakar and Saint-Louis.

Paris, and in 1950, President then Secretary-General of the Federation of Black African Students in France. This organization was to be the well-spring from which emerged the future "intelligentsia" of all French-speaking Africa. It was here that Mr. M'Bow discovered the complex realities of pressure groups and French political and trade union movements.

Contrary to what sometimes happens, his militancy stimulated his academic work. He quickly obtained his *licence* degree, and even found time to marry a geography student, Raymonde, whom he met at the Sorbonne. She was a Haitian, tall and beautiful, a diplomat's daughter, and a descendant of the African slaves shipped to the Americas centuries ago.

Their marriage was the beginning of a long and rewarding association: joint publication of many works, and a close family life, with three children.

When he left university, M'Bow was offered a teaching job in France. He refused and asked to return to his own country. But because of his political views, the authorities of French West Africa preferred to keep him away from the major centres. He was appointed to the secondary school at Rosso, a small isolated town in Mauritania, then a part of French West Africa. "I was delighted", he recalls. "I wanted to make contact with Africa again and to be with African pupils. I was just thirty, and the only black secondary teacher in the Senegal-Mauritania area. It was quite an event."

This "event" was to last two years. A singular spark fired the lessons of this young teacher, but his pupils were not aware that it came from a man rediscovering himself.

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow did not remain unnoticed in isolated Rosso for very long. At that time, Unesco's Director-General, Jaime Torres Bodet, had proposed the setting up by Unesco member countries of "fundamental education programmes" to combat illiteracy. The Rectorate of Dakar called on Mr. M'Bow, because of his experience as a teacher and also as a Senegalese, to head a new department of fundamental education for the whole of Senegal.

Then began a unique period in the life of Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, "no doubt the most inspiring and instructive of my whole career", he says. This was a far cry from the quiet sinecure of a civil servant sitting behind his desk. For five exciting years, from 1953 to 1957, accompanied by a small team of African doctors, veterinary personnel, student teachers, farming specialists, radio and cinema technicians, and sometimes even a carpenter and a mason, he travelled by truck throughout the country.

He ate from the calabash pot with the villagers, whose life he shared for two or three months at a time. He acquired a unique and detailed knowledge of daily life in the villages of Senegal. Under his direction, schools were built, health centres opened, midwives and nurses trained, agricultural co-operatives installed, chemical fertilizers introduced. Everywhere he strove to alleviate ignorance, disease and misery, the afflictions of what was already beginning to be called underdevelopment.

The villagers were illiterate. But "dignity comes through learning". The history teacher became a simple primary school teacher. Using French and local dialect, he devised a reading and writing method specially adapted to his classes. His pupils, of both sexes, were aged from 6 to 60. "In Badiana, for the first time, a literacy campaign included both men and women. The villagers helped to finish the ideographic alphabet; it was stencilled and roneoed... The simplicity of the method gave them confidence. Those who had learned

to read well were loudly applauded. Evening sessions sometimes went on far into the night..."

It is revealing to read the reports written by Mr. M'Bow, Chief of Mission, after expeditions to places such as Badiana, Dembakane, Senoudébou, Mangaroungou, or Gaya... The fifty close-written pages are not only a sociological study of life in a Senegalese village twenty years ago, but also, despite the deliberately impersonal style, an adventure story of a handful of men working together to bring African villagers into the modern world.

Between missions, however, Mahtar M'Bow found time to participate actively in the political life of his country. His name became known as that of an opposition leader whose views commanded respect. First he was a member of an independent group of intellectuals which, in 1955, united with the Democratic Coalition, led by Léopold Senghor, to later form, with the Senegalese Union for Progress, the Senegalese People's Coalition.

In 1957, France began its decolonization process and installed Senegal's first semi-autonomous government. Mr. M'Bow was appointed the first Minister of Education and Culture. Once again, he travelled through the bush, built additional schools and set up the first post primary classes, so that more children could go on to secondary education.

In 1958, General de Gaulle, on assuming power, asked the French African territories if they would agree to form a Community linked to France. Some said "Yes". Others, with M'Bow, replied "No", and called for immediate independence. When the views of the former prevailed, M' Bow, who had resigned to fight his campaign, returned to secondary teaching, with his wife, at St. Louis, in Senegal, at the same Lycée Faidherbe which had turned him down as a pupil.

This time, it was as an influential opposition leader in the African Regroupment Movement that he patiently took up the struggle again. His progressive nationalism won him esteem abroad, especially when Senegal finally gained independence in 1960.

He travelled a lot, made many contacts, published several books aimed at making Africa better known to the world at large and also school textbooks designed to impress on African children the richness and diversity of their continent. But he remained a teacher at heart.

The new Africa needed highly qualified personnel. In many countries, Unesco launched the idea of teacher training colleges to train such personnel, and M'Bow was called on to teach in one of these colleges in Dakar.

In 1966, Senegal's economy depended on one crop, the ground-nut. An economic crisis loomed; the huge port of Dakar stood empty. President Senghor asked the opposition to collaborate with him. It accepted, hoping to implement its own proposed reforms from the inside.

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow once again became Minister of Education and with Léopold Senghor's accord began the "Africanization" of the university. He himself presided over the commission which drew up the first Senegalese alphabet based on the phonetic transcription of the six Senegalese languages, including Wolof. From then on the teacher and the political leader in M'Bow were to become one.

When the 1968 wave of student revolt in the world hit Dakar, M'Bow tried to avoid a head-on confrontation and succeeded in keeping the discussion open with the student body whose motives he fully understood. Following this he was made Minister of Youth and Culture, a post he held until 1970, when in a cabinet reshuffle he again left the Government.

BY that time he had come to be known as "elder brother" by many of his fellow Africans. In 1966 and again in 1968 he headed the Senegal Delegations to two Unesco General Conferences. Since 1966 he had been a member of Unesco's Executive Board. He also became chairman of the African group of Unesco's Member States and of the group of 77 countries representing the Third World.

In November 1970, Unesco's Director-General, René Maheu, offered him the key post of Assistant Director-General in charge of Education.

This post, calling for administrative and diplomatic qualities, permitted Mr. M'Bow to gain a detailed knowledge of the educational developments in every part of the world.

At Unesco's Paris headquarters and "in the field", M'Bow's tall, well-built figure soon became a familiar sight. He was known for his frank, open manner, his simple and direct method of speaking. Possessed of a phenomenal memory, he spoke with an assurance that comes from knowing every detail of a project. He came to be recognized as the man who preferred to settle questions rapidly by direct personal contact rather than through red tape or lengthy bureaucratic procedures.

He owes to his African village background and long experience a feeling for conciliation invaluable for solving harmoniously the thorniest problems. "We have never seen him lose his temper", say his colleagues, "but while he readily shows confidence in others, woe betide anyone who lets him down."

Now a vigorous 53, with a capacity for work that astonishes everyone, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow has no illusions about the job ahead. He knows it will be tough, but he also knows how much Unesco can do to help countries free themselves from ignorance and poverty. Knowing Unesco well and believing wholeheartedly in its objectives, he intends to infuse it with fresh vigour and give it a new style.

"I should be delighted indeed to listen—as we do under the baobab tree in Africa—to all points of view and to find a solution acceptable to all...", he says. "I am a little wary of a universalistic humanism which often masks Eurocentrism. I prefer pluralism, which accepts the distinctive identity of each people. I was brought up to accept differences in a spirit of tolerance. I am the brother of every human being, whatever his or her race, whatever his or her belief, and wherever he or she may live. This is the first stepping stone for building true solidarity between all peoples.

With René Maheu, Unesco's former Director-General, a whole generation of the early pioneers of the Organization is disappearing. They were dedicated men and women who often came from the Western world. With Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, a black African who stands at the cross-roads of several civilizations and rejects neither his past under a colonial regime nor his European university background, a new generation of men and women is emerging in the train no doubt of the present acceleration of history.

The path that led the country boy from the African Sahel to head one of the most important organizations of the United Nations system perhaps marks a turning point in the emergence of this other world, long oppressed, despised or disregarded—the world of the disinherited peoples. "I feel that I am today the symbol of these peoples", Amadou Mahtar M'Bow said on taking office, on November 15, 1974. In choosing him as Director-General for six years, Unesco has entered the 21st century.

■ ***Pierre Kalfon***

Election of Amadou Mahtar M'Bow. 1974

30 years after

Photo © Jackie Raynal, Paris, from the film *Héraclite l'Obscur*, by the French director Patrick Deval

world war II

Thirty years ago, in 1945, the Second World War—the most destructive and murderous conflict in history—came to an end. This event has been solemnly commemorated by Unesco and by many countries throughout the world. Unesco's Executive Board, meeting in Paris in May, marked the occasion with a special ceremony, and last month (October) Unesco organized an international forum on the subject in Warsaw with the Polish National Commission for Unesco. Other events to mark the occasion at Unesco's Headquarters in Paris included a series of films on the Second World War, as well as various photo and poster exhibitions.
With this issue, the *Unesco Courier* also wishes to mark the 30th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Our number is divided into three parts as follows: (1) salient passages from declarations by international figures at the special session of Unesco's Executive Board; (2) the creation of the United Nations in 1945, immediately following the end of the war, with a survey of its problems and actions; (3) the threat to the world posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Amadou Mahtar M'Bow

Director-General of Unesco

THE commemoration of the end of the Second World War rekindles in the hearts and minds of all those who, like myself, were directly involved in that global tragedy, a feeling of indescribable horror at a slaughter of unprecedented cruelty and magnitude.

During the six years that the war lasted, more than 50 million persons—men, women and children from almost every country, civilians as well as non-civilians—died in battle, from bombing raids, in concentration camps, or from other causes directly resulting from the war. And to this tragic loss of human life one must add the devastation of entire areas, the obliteration of cities, and the destruction of works representing centuries of creative effort.

Cruelly destructive and waged at the cost of untold sacrifices, the war ended nevertheless on a note of hope and confidence in mankind, with the victory of those who had fought for freedom against those who sought to impose on the rest of the world by force of arms a tyranny based on injustice, racialism and violence raised to the status of law.

The end of hostilities 30 years ago marked the defeat of a doctrine of evil, and it is understandable that the first concern of leaders facing the immense task of reconstruction was to try by every possible means to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Out of this determination, and as soon as the war ended, the United Nations system was born, and with it Unesco, in a surge of enthusiasm which is reflected in the entire Unesco Constitution. It is because Unesco was conceived by its founders as one of mankind's bastions against barbarism that the essential mission assigned to the Organization is to contribute to the maintenance of peace—a true peace which can only be assured by the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

The Second World War was brought about by the denial of the democratic principles that imply respect for the individual and by the propagation through ignorance and prejudice of a doctrine of inequality between races and men. When the conflict ended it was clear that Unesco's role should be to help to secure universal respect for justice, for the rule of law, and for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.

This was the principal concern of Unesco's founders, whose ideas may be considered as the inspiration of all the Organization's efforts, however modest.

But every anniversary is also an occasion for self-examination, and today we should ask ourselves whether those forces which plunged much of the world into chaos 30 years ago have really been neutralized and whether the moral commitments which the international community made to mankind immediately after the war have really been fulfilled. We must ask these questions out of respect for the victims of the Second World War and as a minimum measure of our vigilance.

The last 30 years have seen a constant strengthening of the conscience of the international community. I am thinking particularly of the upward struggle of peoples and the work of the United Nations system, and certain major trends of contemporary history, including the one which led to the emancipation of many countries from colonial domination. All these have paved the way for a more just and more fraternal order on our planet.

But a single glance at the world of 1975 reveals many causes for anxiety. Armed conflicts have not been eradicated (one of the cruellest wars has just ended after devastating a tiny country for 30 years and claiming millions of victims) nor have threats of war; nor the most flagrant violations of human rights (not infrequently ▶

associated with the maintenance or re-emergence of racialism or the resurgence of authoritarianism). Nor have we seen the end of the unjust division of wealth among nations and, in many cases, within nations themselves.

