U.N. WATCH

Emergency, Again

In the roster of U.N. acronyms, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) has been a star. But now the American public is confusing the agency with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), from which the U.S. withdrew amid much publicity at the close of 1984. Voluntary donations to the children's fund have decreased, greeting card sales are down, and letters to the agency complain about policies that have nothing to do with its activities. Hugh Downs, chairman of the U.S. Committee for UNICEF, has been asked to explain why he lends his name to a fund that has lost U.S. support. In fact, with the approval of the Reagan administration, Congress increased the U.S. contribution in 1984 from $42.5 million to $52.5 million.

Created in 1946 by the U.N. General Assembly to care for children left destitute after World War II, UNICEF was given semi-autonomous status—rare among U.N. specialized agencies. As the years went by and more of its efforts were concentrated in newly independent nations, the words "international" and "emergency" were dropped from general use, although the acronym remained unchanged. UNICEF reports directly to ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), a principal organ of the U.N., and to the General Assemly. On its board are the representatives of forty-one nations—from small, oil-rich Bahrain to small, impoverished Lesotho, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council.

All contributions are voluntary; there are no subsidies from the U.N., no assessments of U.N. members. Governments contribute three-quarters of the agency's income, and the remainder comes from greeting card sales and public fund-raising. Income reached a peak of $378 million in 1982, falling to $342 the following year. The 1984 budget was approximately $350 million. Operating in more than a hundred countries, with 80 per cent of its personnel in the field, UNICEF is spread thin over "the least-developed countries" and "the most-seriously affected."

Nonetheless, UNICEF is often called upon in an emergency to undertake activities other than those directly related to the care and health of the young. Unique among agencies, UNICEF has earned the trust of countries that do not trust each other—members of the East bloc and the West bloc, industrialized nations and nations of the Third World. The most recent call is to organize aid for Ethiopia. UNICEF has had some seventy field workers assigned to Ethiopia and has recently added sixteen, drawn from among nationals of the country. While the nation's famine has finally caught the world's attention, there is more than a hint of neglect and callousness on the part of the Ethiopian Government (see Harold Marcus's "The Politics of Famine" in this issue). And there are other impediments to relief: a stoppage—perhaps even confiscation—of supplies sent to northern areas, where antigovernment forces are strong; profiteering and bureaucratic obstacles; bad roads and insufficient transport.

Nor is the horror restricted to Ethiopia. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ethiopia, Chad, and Uganda have fled to the Sudan to escape war and starvation. The Sudanese, poor and tolerant, have not closed their borders. UNICEF estimates that the Sudan now shelters a million of these people.

The agency's annual report for 1984 strives for a note of optimism. Much *is* being done, but the report's centerpiece—a map of the "developing world"—illustrates how large an area of the globe must still fight for survival. UNICEF, as well as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Bank, warns that almost all of Central Africa is threatened by famine in various degrees. James P. Grant, executive director of the children's fund, notes that "while the dimensions of the human suffering in Ethiopia had evoked an outburst of public shock and sympathy, and a rush of financial contributions, the real tragedy was that the catastrophe was not new but had been continuing, and deepening, long before it received serious world attention."

How to Use the U.N.

In 1974, attacks by Greek Cypriots on Cyprus's Turkish minority resulted in an invasion of the island by Turkey. The country was split, the economy wrecked, and U.N. peacekeeping forces stepped in to enforce a truce.

In 1984, U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar held separate talks with both sides and finally got them to agree to meet at United Nations headquarters in New York City. A draft agreement is now on the table and bargaining has begun. Concessions will come hard for the Greek Cypriots, who feel they have the benefit of numbers. Turkish Cypriots have already agreed to a plan that calls for a president chosen from among the Greek Cypriot population and a vice-president from among the Turkish ranks. There is no fighting on the island and there will be more meetings.

Pulling Out

The United States is about to leave the World Court (formally, the International Court of Justice), which has ruled against the U.S. in the case of the mining of Nicaragua's harbors. The Reagan administration had first claimed that the Court lacked jurisdiction in the matter. Since there really is no agreed-upon body of international law, nations must agree to bring cases to the Court. Observing the Court's decision is likewise voluntary.

When the Court decided against the U.S., the State Department charged politicalism "against the interests of the Western democracies." Similar charges were employed when leaving the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Labor Organization, to which the U.S. has returned, as well as during the recent withdrawal from UNESCO.

The World Court is, in fact, a respected organization among jurists. At any one time fifteen countries send their finest legal minds to the Court