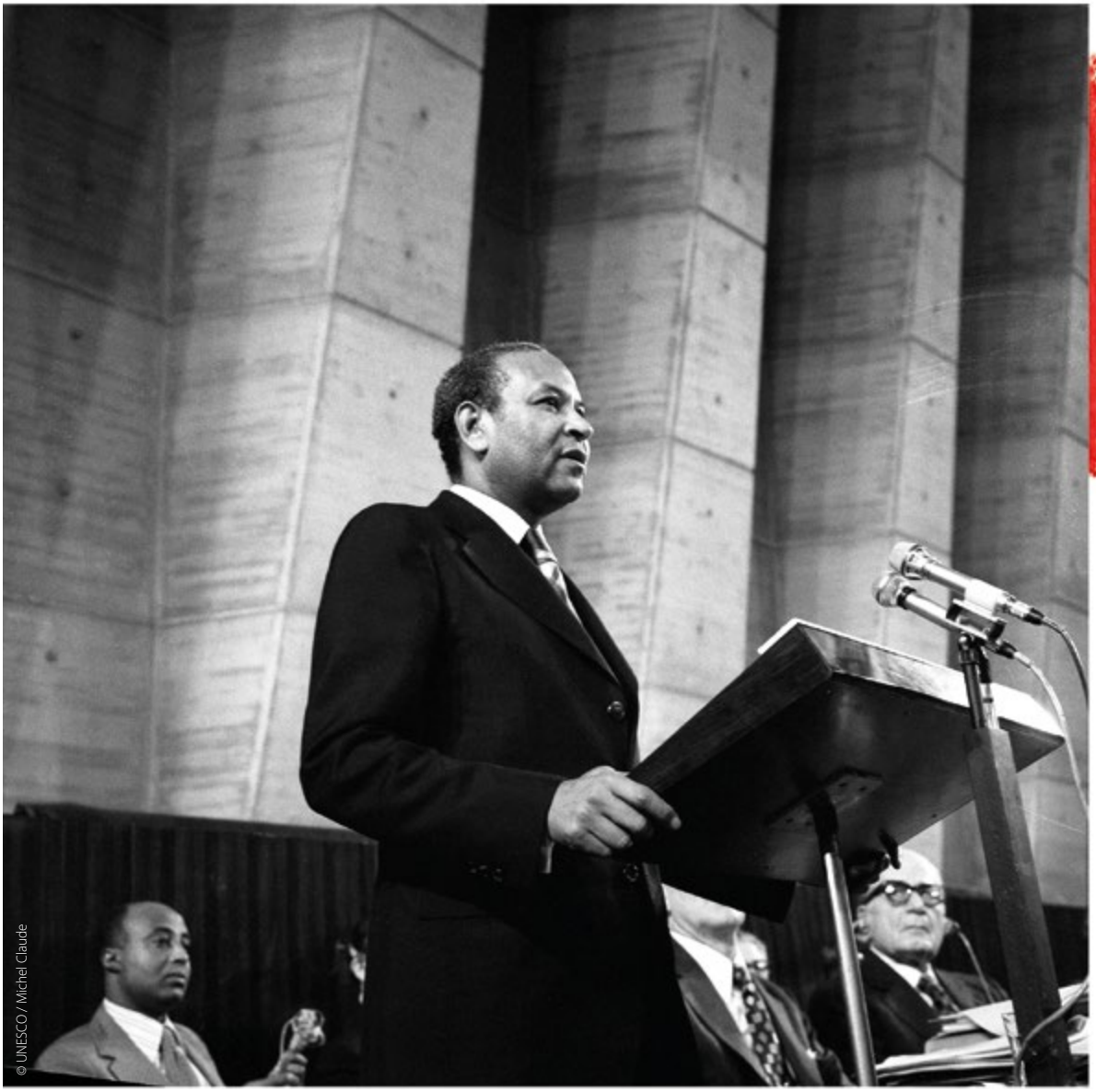
The balance of forces has shifted from the industrialized countries to the poorer countries. This proves that there are no longer any so-called "minor" peoples and that all peoples now aspire to respect for their freedom and dignity. To stifle their aspirations would be to negate the full meaning of the victory won 30 years ago.

But even in the industrialized countries, the arms race, embarked on in the perhaps illusory hope of guaranteeing security through what has been called the "balance of terror", is impeding progress in other fields far more beneficial for mankind and may, if carried to extremes, lead to the very perversion of science diverted for destructive purposes.

The Second World War and the period which preceded it can teach us an important lesson, which is that peace can only be founded on justice and that international co-operation, which is more necessary than ever today, must now enter a new and more dynamic stage. Only in this way can mankind hope to avert the threat of global upheaval such as the one that rent the world apart from 1939 to 1945, and avert the possibility of an even greater catastrophe that would annihilate the whole human race.

This new path of international co-operation to preserve peace is the one that the United Nations and all its agencies have embarked upon with increased vigour, whether it be to promote human rights as they have always tried to do in the past, or to attack the root causes of some of the most serious and dangerous inequalities amongst men through recent action to establish a new international economic and social order.

Unesco must redouble its efforts to serve the cause of peace in all spheres of its competence, and it can do this particularly by helping to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men. As an organization concerned with the world of the human spirit and the human mind and invested with the global authority which its virtual universality has conferred upon it, Unesco can, I am convinced, contribute increasingly to the practical fulfillment of human rights and, if its Member States overcome their differences, it will one day come to be recognized by all mankind as a spiritual forum embodying the conscience of the world.



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Election of Amadou Mahtar M'Bow. 1974

Interview with the European Economic Community.

UNESCO and the world outlook for tomorrow

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director-General of Unesco

In the article below, Unesco's Director-General, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, examines Unesco's role in the world today and the outlook for tomorrow. His text serves as an introduction to the findings of an international advisory panel (see page 26) set up last year by Mr. M'Bow to survey the major problems of the world in the light of Unesco's fields of interest and the new international economic order.

THE present situation in the world and the outlook for the last quarter of the 20th century seem to me to show that Unesco, as it attains its 30th year, has just as important a mission to fulfil as when it was founded at the end of the Second World War.

Unesco's original and essential function, which ultimately is an ethical one, is still in fact to contribute to peace by promoting international co-operation in education, science, culture and communication.

The dangers to which world peace is exposed are in evidence every day. But we know, too, that there are other threats, in some cases resulting from the very powers which science and technology have given to mankind: natural resources are being exploited without order or control, our environment is deteriorating, the inequalities between countries or groups of countries, and indeed within certain countries, are becoming intolerable, and misunderstandings between cultures are deepening despite, or perhaps even because of, the rising flood of information, which sometimes looks as if it is going to submerge us.

I am therefore convinced that, to ward off these dangers, it is essential to engage in a joint, world-wide effort of reflection on where our civilizations are heading.

Unesco has a duty to take part in this reflection in depth, which should be its foremost obligation. Unesco's particular vocation as an international organization is to be a forum for those who serve science or education, culture or communication. Here they can examine the great problems of our time in the light of different approaches originating in many parts of the world,

The distinctive Y-shaped Secretariat building of Unesco's headquarters (circled) is clearly visible in this helicopter view of part of Paris's Left Bank. Photo was taken from almost directly above the Eiffel Tower. (bottom).

Photo © IGN, Paris

exchanging, supplementing and consolidating their viewpoints.

In emphasizing Unesco's rôle in international intellectual co-operation I do not feel that I am singling out an aspect of the Organization's mission which is basically different from its work to promote development.

There is, of course, often a tendency to draw a distinction between these two aspects of Unesco's work. It is pointed out that during its early years, when its members belonged mostly to the industrially developed world in the northern hemisphere, Unesco was chiefly concerned with promoting intellectual co-operation, whereas later, as new States which had recently become independent joined the Organization, it turned to concrete action to assist development.

These two forms of action must be complementary, however, for apart from the need to base action for development on sound knowledge and skills—which Unesco can secure from the international community only if it is a lively centre for carrying out studies and pooling ideas—the actual work involved in promoting development affords opportunities for intellectual and cultural exchanges, so that eventually no fundamental difference between intellectual co-operation and operational action can be clearly discerned.

But above all, I am convinced that the problem of development is inseparable from a whole complex of matters considered as relating to intellectual life. We cannot accept the picture, inspired by a facile idealism, of Unesco on the one hand devoting some of its efforts to scientific and cultural co-operation and the world of ideas, in the hope that such co-operation will further the spirit of peace in the world, and on the other addressing itself to the task of improving the situation of the least privileged.

The distinguishing feature of the world today seems to me, on the contrary, to be the close interdependence between all its parts, all the regions composing it, all the human groups living in it. Development is therefore not a problem peculiar to a certain number of countries. It is a world problem, because its significance is something involving a global complex of relationships and mechanisms, a certain kind of order or disorder.

It is a concept applicable alike to the prospects of the industrialized countries, wondering about the future of their growth and its effects on living conditions, and to the longing for a better life in the countries of the Third World.

It is a unifying concept in the domain of theory, even though it may cover the most serious disparities between human groups and between individuals, and as such, more than any other, it implicitly calls for human solidarity, that solidarity whose absolute necessity I stressed on taking office as Director-General of Unesco, pointing out that it presupposes not only the acceptance of differences between individuals and between cultures but also concerted efforts to achieve justice and progress for all.

I have dwelt on the question of development in this way partly no doubt because it is central to our preoccupations, but also because it appears to me to provide an excellent illustration of some of the major problems affecting the future of mankind and necessitating a concerted approach on the part of the international community if they are to be solved.

■ ***Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow***

During a ceremony which took place on 10 January 1977 at the Acropolis in Athens, Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, (below, with Mr Constantine Trypanis, Greek Minister of Culture and the Sciences), launched an appeal for an international campaign to save the monuments of the historic Acropolis site which have seriously deteriorated in the past few years. We publish here the text of the appeal.

The Greek government has already taken important measures to help preserve the threatened buildings and statues. Castings have been made of the Caryatids, for instance, with a view to removing them to a national museum until a solution can be found for the problem of stone disease.
In addition to damage from water and frost, from the rusting of metal construction frames, from erosion and from the consequences of intensive tourism, the Acropolis is now suffering from the terrible effects of atmospheric pollution on stone.

The magnitude, complexity and urgency of the problem has led to the drawing up, at the request of the Greek authorities and in collaboration with them, of a plan of action to be carried out within the framework of an international campaign approved by the Unesco General Conference at its last session in Nairobi (Kenya) in October-November 1976. The goal is to preserve a great cultural heritage which, although essentially Greek, is nevertheless the concern of all mankind.

According to joint Greek-Unesco estimates the operation will cost $ 15 million and take between five and ten years to complete.

The "Unesco Courier" intends to devote a future issue to the history of the Acropolis and the problems posed by its preservation.

■ ***To enable readers to respond to this appeal we publish on page 34 details of how and where to send contributions.***

THE ACROPOLIS IN DANGER

An appeal by the Director-General of Unesco
Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

Photo Unesco - Simon Callery

The Acropolis is in danger...

After resisting the onslaughts of weather and human assailants for 2,400 years, this magnificent monument, on which Ictinos and Phidias left the imprint of their genius, is threatened with destruction as a result of the damage which industrial civilization has increasingly inflicted on it for a number of years past.

So far, thanks to the restoration work carried out since the 19th century by the Greek Department of Archaeology, supplemented more recently by special conservation measures, the three million or so visitors who now throng to the Acropolis each year have still been able to admire, in the splendour of the incomparable Attic light, the glorious testimony to that excellence which characterized the Golden Age of Pericles and which has remained, throughout the centuries, for so many countries of the world, a unique source of inspiration in the field of art and thought.

Today, however, the dilapidation has reached such proportions that the temples, sculptures and foundations can no longer be preserved unless a vast and complex programme of conservation work is put in hand without delay. From the technical and scientific point of view, this calls for detailed studies, for which it would be difficult for the Greek Government to accept sole responsibility, despite all it is doing already.

Some of the damage is caused by water seeping

Photo Dominique Roger - Unesco

into the cracks and by frost. Elsewhere, the marble is splitting because of the rusting of the iron bars and ties used in the past to keep the stones safely in position. Steps, pavements and rock are being worn away by the feet of countless visitors. But to all this has been added another cause of damage, far more serious even than these. This is atmospheric pollution, the price we pay for industrial progress, which is causing the rapid deterioration of the stone by the action of factory gases and smoke from domestic hearths.

Until such time as a suitable zone of purified air can be established round the Acropolis, simultaneous action is needed so that on-the-spot protection can be provided for whatever sculptures can be so preserved, so that the remainder can be removed and transferred to the Acropolis Museum, being replaced for the time being with plaster-casts, and so that rusting trusses can be replaced with a non-rusting alloy, improved paths and intersections provided in order to channel the flow of visitors, and the rock strengthened where landslides and subsidence occur, and the necessary restoration work put in hand wherever this is possible.

The work needing to be done is, by its very extent, a challenge to the international community which cannot accept with resignation the catastrophe threatening the Parthenon, the Erechtheum and its caryatids, the Propylaea and the temple of Athena Nike. For this reason, and in response to the appeal made to it by the Greek Government, the General Conference of Unesco, at its nineteenth session recently held in Nairobi, by acclamation declared itself in favour of a world-wide campaign, to be conducted under the Organization's auspices, to rally public and private support with a view to safeguarding the Acropolis.

Unesco, whose Constitution lays upon it responsibility for the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of works of art and monuments of history and science, is thus called upon to encourage the international community to make common cause in order to save cultural treasures which, although they belong to the heritage of Greece, are also part of the shared inheritance of mankind. In doing this, its intention is, by publicizing needs, co-ordinating offers of help, soliciting external contributions and seeing that they are made available as and when most effective, in agreement with the Greek authorities, according to needs and possibilities, to support the work of the many friends of Greece throughout the world who are ready to provide direct assistance and co-operation.

This is why I am launching here a solemn appeal to the conscience of the world so that the Acropolis may be saved, just as my predecessors appealed for the monuments of Nubia in Upper Egypt, for Venice, for the temple of Borobudur in Indonesia, for the archaeological site at Mohenjodaro in Pakistan, and for Carthage in Tunisia.

In the name of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I invite governments, the National Commissions for Unesco, public and private institutions and the general public in the Organization's 141 Member States to be generous in providing the assistance, whether money, equipment or services, needed to carry out the great task on which the Greek Government has embarked. Though the resources with which it has done so are considerable, they are insufficient to complete a project which will necessarily last several years.

I invite the intergovernmental organizations of all continents, and in particular those of Europe, as well as all foundations whose activities contribute to cultural progress, to join in the immense task which the Greek Government is undertaking in co-operation with Unesco.

I invite the international specialist organizations which participate with Unesco in safeguarding mankind's cultural heritage, such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, the International Council of Monuments and Sites and the International Council of Museums, to support the activities undertaken as part of the world campaign and to encourage further steps to the same end.

I invite museums, art galleries, libraries and theatres, in which the resplendent genius of Athens is reflected, to arrange exhibitions, performances and displays devoted to safeguarding the Acropolis, the proceeds being paid into the funds set up in Member States or the International Fund established by Unesco.

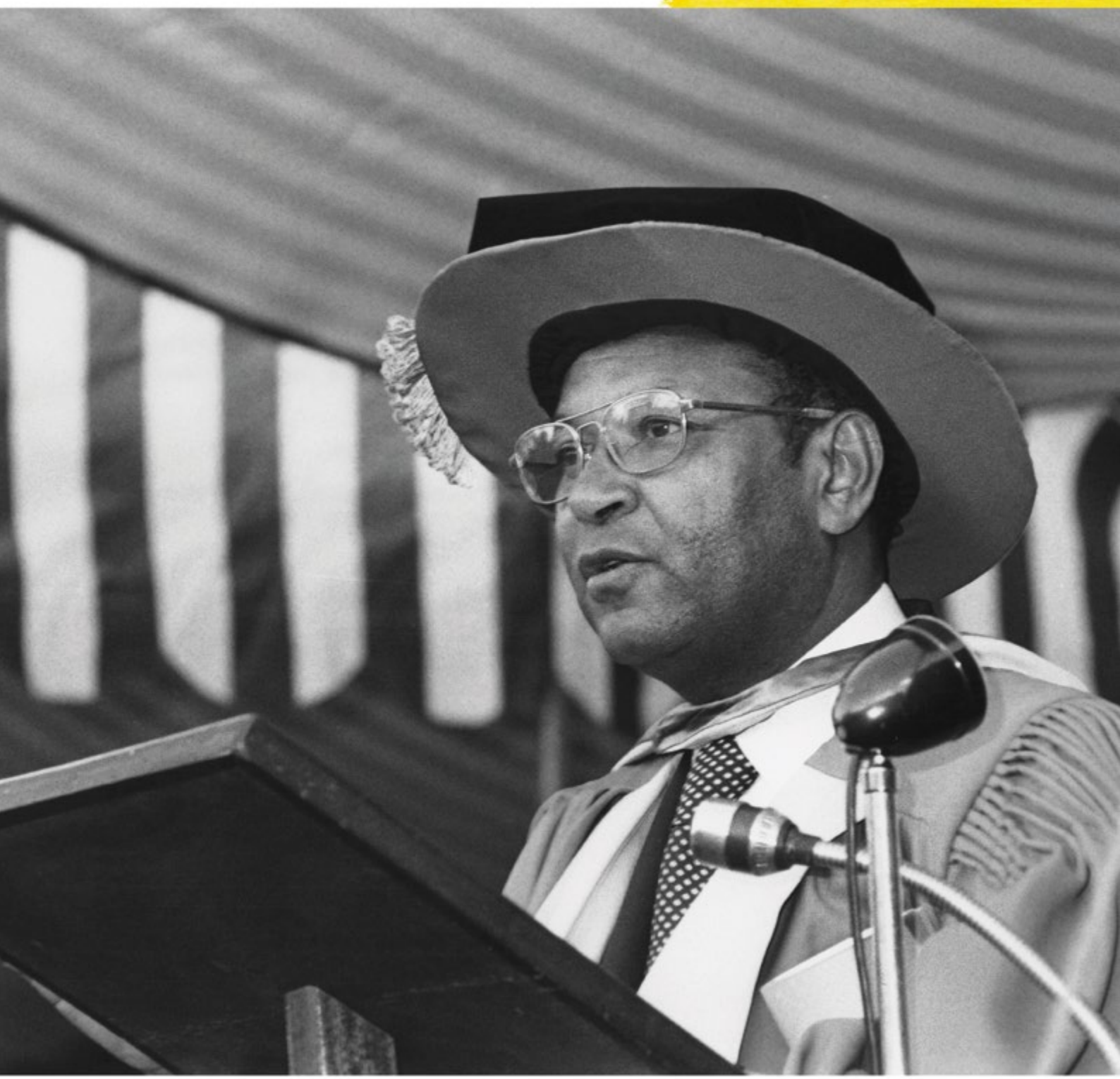
I invite artists, writers, critics, historians and composers the well-springs of whose work are in Ancient Greece, and all those whose task is to provide information, such as newspapermen, columnists, press, radio and television journalists and film-makers, to assist us with their knowledge and their talents in arousing the support of the general public in all countries.

I also invite schoolchildren, students and teachers in all schools and universities to organize collections, especially in conjunction with the National Commissions for Unesco in their countries. The proceeds from these collections will go towards preserving the crowning glory of a civilization to which art, science and philosophy, even in our modern world, still owe an immense debt of gratitude.

Finally, I invite all those millions of people who have already visited or who intend to visit Athens, as well as those who perhaps will never have that opportunity but who sense clearly, whatever the cultural area to which they belong, that the treasures of the Acropolis testify in the highest degree to the creative genius of man, to make a contribution, however modest, which will enable them to give a little of themselves to the collective effort.

I do not doubt that mankind will once more rise to the need and prove equal to the task of saving its heritage, and that in this way, over and above the diversity of ideologies and systems, further progress will be made in realizing that spiritual unity sought by the nations of our world, in their growing awareness of interdependence and a common destiny and their desire to establish a new order founded on the brotherhood of their peoples.

■ **Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow**



Nairobi, 29 October 1976. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow receives the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Nairobi.

The will

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director-General of Unesco

SINCE 1945 the disaster of a third world war has been avoided; but at what price has this been achieved? For how many days have the guns been silent throughout the world? Although the field of conflict has shifted towards the poor countries, children, whose lives are no less precious than anyone else's are still dying as a result of war.

Yet the nations, that in this twentieth century alone have sacrificed more than 100 million human beings on the altars of war, continue, as if caught up in the gears of a runaway machine, to dissipate a vast proportion of their genius, of their energy, of their resources, on the manufacture of lethal weapons, ever more sophisticated and devastating. To these nations, the question of disarmament represents an unavoidable challenge.

If we take up this challenge, not only will mankind be delivered from the menace of a hecatomb without precedent but it will also acquire the means to win the struggle against poverty, sickness, ignorance and the other afflictions which beset so many peoples.

If only a proportion of the material and human resources devoted to preparation for war were assigned to the cause of development, it would suffice to change the face of the earth, lessen the widening gulf between rich and poor countries, and reduce the areas of poverty which continue to exist in many industrialized countries. A great number of essential activities, in the fields of nutrition, health, literacy, the development of education, the training of scientific and technological personnel, the establishment of research centres, cultural development, and the safeguarding of the environment, are curbed or even blocked, solely for lack of material resources. This in turn aggravates inequalities, and brings about new situations of tension.

And so in addition to the development of nuclear weapons we have the armaments race in so-called conven-

for peace

tional weapons, which extends to the smallest and poorest States. Thriving on injustice, and representing a further manifestation of selfishness in the world today, this race, in turn, brings into being terrifying world-wide interests linked to arms industries, multiplies the risk of a world conflagration, and provides fuel for the flames of conflict.

The arms race is not only fraught with the most terrible danger to human life; it also determines investment choices and sets a premium on economic structures which, having become essential to the life of nations, subsequently make it all the more difficult to carry out the conversion of the arms industry to non-military activities.

The countries whose high level of development enables them to influence the crippling economic and social process of the arms build-up have a special responsibility towards the international community and to the small and medium States which at present can do no more than submit to decisions which have been taken elsewhere, even though they involve their future.

For Unesco, the essential task is the creation of a growing movement of world public opinion which is conducive to disarmament and peaceful co-operation. One of our essential objectives should be to work towards the inclusion of education on disarmament in courses, not only at school and university, but wherever knowledge or skills are acquired.

What has to be done, above all, is to ensure that the burden implied by any war and the enormous benefits of peace are better understood so that public opinion can throw its full weight into the balance and can support governments in the movement towards disarmament.

We have to persuade and convince and appeal to reason and common sense, but we also have to call on people's generosity and a clearly realized sense of solidarity that stands to benefit one and all. It is a long drawn-out, difficult and at times unrewarding combat, for guns have to be silenced by ideas, but it is a combat on which all the world's hopes are staked. ■

Photo Boubat © Top, Paris

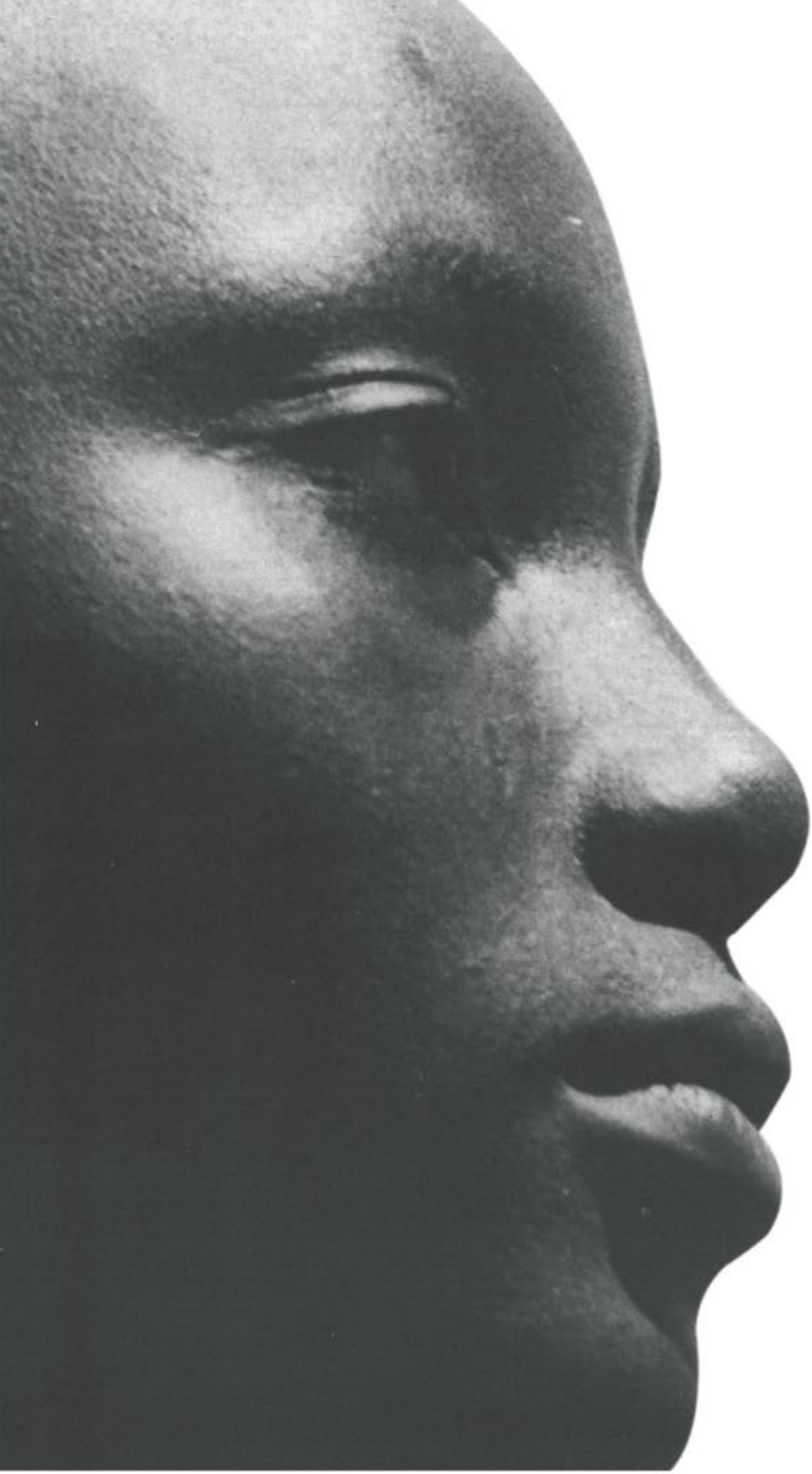


Photo © Hoa-Qui, Paris

The General History of Africa

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

Director-General of Unesco

THE face of Africa has long been concealed from the world by myths and prejudices of all kinds. African societies were regarded as societies without a history; in spite of major studies produced in the early decades of this century by such pioneers as Leo Frobenius, Maurice Delafosse and Arturo Labriola, many non-African scholars, wedded to preconceptions rooted in their own background, maintained that such societies could not be studied scientifically because sources and written documents were lacking. This amounted to a refusal to see Africans as the creators of original cultures which blossomed and perpetuated themselves for centuries in distinctive ways of their own which historians can only grasp by adopting new methods.

Furthermore, the African continent was virtually never considered as a historical entity. On the contrary, stress was laid on everything which might give credence to the idea of a division, since time immemorial, between a "white Africa" and a "black Africa", each ignorant of the other. The Sahara was often presented as an impenetrable expanse which completely prevented any mixing of ethnic groups and peoples, any exchange of goods, beliefs, customs and ideas between the societies established on each side of the desert. Impassable frontiers were traced between the civilizations of ancient Egypt, of Nubia, and those of the peoples living south of the Sahara.

Today it is generally recognized that the civilizations of the African continent, through the variety of their languages and cultures, form, to varying degrees, the historical contours of an ensemble of peoples and societies united by links stretching back for centuries.

Another phenomenon which has had a deleterious effect on the objective study of the African past is the existence of racial stereotypes, which appeared with the slave trade and colonization, bred contempt and incomprehension, and became so deeply rooted that they actually perverted the conceptual basis of historiography. From the moment when the notions of "whites" and "blacks" were adopted to serve as generic descriptions of the masters and the dominated peoples respectively, Africans had to struggle against a dual enslavement, economic and psychological.

Identifiable by the pigmentation of his skin, earmarked for labour in mines and plantations, one commodity among others, the African came to symbolize in the minds of his oppressors an imaginary racial abstraction, falsely infused with the notion of inferiority, which was categorized as negro. This spurious process of identification reduced the history of the African peoples to the status of an ethno-history in which any appreciation of their cultures was bound to be distorted. As for the image of themselves which the colonizers gave to the Africans, need it be said that all too often, alas, this was no more than a caricature of the civilizations whose values they were supposed to embody?

The situation has changed radically, especially since the African countries have achieved independence and now actively participate in the life of the international community and the mutual exchanges which it exists to promote. In exercising their right to take the initiative where their own history is concerned, the Africans themselves are profoundly aware of the need to re-establish on firm foundations the historical nature of their societies.

Herein lies the importance of the eight-volume *General History of Africa,* upon whose publication Unesco is now embarking.

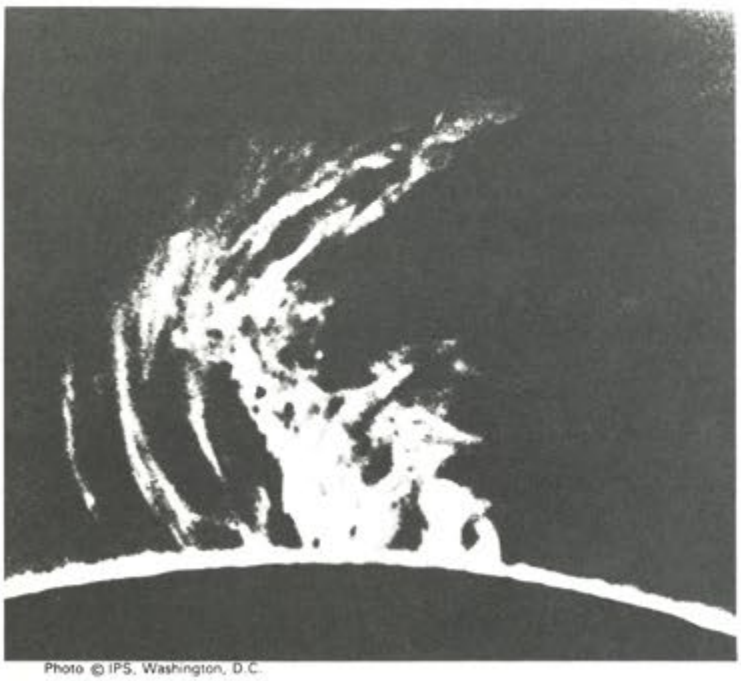
The specialists from many countries who have participated in this work decided to begin by defining its theoretical and methodological basis. They have scrupulously re-examined the unjustified simplifications originating from a restrictive, linear conception of history, and, whenever necessary and possible, have revised accepted positions so as to present the facts in their true light. They have made every effort to bring into focus the historical data through which it is possible to comprehend the development of the different African peoples in their specific social and cultural contexts.

Work on this immense task, made even more complex and arduous by the diversity of sources and the dispersion of documents, was undertaken by Unesco in three stages. The first (1965-1969) consisted of work on documentation and planning: the collection of oral and unpublished written sources in the field; the preparation of a *Guide to the Sources of the History of Africa* based on an inventory of the archives of European countries; meetings of experts to discuss questions of methodology and to trace the broad outlines of the project. During the second stage (1969-1971) international meetings of experts held in Paris (1969) and Addis Abeba (1970) confirmed the interdisciplinary character of the method chosen. The third phase is that of the drafting and publication of the work, under the intellectual responsibility of a 39-member International Scientific Committee, two-thirds of whose members are Africans.

The General History of Africa throws a new and original light on the continent's past, considered as a totality, because its authors have avoided the pitfalls of dogmatism in tackling such fundamental questions as the slave trade, which was responsible for one of the cruellest deportations in the history of mankind and emptied the continent of part of its lifeblood; colonization and all its consequences; the relations between Africa south of the Sahara and the Arab world; the process of decolonization and the accession to independence of the new African States. The *General History* brings into focus both Africa's historical unity and its relations with the other continents, notably with the Americas and the Caribbean islands, where the African heritage has left its imprint on ways of feeling, thinking, imagining and acting, and where the descendants of Africans have actively contributed to the fashioning of national identities.

I am convinced that the whole sense and thrust of the future draws its force from an intensely felt consciousness of history, faithfully transmitted from generation to generation through education. In Africa, as elsewhere, this consciousness is one of the essential conditions of the independence, development and affirmation of peoples. Unesco is thus serving the entire international community by helping to make known and by restoring to its proper perspective Africa's contribution to human progress.

Meeting the



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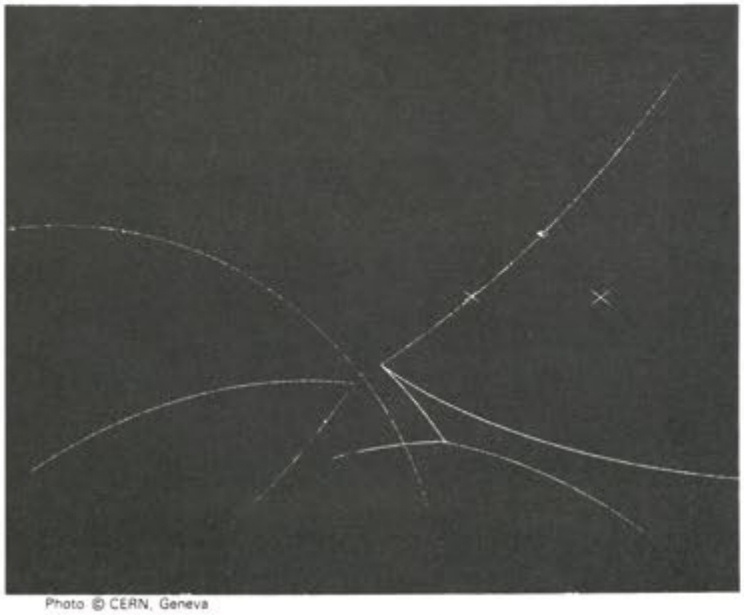


Photo © CERN, Geneva

ENERGY has always been a factor of fundamental importance in the life of human societies. All activity entails the expenditure of energy and hence, from the draught animal to nuclear fission, the history of energy merges with the history of mankind, in whose pattern it is in many respects one of the guiding threads. The production of energy down the ages has followed the development of scientific thought, and the forms of energy available and the manner of their use have often had a direct influence on the nature of society. In other words energy must be considered, in a historical perspective, in the light of culture in its broadest sense.

Thus in the nineteenth century the massive use of coal, coupled with the invention of the steam engine and progress in chemistry and steel manufacturing, made possible the first industrial revolution which transformed the essentially agrarian societies of Europe and then America. Likewise, the discovery of electricity and its host of uses, whether for lighting, mechanization, or communication, have made a deep impact on the lives of men and women of every continent and have fostered the creation and growth of the world's great cities. In the twentieth century the exploitation at an increasingly rapid rate of the other fossil fuels, oil and natural gas, has, along with the development of hydro-electric power and nuclear energy, enabled the industrialized societies to pursue the momentous changes which have given birth to the modern world, with its hopes and contradictions.

If energy problems are today so acute at the international level as to justify the holding of a United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Energy Sources, this is because it no longer seems possible to satisfy the world's constantly mounting energy needs by continuing to exploit, exactly as before, too limited a range of energy resources. The international community is thus confronted with the challenge of making forthwith those structural changes—economic, social and technological—which are required by the transition to new energy sources.

In fact, as this issue of the *Unesco Courier* makes clear, given the circumstances of production and living conditions which currently prevail in a number of countries, no single energy source can continue to meet all energy needs over a very long period; nor are there new sources capable of taking over fully from those which now exist. Such is the outcome of a world situation which has been characterized for too long by the intensive exploitation, for economic reasons related, for instance, to underpayment for energy, of non-renewable sources such as oil over which there hangs the threat of eventual exhaustion. The study of alternative solutions should aim to increase energy production but it must also situate this endeavour within a wider context. It no longer seems possible to envisage the future without taking into consideration total world energy consumption, together with the need for changes in the energy economy as a whole, with all the consequences which will ensue for the environment and for society.

Such a project concerns all countries, whether industrialized or developing. It is true that the problems it raises will differ from one nation to another, but it is in the interest of them all that the transition should take place smoothly, as part of a concerted effort. Par-

energy challenge

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director-General of Unesco

ticularly important is the tapping of new, less costly energy sources which can be exploited almost everywhere. For the developing countries the problem is of vital importance. The increasingly unequal situation in which they find themselves today means that their chances of mobilizing the necessary financial resources are slight. Consequently they must find new resources, but above all they must have access, notably through a better flow of information, to the knowledge and techniques whose mastery is indispensable to their progress. For this to come about, these countries need to join in world decision-making as full and rightful partners. The transition to diversified energy sources is in large measure linked to the setting up of new rules and new mechanisms designed to alleviate the tensions of the world economy and to bring into being a more equitable international economic order, in a spirit of solidarity and concertation.

Unesco is taking part in this process of international reflexion and action. Apart from the fact that the whole thrust of its activities is to encourage the emergence of this new order, it is particularly qualified to contribute to the strengthening of international scientific co-operation which is indispensable to the advancement of learning and the free circulation of knowledge. It can also help countries which are attempting to solve their energy problems to draw up national policies which take account of all the factors involved, whether they are related to science, technology, education, information, or to social and cultural life.

The free flow of scientific and technical information and the exchange of data acquired through experience in different social, economic and cultural situations can make a decisive contribution to speeding up the exploitation of new and renewable energy sources, notably in the developing countries. With this in mind, Unesco is currently engaged in creating an international information system on energy sources, the use of which necessitates not only data from many fields—the physical sciences, ecology, the life sciences, engineering, economics—but also access to documentation on production, planning and training at every level, from university teaching to the education of rural populations. This system will thus be of interest to a wide range of users, from research workers to planners, from engineers to educators, not to mention the wider public whose involvement is essential where energy-saving or the adoption of new techniques are concerned. The setting up of such an information network is, of course, indissociable from an intensification of research, teaching, training and popularization, all of which Unesco's programme seeks to promote.

Unesco is also concerned to put the problems of energy in a context in which all their complexity can be grasped, and has accordingly set out to identify the many non-technical factors (especially those of a social and cultural nature) which affect the exploitation of the different energy sources. Social attitudes, differing from country to country, can have far from negligible effects on the possibilities and rapidity of change.

The environmental problems resulting from an increased reliance on coal and nuclear energy should not be neglected, either. Here attention has tended to focus on certain short-term effects on public health or working conditions or on direct consequences for the physical environment, at the expense of the longer-term social, cultural and ecological consequences for which there are often very few data available and which, if they are to be tackled comprehensively, require more concerted international action.

Through these studies and activities relating to energy problems Unesco wishes to contribute on the one hand to each country's efforts to pursue its development along its own specific lines and on the other to the efforts being made by the international community in the late twentieth century to achieve a balanced and more equitable management of the planet's resources, considered as the heritage of all peoples and of generations present and to come.

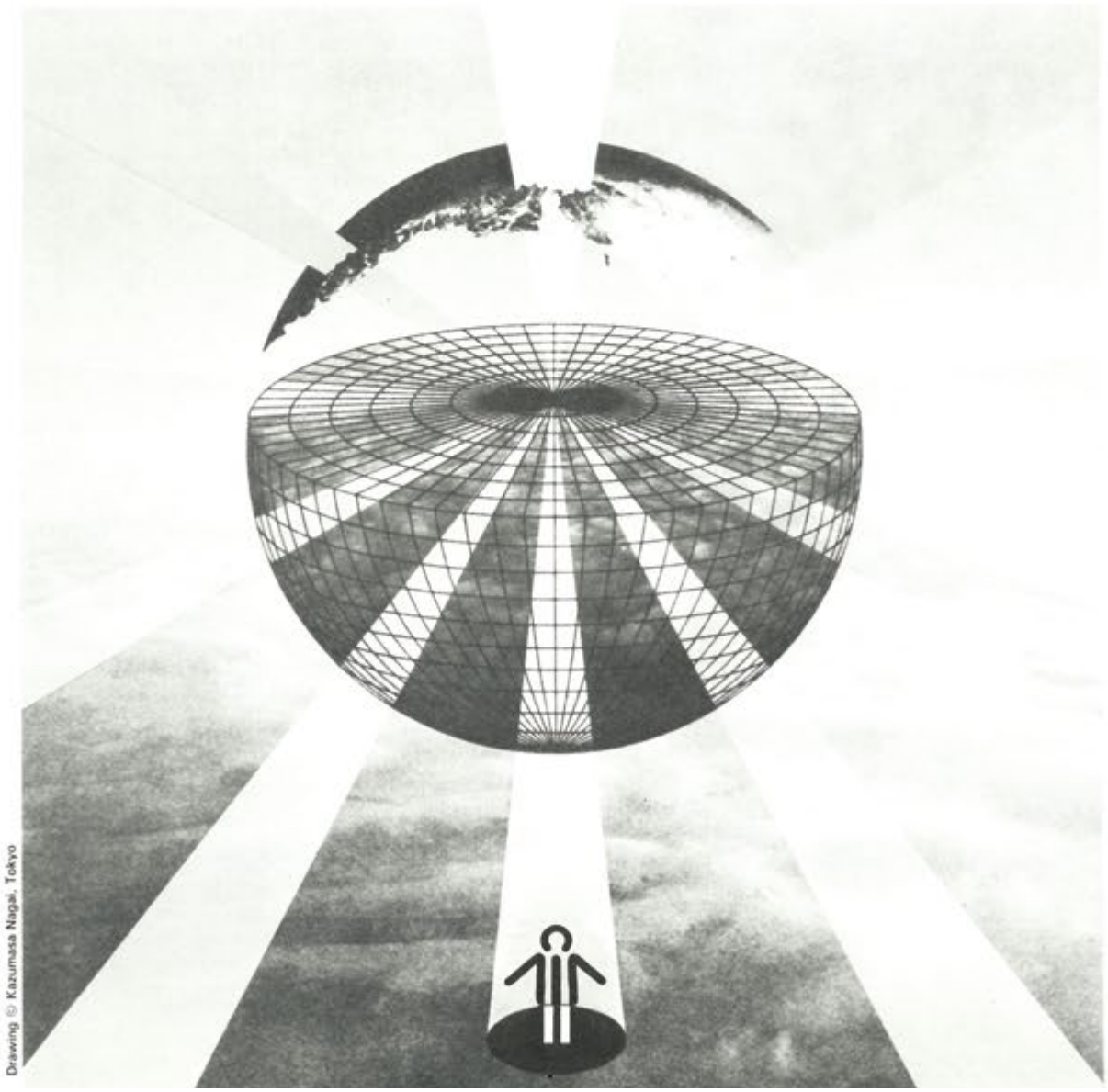
But an analysis of energy problems cannot be isolated from a historical appraisal of the relations between the successive levels of energy use by mankind and the evolution of the scientific concepts which make the use of energy possible. Energy produced by human and animal muscle was, for long ages in the history of mankind, the most important form of energy, as it still is for many peoples today. It underlay the earliest development of agriculture and urban civilization. As a result of the rise of the physical sciences and their application to the interpretation of natural phenomena, the meaning of the word energy gradually became wider: to mechanical energy were added thermodynamic and electrodynamic energy, opening the way for a first leap in the scale of energy production, from the kilowatt to the megawatt, and providing impetus for the first industrial revolution. The next theoretical development, the quantum theory, corresponded to the crossing of a new threshold: the use of energy from nuclear fission. This discovery, associated with the development of computers, led in turn to the second industrial revolution, with energy now being measured not in megawatts but in gigawatts. Other thresholds will undoubtedly be crossed with the continuance of fundamental research into the structure of matter and the development of techniques for effectively eliminating and recycling radioactive wastes. Nuclear fusion is a promising field because it releases even greater quantities of energy than those produced hitherto, and the fuel required is extremely abundant.

These successive breakthroughs in knowledge, promptly turned to practical use by human ingenuity, are the fruit of individual genius—the genius of the great scientists of every age whose achievements are so many milestones in the history of scientific thought. But just as the quickening tempo of progress in the last few decades was made possible as a result of the slow accumulation of universal knowledge and its transmission across time and space, so scientific and technological innovation, though it may be first and foremost a matter of individual or collective creation, cannot, given the complexity of the world today, serve the welfare of all without close co-operation between all those communities and centres in which it comes into being and finds application. This intellectual co-operation is a cherished field of activity for Unesco. By encouraging it, by tightening the bonds between the world's scientists, Unesco, in the field of energy and elsewhere, is also preparing a future in which man will possess knowledge to release forces on a par with his immense needs and will be sufficiently wise to master those forces. ■

WHERE THE FUTURE BEGINS

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

Director-General of Unesco



Drawing © Kazumasa Nagai, Tokyo

SINCE Unesco was created thirty-seven years ago as a result of its founders' determination to provide mankind, in the sphere of activities of the mind, with the means for influencing its own future development, the world has changed profoundly. The international community has expanded considerably with the emergence of new nations, and mankind has constantly strengthened its control over the planet and increased its mental and material powers. Scientific and technological advances, the successive stages of which have conspicuously marked development in the last quarter of a century, for instance, enabling man even to explore space, have considerably improved the lives of a certain number of peoples and have now given the whole human race, for the first time in its history, the means of ridding itself of the major concerns that have preoccupied it since the dawn of time—food, health, shelter, protection against natural calamities, security.

The spread of education has given more and more people access to the most varied and advanced forms of knowledge, thus greatly enhancing the capacity for innovation, and hence the well-being of many societies. The achievement of political sovereignty by almost all nations has made possible an extraordinary widening of the scope for human initiative and liberty and has given each of them the opportunity to play an active role in a history that will henceforth be worked out by a collective effort. Exchanges of goods, capital, knowledge and know-how are becoming more and more numerous; intellectual and cultural intermixing proceeds apace; and anxieties, hopes and fears are beginning to converge, transcending the demarcation lines drawn by history or established by geography. As all communities are more and more gathered together within one and the same network of vital relationships and even mutual dependence, the prospect at last gleams ahead of a world community joined in unity of purpose and finally reconciled with itself, where all will be sure of the means to live a better life, unhampered by fear, and where there will be an ever fuller flowering of freedoms and creative faculties.

But entire populations are still living in absolute poverty. Profound inequalities continue to divide peoples and individuals and the pursuit of progress itself frequently gives rise to contradictions, uncertainties and doubts. Disturbing harm is being done to the natural environment. There is mounting tension between countries and within some countries; life in many societies is troubled by violence. Instruments of destruction are being further developed and stockpiled. Nuclear weapons, by their quantity and destructive capacity, are already capable of annihilating all that mankind has constructed through thousands of years of effort, and even mankind itself. Overarming is not only an expression of the mutual distrust which is advanced to justify it; but it accentuates the trend towards division of the world into spheres of influence and leads to military, economic and cultural interference in the lives of others; and it diverts an enormous volume of resources from the satisfaction of societies' urgent needs.

One world

From whatever angle one approaches the major questions which mankind has to answer, one realizes that the future of modern societies will be enacted in a context now expanding to worldwide scale.

As a result, societies which had been able to live in almost total ignorance of each other up to a few decades ago are now in increasingly regular contact. Reciprocal influences are becoming ever more numerous and interdependence is becoming a multidimensional reality. While interdependence is doubtless a source of mutual enrichment, receptivity, initiative and creativity, it also leads to frustrations when accompanied by a deterioration in the lot of some people, a reduction in the scope for manœuvre, increased unpredictability and greater vulnerability.

The image that emerges from any analysis or effort of reflection is therefore that of an increasingly complex world in which sources of friction are on the increase just as the reasons for co-operating and the means for communicating are becoming stronger.

Asymmetries and inequalities

Economic statistics provide blunt evidence of the scale of the disparities between nations and groups of nations. But inequalities also persist within most societies and are in some cases even becoming more pronounced. The prosperity of many industrialized countries may conceal an uneven distribution of income, and some sections of the population in those countries lead a difficult, sometimes even precarious existence. In the Third World, vast populations frequently enjoy none of the benefits of progress and towns and cities—in many cases and at least as regards certain social categories—are like islands of modernity cut off from the hinterland.

The picture of destitution, concentrated for the most part in countries of the Third World is a familiar one. An age-old word—poverty—has today become a central concept of economics. It betokens serious deficiencies in food, housing, health and education and an extremely low income level. Depending on the criteria adopted, it may be reckoned that there are some 800 million people in the world living in a state of absolute poverty (World Bank) or about 1,100 million poor (International Labour Office). Other equally impressive figures have to be taken into account to form a more detailed picture of various categories of unfulfilled needs: 430 million people severely undernourished, 1,000 million badly housed, 1,300 million without adequate access to drinking-water, and, according to statistics established by Unesco, 814 million adult illiterates and 123 million children of school age not attending school.

The international economic system

The present situation is really only the most recent stage in a process that began in the distant past. The rise of certain countries, the creation of vast colonial empires for their benefit and the dawning and development within those same countries of the industrial revolution had the effect of placing them in a position of economic dominance, which has finally reduced many other parts of the world to the state described by the concept of "dependence" set forth in certain economic theories.

Whether politically colonized or not, most "dependent" countries served as reservoirs of raw materials or specially favourable markets for the manufactured goods of the dominant countries. The economies of these countries have thus developed basically under the pressure of demands originating elsewhere rather than in accordance with their own needs.

Even today, with the exception of petroleum, the Third World countries have no control over the prices of the products which constitute the basis of their exports, nor over the prices of products which they must import. Many of them are faced with a steadily deteriorating balance of payments, while their borrowing capacity is shrinking.

Notwithstanding the different constraints to which they are subjected and the specificity of their situations, the development of Third World countries has been conceived, given its basis in theory and directed, in most cases, by reference to the international economic situation which has been imposed on them. Underdevelopment has been interpreted as essentially a time-lag in the various branches of socio-economic activity, as compared with the situation obtaining in the so-called developed countries, while development has been seen as a universal process occurring in all places and at all times in the same sequence of successive "phases". A progression has thus been envisaged, leading necessarily from the traditional, predominantly agricultural society towards "modern" society, frequently described as the "age of consumption", and inevitably involving, sooner or later, an "economic take-off". This seems to have been the premiss, explicit or otherwise, behind the efforts made in the last few decades, an approach which at times failed to perceive the crucial importance of the constraints imposed on the developing countries by the international economic system.

It appears, however, that genuine development has to be elicited from within, willed and conducted by all the vital forces of a nation. Accordingly, it should encompass all aspects of life and involve all the energies of a community within which each individual, each ▶

occupational category and each social group has its part to play in the general effort and its share in the resulting benefits.

Development cannot therefore be considered solely from the standpoint of economic performance and the growth of material goods. No doubt economic growth and the production of material goods will always be vitally important because of the essential contribution they alone can make to the general welfare; but they should serve purposes consciously accepted by all, that enrich everyone's life, increase the creative capacities of the entire population and have their roots in culture, with all that it implies of truth to self and receptivity to progress.

A growing awareness of the importance of the cultural dimension of development thus emerges as one of the salient facts of our time.

Peace and the arms race

The face of war has changed today. The quantity and destructive potential of modern nuclear weapons and of chemical and biological weapons, are such that a conflict between the great powers, in which such weapons would inevitably be used, would result in the destruction of the human race. The feature that makes the present era radically different from previous eras is this capacity of the human race for self-annihilation. It is a state of affairs unique in the history of mankind, and one that must be constantly borne in mind at a time when it is sometimes asserted that with tactical nuclear weapons, a nuclear conflict could remain localized and its consequences be surmounted. In practice there is no guarantee that, once set off, a nuclear conflagration could ever be contained. The after-effects of atomic explosions would be so extensive that there would be a strong likelihood of the threshold being quickly reached where the scale of destruction would prove lethal for the whole of mankind.

It is against this background that the many localized conflicts that have occurred since the end of the Second World War, involving developing countries for the most part and causing the deaths of millions of people, must be set. Several of those conflicts have stemmed from the will of the colonized or formerly colonized peoples to win their independence or to withstand external pressures that imperil their freedom. Others, admittedly, have more complex origins—confrontations within nations or disputes between nations—but all of them are inevitably aggravated, if not brought on, by the antagonisms within the world community.

The arms race, originating in many cases from the will to predominate or from a sense of insecurity which, far from mitigating, it aggravates, accelerates under its own momentum. It has undeniably become a phenomenon which, by virtue of its scale and implications, dominates the international scene. Total military expenditure in 1980 may be estimated at over $500 thousand million—a sheer waste of these colossal resources, it may be said, since they do not enhance the security of those who foot the bill, the balance tending simply to establish itself at an ever higher level.

It should also be pointed out that the arms race at present ties up valuable human resources and, especially, very large numbers of top scientists. If this huge research and development potential were used for purposes of human welfare, considerable progress could be made towards solving some of man's major problems, such as those in the fields of health, education or agricultural production. Quite obviously, such a redeployment has an ethical dimension and is one of the major issues in the current debate on the ultimate purposes of science and technology.

On a more general level, ethical concerns cannot be dissociated from attempts to build peace, which means considerably more than the absence of war. Peace has a positive content, demanding as it does justice in relations between societies and recognition of the equality in dignity of all peoples and all cultures. It is hence more particularly synonymous with respect for fundamental human rights and the freedom of the peoples to make their own decisions.

Human rights

Massive violations of human rights continue; foremost among them, mention must be made of the apartheid regime that still prevails in South Africa, despite repeated condemnations by the international community. That regime continues to institutionalize racism and to deny, by its very existence, the most fundamental principle on which human rights are based: the oneness of the human race and the equal worth of all human beings.

The right of peoples to self-determination is also seriously flouted. Some peoples are still politically subjugated, as a result of long-standing, or in some cases recent, historical circumstances. Many communities are still deprived of the right to an identity.

There are some ten million refugees in the world today; their situation is particularly grave because of the precariousness of their living conditions, the fact of their having been uprooted and the difficulty of finding viable solutions in the prevailing political and economic circumstances.

No less disquieting is the trend with regard to individual freedoms, which are jeopardized in various ways, either by blind terrorism that strikes even at the totally innocent in the name of particular aspirations or principles, or by the established authorities. Authorities in many countries have curbed political liberties and freedom of association and put down opposition movements. In some cases, the law itself is used to redouble the attacks upon human rights, for instance by retroactive, repressive legislation, the widening of the interpretation of national security, or the institutionalization of emergency measures. There is a disquieting tendency to "criminalize" opposition by bringing mere political disagreement within the scope of the penal code. Furthermore, normal legal safeguards are often set aside, with the resultant development of various forms of detention without trial.

No less serious, and perhaps even more serious, is the tendency to adopt, parallel to official and legal repression, procedures beyond the pale of legality and State power, involving undercover operations of kidnapping or murder whose perpetrators enjoy a sort of impunity.

Moreover, although prohibited by legislation in most States, torture and, more generally, humiliating and degrading treatment are still practised. In some places they are inflicted, seemingly on a systematic basis, when suspects are arrested and during their interrogation and detention.

But not even the denunciation of violations of human rights is unaffected by the political rifts in the world. For instance, the very people who habitually express indignation at certain actions tend to minimize others that are equally serious, because the regimes responsible for them share their view of the world or serve their interests. The danger with such attitudes to violations of human rights is that they may lull consciences into acquiescence; they must be countered by an unconditional insistence on respect for human rights, irrespective of the political judgements that may be passed on particular situations. Individual freedoms and the freedom of peoples are two sides of the same coin. These problems, like those of development and peace, concern each human being and the entire human race.

The environment and natural resources

There is another area in which complex networks of interactions now appear to bind the fate of the individual inextricably to the collective future of mankind: this is the relationship between man and nature. Attention is now also focused, as the result of a new awareness which has become especially marked over recent decades, on the pressure that man's activities, based on technological advance, exert on the environment, either through the unchecked eating-up of resources and of space, or through the production of wastes that the natural environment can no longer absorb without suffering far-reaching effects. The major risks emerging in the relationship between man and nature are the exhaustion or scarcity of certain non-renewable resources essential for human activities and irreversible damage that might jeopardize the balance of the biosphere.

These concerns must be seen in the context of problems of society and development which are of decisive importance as regards the environment. Underlying all these problems, in fact, are the forms of production and consumption of the industrial societies. In the purely technical and economic logic of industrialization as it has generally been conceived, the environment and natural resources are treated simply as instruments serving economic growth. The pursuit of quick and high returns means that the cost of environmental damage is overlooked. Society as a whole, considered either nationally or internationally, then has to bear costs which are entirely neglected in any economic reckoning. This type of behaviour, which leads to unrestrained and what might fairly be termed unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources, gives rise to serious damage. In many Third World countries, it entails an overworking of natural resources that is detrimental in the long term, whether they be living resources, like forests and fish stocks, or mineral resources occurring in finite quantities.

But situations of underdevelopment, in themselves, also have unfortunate implications for the environment. Poverty leads to over-use or irrational use of the productive capacities of ecosystems, of soil, water and wood. It also leads to uncontrolled extension of urbanization, which has today become a major problem in many countries.

Environmental problems can never be considered apart from the present forms of the international division of labour and the constraints imposed by the international economic system. Control by the developing countries over their own natural resources is, incidentally one of the main lines of emphasis in efforts to bring about a new international economic order.

But this objective cannot be dissociated from the idea of a global environmental ethic based on wise use of the resources that the planet offers to men and that human ingenuity succeeds in discovering and turning to account.

Such an aim may in the long term imply changes in the manner in which resources are used in most countries of the world, eventually involving far-reaching changes in behaviour and recognition of the primacy of such values as solidarity and equity, in application not merely to people alive today but to those who will come after us, as opposed to behaviour guided solely by immediate self-interest.

Communication between people and between cultures

Recent developments have made the world more and more one as regards communication and exchanges between people and between cultures. Countless communication networks have grown up as production, management and organization technologies have spread throughout the world, with the intensive circulation of products and people, the rapid strides made by telecommunications and data processing, and the huge increase in the volume of messages put out all over the world by the mass media.

These technologies are playing a part in transforming societies and causing them to move towards ever greater complexity. Communication and information may in fact be regarded as the nervous system of contemporary societies: they are essential to their activities, particularly in economic matters, and play an essential part in financial transactions and banking and in the development of trade, of land, sea and air transport, of health or public administration systems, and of military systems. Any political power is of necessity placed at the centre of a complex communication and information system, since decision-making increasingly necessitates consideration of more and more constantly changing items of information, and since, furthermore, any policy needs to be explained and commented on if it is to gain acceptance. Some people consequently consider that tomorrow's economy will be one based mainly on information, and that information is in the process of becoming the key resource marked out for a major role still more decisive than that of raw materials and energy.

This makes the very great disparities in the different countries' situations as regards their communication and information capacity all the more serious. The least well equipped countries, especially the developing countries, are deprived of some of the most effective means of controlling the various aspects of the development process. The development of communication and information in the developing countries, which is generally recognized to be necessary by the international community today, is therefore a prime prerequisite for the advent of a world of greater equity and solidarity and for the free development of democracy within the various societies. If they were better able to communicate and to acquire and impart information, the developing countries could not only make their voices heard more effectively in international affairs but could also make more progress in education—particularly in the struggle against illiteracy—and could develop their scientific and technological potential, improve their health systems, promote rural development, and be in a better position to deal with natural disasters. Communication and information can also help those countries, and indeed all others, to consolidate national unity, preserve their cultural identity and make provision for greater participation by the public in the changes currently taking place.

It seems essential, therefore, to do away with the obstacles that prevent people and nations from gaining access to all sources of information and from directly expressing their own points of view, as also to avoid the distortions which compromise the dignity and independence of peoples. In this context, it is clearly important to foster the development of all forms of communication and information in all countries, and particularly in the developing countries, and to encourage efforts to discover and apply innovations which will allow of readier adaptation of structures and content for the purposes of different categories of users, the compiling of information with broader participation by the public, and greater diversification in cultural expression.

Science, technology and society

Existing modern technologies already confer enormous powers upon man, and their potential is such that many of the problems confronting human societies could be solved if they were ▶

systematically employed. The prospects opened up by modern science are therefore full of new promise.

To obtain a clearer picture of these prospects, it is important to note that very profound upheavals have reshaped the map of the scientific world and the relations between the various sciences. This development and its practical implications are bound to exert a strong influence on scientific and technological strategies. A new configuration of fields of knowledge could be said to be forming, in which the branches of the future appear to be biology, data processing, systems theory and the communication and information sciences. We are thus witnessing nothing less than a scientific and technological revolution, which seems capable of transforming not only methods of production and patterns of consumption but mentalities and social practices as well. It is even tending to efface, to some extent at least, the old-established demarcation lines between the natural sciences and the social and human sciences. We are perhaps living in an era in which cross-over points are emerging between the major fields of human creativity: among the various scientific disciplines and between them and culture.

Although considerable efforts have been made, much more remains to be done in order to find appropriate solutions to the problems of energy supply, food, housing, transport, leisure or the management of the environment still encountered in all societies in different forms and degrees. The bulk of scientific and technological potential is still concentrated in a limited number of countries which alone possess the means for conducting research in certain fields, especially the advanced fields, and therefore hold the keys, so to speak, to the major advances of the future. Moreover, the lines of emphasis in research and the choice of fields in which it is applied are determined primarily by the needs and problems of the countries that are already best provided for—which adds to their accumulated wealth of scientific and technological knowledge, while the existing stock of knowledge and know-how is still inaccessible to most developing countries.

Science must be used to increase the well-being of all peoples. This presupposes a freer and more intensive flow of information and knowledge concerning both science and technology, a worldwide concerted effort to make scientific research more relevant to the needs of the whole of mankind, and to ensure in all countries, the developing countries in particular, their own development of science and technology. On this last point, it should be stressed that scientific and technological development must come about as a result of a set of complex interactions between the need for scientific and technological solutions to economic and social problems, on the one hand, and, on the other, efforts to train researchers and specialists and to organize scientific research and experimental development programmes.

Cultural identity

The need to rethink development, and to invent new strategies to take account of what is distinctive in each nation's way of life and culture and to call into play the enterprise of all the individuals and groups that go to make it up, is becoming all the more urgent today because of the tendency towards uniformity that is developing and, in many countries and among many sections of the population, impinging upon life-styles and modes of thought and on the organization of the social, individual and family environment. This tendency results less from a convergence of the different values of civilization than from the predominance of certain centres propagating the knowledge, know-how and social usages specific to the best endowed societies. The very fact of the growing oneness of the world in economic, social and cultural matters is bringing certain needs and aspirations to the fore, in more and more environments and within various societies, and causing them all to follow the same model, based on goods and services produced and distributed throughout the world. In every area of life—from food to clothing, from transport to leisure—the same patterns of consumption are tending to spread. This tendency is enhanced by the media and the cultural industries which are extending it into cultures, ideas and ways of seeing or depicting the world.

This logic of growing uniformity favours certain lines in the pursuit of knowledge to the detriment of other forms; it imposes certain aesthetic or ethical values; it stimulates the growth of certain areas of activity, encourages certain talents and modes of feeling—and ignores others. Whole sectors of creativity are thus repressed, societies mutilated in their individuality and their distinctive structure. Carried to the extreme, this logic could lead to mankind's becoming ossified, since diversity, if accepted on a footing of complete equality, is indeed an essential and fertile source of vitality alike for individual societies and for the whole world.

The growing homogeneity that world uniformity based on a single model would produce could well leave all humankind bereft of the means to face unknown or new dangers. Who can say whether a given culture or a given genetic feature, now lost beneath the ruins of traditional societies, may not have been an integral part of a heritage and perhaps essential to the further progress of humanity? Nor can we rule out the possibility that one day the global technological society might perish from entropy, for lack of a sufficient differentiation between cultures.

These would appear to be the historical implications—in reaction to the growing globalization of fundamental social processes and the pressures towards uniformity brought to bear on the individual or collective mentality—of the reawakening of specificities, which is the manifestation of a now overriding demand, that of identity, which can be seen everywhere in the world and which in some countries links up with the efforts successfully carried out or more recently undertaken to enhance the status of the national culture.

In this respect, it is significant that the demand for cultural identity, first voiced in certain parts of Europe in the nineteenth century and which crystallized the aspirations of the young nations formerly under colonial rule—for whom the conquest or reconquest of their mutilated past represented the most precious achievement in the struggle for independence—should now be raised again in the industrialized societies, where the need to preserve or to revitalize regional or ethnic identities is increasingly felt. In all regions, cultural identity appears now as one of the chief driving forces of history, representing neither a fossilized heritage nor a mere collection of traditions, but an internal dynamic, a process whereby a society continually creates itself, nourished by internal diversities consciously and voluntarily accepted, and welcoming, assimilating and if necessary transforming contributions received from elsewhere.

Far from coinciding with withdrawal into an immutable, self-enclosed past, it promotes a lively, original and constantly renewed synthesis. Identity thus appears increasingly to be the *sine qua non* of progress for individuals, groups and nations, for it is the force that animates and underpins the collective will, that gathers to itself the internal resources for action, and that turns necessary change into creative adaptation. More and more linguistic, religious, cultural and occupational groups are accordingly asserting their individuality and strengthening their internal bonds. The protection of their specific identities seems to be the first step towards the

regaining of their creative faculties, their inventiveness and ability to participate in a world that has tended to efface them. It should in no way be interpreted as a mere revitalization of former values, but betokens chiefly a search for new cultural designs whereby to carry on from rehabilitation of the past by an awareness of increased responsibility for the future.

Uncertainties and the renewal of values

While it is now clearly appreciated that economics cannot be the only criterion in development, that other objectives must be defined and that new methods, modelled more closely on the requirements and aspirations of the community must be invented, the striking feature of many contemporary societies is extreme diversity in the behaviour, demands and aspirations of individuals and groups, and the juxtaposition, at times, of different scales of values. This diversification in systems of standards is no doubt connected with the development of societies and changes within them but it is also connected, in part, with the increasing flow of goods, services, technologies and messages from one part of the world to another.

In most countries of the Third World, a host of needs and new motivations are appearing, based on the systems of standards and values specific to certain industrialized societies. The combination of new aspirations and traditional loyalties produces divided values in certain regions, within certain families and even in the hearts of more and more individuals. The sharp division between modernity and the underlying cultures appears in many countries to be opening a gulf between those who have integrated into the new world and those to whom it remains foreign, thus aggravating the polarization between groups, between town and country and between the industrialized and rural sectors.

In the past few years, however, there have in a number of countries been attempts to rebuild society on the basis of a revival of its most deeply rooted cultural values. It is this aspiration that is imparting fresh impetus to the spiritual, religious or mystic movements through which part of the population in those countries is seeking to re-establish links with an ethic of solidarity and mutual assistance. It is this, too, that is inspiring certain peoples with the determination to build their own version of modernism, by reinterpreting tradition so as to identify its creative features. This ambition calls for an endeavour to renovate social standards and practices by drawing on those cultural traditions and traditions of work, and aesthetic or moral values, that will enable the society to make room for progress without self-betrayal, and by rejecting all those traditions and values that would shut it into a past offering no way forward.

Questionings and new approaches are also appearing, for different reasons and in other forms, in a number of industrialized societies where more and more groups, particularly among the young, are tending to adopt new attitudes towards income and social success, work and leisure, and the man-made and natural environments. New aspirations are emerging and giving rise to a greater demand for decentralization and participation; to an attempt to find a new, settled place in small communities, whether geographical, professional, religious or linguistic; to a lesser emphasis on order and even on economic security, and to a desire for emancipation *vis-à-vis* anything that may have a centralizing function. Are these changes the forerunners of an imminent transformation in the axiological systems of certain industrialized societies? It is difficult to assess either their scope or their precise significance because of the extreme diversity of the attitudes involved, their uncertain and often ambiguous or contradictory nature, and the heterogeneity of the aspirations they reveal.

In some countries social movements of a new kind are emerging, bringing into the political arena and the sphere of collective action matters hitherto regarded as strictly private, like birth, old age, housing, environment and communication. Associations that cut across the usual social barriers are being set up—women's groups or clubs for "senior citizens", neighbourhood co-operatives, consumer or user associations, and groups getting together for leisure activities or work—which are experimenting with novel types of cultural activity and often introducing new relationships between the economic and political spheres. As a result, new issues now have their spokesmen in society, while cultural production is linked once more with social production as in the past.

All these ventures show that people are radically challenging the established order and exploring new avenues in a great variety of ways, which may denote a revival of social creativity.

Between breakdown and renewal, therefore, a fundamental challenge arises and will no doubt face a large number of societies and the international community itself in the coming years: how, with the growing complexity of forms of organization and production systems, to reconcile the demand for the cohesion and effectiveness needed both nationally and internationally for action to promote development with the demands for a share in initiative and creativity that are often voiced? The movement towards a diversification of systems of references, in reaction against the trend towards uniformity and conditioning, is undoubtedly indicative of the intrinsic vitality of contemporary cultures. It may herald a regeneration, on condition however that more appropriate forms of communication and exchange are established, within a context of greater justice, among societies and within those very societies, among social groups separated by their differing loyalties and aims, and among nations which must arrive at mutual understanding and reach agreement on the co-operative actions which are called for and indeed demanded by the world today.

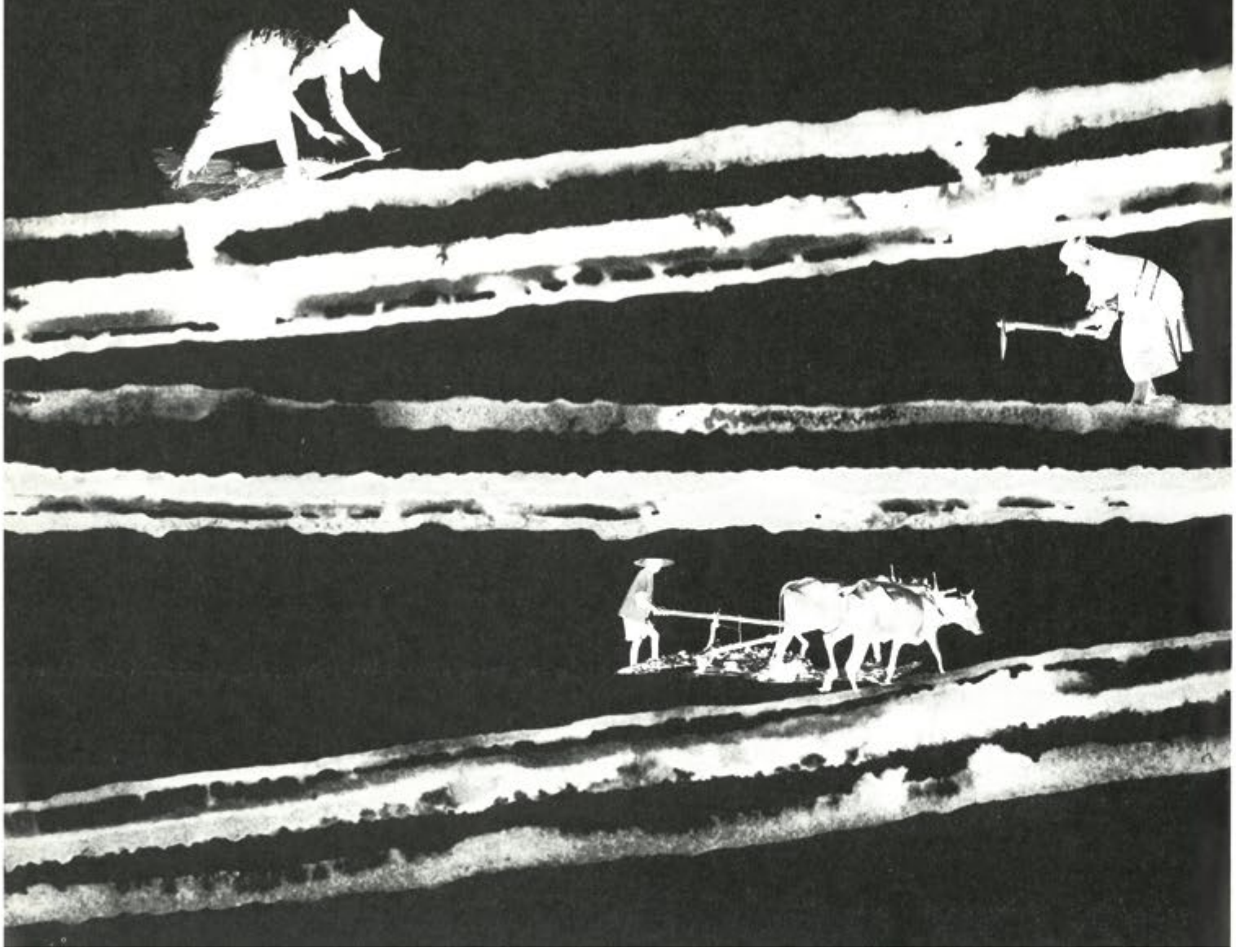
■ Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

'A MORAL IMPERATIVE'

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

THE eradication of illiteracy represents a moral imperative for the international community. The reasons for this are evident. It is sufficient to consider the number of illiterates, an estimated 824 million in 1980 or 29 per cent of the adult population, a number which is constantly on the increase even as the rate of illiteracy slowly declines.

If present trends continue, there will be 900 million illiterates towards the end of the century. Illiteracy is generally closely associated with poverty. It is most widespread in the most deprived areas of those countries which have the least resources, and among the most destitute sections of the population—those that suffer from serious inadequacies as regards food, health and



Document Dieter Grauer, FAO, Rome

housing or who are affected by unemployment.

The persistence of widespread illiteracy is a major impediment to development, and makes it impossible for millions of men and women to take their destinies into their own hands. It condemns to failure the fight against poverty, the elimination of inequalities and the attempts to establish relations of equity and justice between both individuals and nations.

Unesco's strategy and actions in favour of literacy have evolved over the years to reflect the experience acquired by Unesco and its Member States. Thus the programme approved by the recently concluded 22nd session of the General Conference for the 1984-1985 biennium contains several noteworthy innovations.

The most important of these is the adoption of a global strategy whereby action for generalization and renewal of primary education—the only means of attacking illiteracy at its very root—is combined with literacy education for young people and adults. It is a fact that illiteracy thrives on the inadequacy of primary education. There are today some 120 million children of primary school age who do not have the opportunity to attend school and who, if adequate measures are not taken, will swell the ranks of adult illiterates in the future. Sixty per cent of these children cut off from school are girls, the women and mothers of tomorrow whose role and influence in every sphere of life are of decisive importance.

But even many of those fortunate enough to attend school will not necessarily pursue their studies long enough or receive an education of a sufficient quality and relevance to their lives to enable them to achieve an enduring level of literacy. Hence, the extension and reform of primary education is an indispensable element in any realistic strategy to overcome illiteracy.

Unesco's programme also gives immediate attention to an alarming phenomenon—the relapse into illiteracy of many young people and adults. Studies must be undertaken to diagnose this complex problem systematically.

Another aspect of the problem of illiteracy which has recently attracted the attention of researchers is the notion of "functional illiteracy". With the rapid development of science and technology, the level of literacy required to cope with the demands of social and economic life is rising. The measure of "functional literacy" is not fixed, but is steadily advancing. For example, the level of instruction which qualified one for employment yesterday may not suffice tomorrow.

It is only by acquiring literacy skills that each individual begins to become a full and active member of his culture, is able to benefit from the accumulated wealth of knowledge and know-how and takes part in the collective process of reflection on the implications of his society's evolution—in a word becomes a full-fledged citizen.

While its elimination requires first and foremost a strong national commitment, illiteracy has become a problem of truly planetary dimensions. Its eradication also calls for efforts on a world-wide scale and in particular for international co-operation reinforced by a greater concern than in the past for the fundamental human requirements of authentic development.

I therefore appeal once again to all those in positions of authority to increase the total volume of aid devoted to literacy work, thus enabling the upward trend in the absolute number of illiterates to be halted, then reversed, before the end of the century. In this way we shall ensure that we enter the new millennium in a climate of liberty, creativity and progress for all. ■

Photo © Hélène Parat, Paris

Peace and human values

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director-General of Unesco

THE Second World War came to an end in 1945, on 8 May in the European theatre, on 2 September in the Pacific. The war had seen the systematic practice of collective massacres, the destruction of cities on a massive scale, the deportation of entire populations, and the organization of many extermination camps. Precipitated by the will to dominate, its mainspring blind intolerance and prejudice, the war afflicted humanity not only through its toll of flesh and blood but by striking at the source of its deepest beliefs, the most precious elements of the cultures of peoples. The brutal rejection of human values was a characteristic of this world conflict, but so too was the uncompromising defence of such values. It is our duty to honour those who gave their lives to preserve world civilizations and human freedom, and to remind today's generations of their sufferings and sacrifices.

To honour their memory is also to recall the task of reconciliation and reconstruction which began at the end of the war with the foundation of the United Nations and of Unesco. The mission specially entrusted to Unesco has been to reinforce peace between the nations through education, science and culture, by contributing to the establishment of new relationships based on the principles of knowledge, justice and mutual comprehension.

Today more than ever, this mission which Unesco has resolutely endeavoured to accomplish remains imperative.

The image of the world which is increasingly gaining ground in the minds of people everywhere is that of a single and complex expanse in which the sources of friction are proliferating while the means of communication are growing more effective and the reasons for co-operation are becoming explicit.

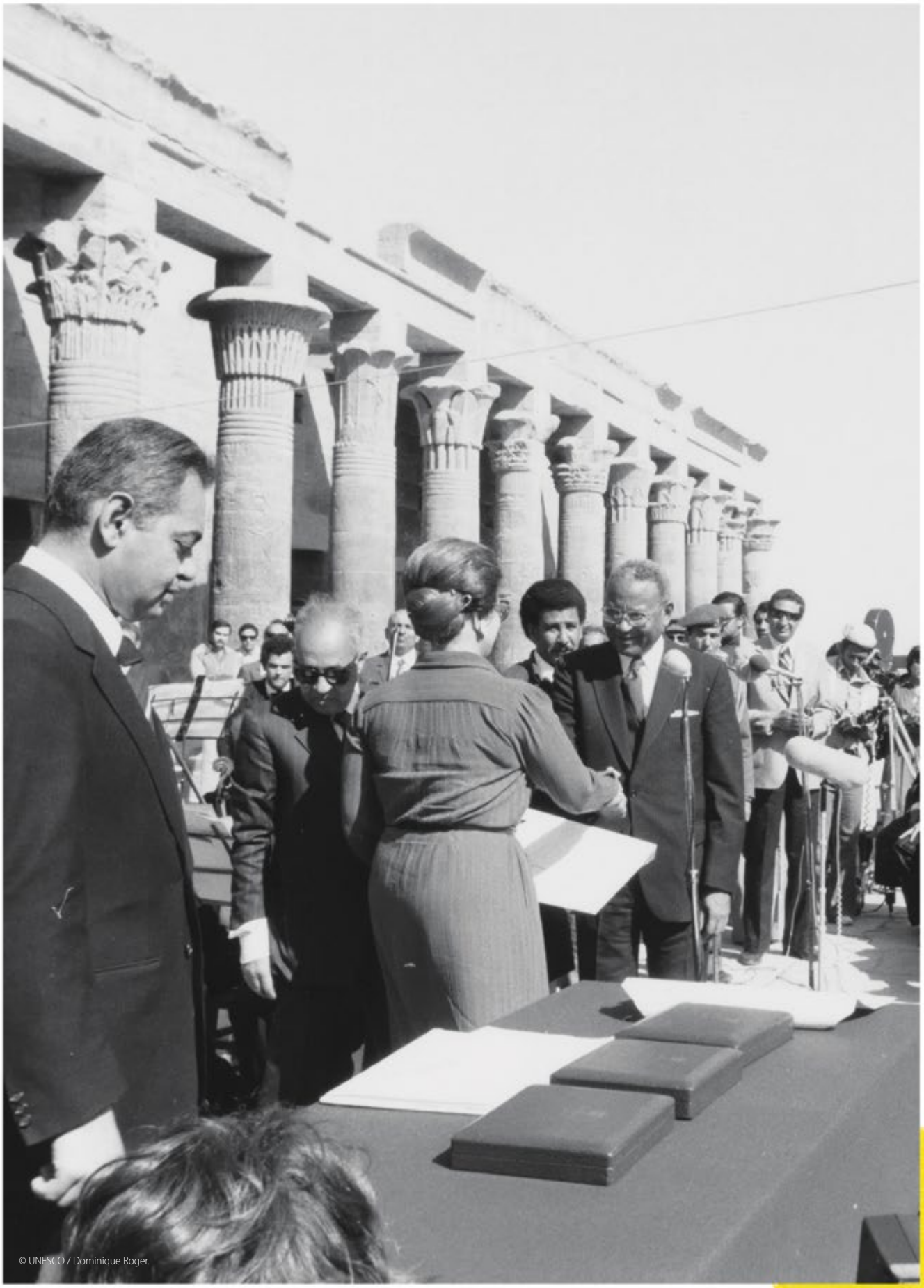
Never more than today have men felt so capable both of mutual understanding and of mutual destruction. Since 1945, there has been an endless succession of so-called local wars which have caused the deaths of tens of millions of persons. Today the acceleration of the arms race, coupled to the extension of these local conflicts with international ramifications, heighten the danger of a generalized confrontation and threaten the future of mankind to an unprecedented degree.

The gravity of these dangers is beginning to be widely felt and giving greater prominence to the aspiration of all the peoples of the world to a lasting peace, based on respect for the rights of individuals, for the liberty of nations and for justice, and on universal progress.

This is why Unesco, faithful to the principles set forth in its Constitution, is continuing to make a contribution to the development, in its fields of competence, of mutual understanding, tolerance, respect and solidarity between individuals and between peoples, as well as the recognition of their reciprocal rights and duties.

It is incumbent on all of us to work towards a genuine renewal of values, bringing to them the sense of an uninterrupted continuity between the rights of each man, those of each nation and those of the entire human community.

The commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War reminds us of this duty and urges us to perform it.



Egypt, 10 March 1980. Ceremony marking the end of the International Campaign for the Safeguarding of the Monuments of Nubia and the inauguration of the new site of the Philae temples reassembled on the nearby island of Agilkia.

A message to world youth

YOUNG people form a considerable and ever-increasing proportion of the world population. Inevitably they are concerned by all the problems arising from the present and future of humanity. None of the major questions of our time can be answered without the active involvement of young people.

Young people constitute 45 per cent of the world's population today and their numbers are continuing to grow. There were 730 million fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in 1975, and this figure should rise to 1,180 million by the year 2000—an increase of 60 per cent in twenty-five years.

If the role and impact of youth in national life vary from country to country, young people in many cases share a number of common preoccupations, fears and aspirations.

In many countries young people are particularly exposed to such problems as unemployment, hunger, delinquency, drugs, violence and racism, all of which are rooted in the tensions and uncertainties of today. But young people are also endowed with imagination, enthusiasm, and courage, qualities which may contribute to the changes which prove necessary; they stand at the meeting-point of continuity and change, tradition and progress.

The different groups of young people must have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of the economic, political, educational, cultural, and scientific life of the society in which they live, and to exercise freely in it the qualities which are theirs.

Unesco, which places action in favour of young people at the heart of its programmes, notably those concerned with education and training, is making its contribution to the achievement of this goal.

Unesco's efforts in this field are focused on three main objectives: stimulating research on young people in the different world regions; promoting the diffusion and exchange of information about and for young people; contributing to the formulation of policies and the application of programmes which will encourage the participation of young people in all aspects of the life of societies. ■

January 1985

A.-M. Bow

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow
Director-General of Unesco

Unesco: 40 years of action

by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

FORTY years ago, just a few weeks after the end of the Second World War, the Conference of the Allied Ministers of Education, which was to adopt the Constitution of Unesco, met in London.

To the terrible toll of six years of desolation and death that the world had just experienced was now added the threat foreshadowed by the explosion of the two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over the ruins of the annihilated cities, in the grief present everywhere, and confronted by the prospect of new forms of mass destruction, the international community became aware of the collective responsibilities which it would have to shoulder in order to preserve the future of the species.

Within the framework of the United Nations system that had just been set up, Unesco was given the task of advancing international peace and the common welfare of mankind through "the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world"—in other words, international intellectual co-operation.

In order to help to bring about "a condition in which the incentives to war are neutralized by social, spiritual and economic advances...", Unesco engaged in vigorous action in many different fields—the development of great standard-setting concepts; the circulation of knowledge, ideas and information; and operational activities to help the poorest countries. This activity aimed among other things to foster mutual knowledge and understanding among nations; to facilitate by means of appropriate methods of co-operation the access of all peoples to what each of them had already produced and to what each was producing in all fields of thought, artistic creativity and scientific and technical discovery and experiment; to bring about conditions under which everyone should have equal opportunities of access to education; and to allow the free exchange of ideas and information.

Over the years, Unesco has constantly broadened the basis of its representativity. Its action in this area has been constantly gaining in scope and complexity—especially with the admission of nearly 100 countries which, during the late 1950s and the 1960s, acceded to national sovereignty.

These countries brought their historical and cultural experience into the Organization; they expressed their particular sensitivities; they evoked their own concerns. The developing countries, in particular, raised questions related to the difficult, sometimes even alarming, circumstances that they were facing, to the manifold challenges confronting them and to the various paths that they were exploring in order to ensure a development that was authentic.

Unesco thus began to think about the reality of an increasingly interdependent world in which societies are in contact with each other to a greater or lesser degree and are part of a world system of reciprocal exchanges and relations.

On account of this development, Unesco, which had at first focused its activities on certain parts of the world, was gradually led to extend them worldwide.

During the past forty years, Unesco has thus made possible the development of a host of communication, exchange, co-operation and action networks, reaching into the most diverse fields, leading to immense progress in knowledge and know-how, and leading the peoples and the cultures of the whole world to draw closer together.

Throughout these decades, Unesco has striven to draw on three sources of energy—the political reality of the governments of Member States; the creative urge of spiritual, intellectual and artistic communities; and the competence and devotion of an international Secretariat that is called on to encourage and co-ordinate the ideas, initiatives and projects of all.

This is why Unesco is duty-bound to increase still further the integration of the intellectual communities of the world in the living tissue of its activities, so that constantly renewed blood can flow through this tissue and so that the factors of amalgamation and catalytic forces that give full strength to the alchemy of intellectual co-operation can be brought into every one of its great debates.

I cannot conclude without adding that the world is today encountering a number of grave difficulties that are reflected in the functioning of the United Nations system and, consequently, in Unesco.

These difficulties no doubt provide a fresh opportunity for re-examining some of the workings of the system with a view to their democratization; they have, however, made some people question the aims and purposes of the system and even the very reason for its existence.

This is not the first time that the United Nations has faced such challenges. It is therefore important that the heads of the agencies of the system should shoulder their responsibilities in full measure.

It is no longer for them a case of merely expediting current matters as best they can. Guided by their conscience, in observance of the principles of the United Nations Charter and of the Constitutions of their respective organizations, it is also—and perhaps especially—for them to rise above the contingent and the incidental in order to keep all chances for the future intact.

In this year which marks the fortieth anniversary of Unesco, it is with this conviction that once more I call on intellectuals throughout the world to strengthen, through our Organization, the ties of solidarity based on the forces of freedom, creativity and progress—themselves the very forces of the spirit that Unesco exists to bring together. ■

This text is a slightly shortened version of an address given by the Director-General of Unesco at the Organization's Paris Headquarters during a ceremony held on 12 December 1985 to commemorate Unesco's fortieth anniversary.

Portrait of Amadou Mahtar M'Bow attending the General Conference in 2005.

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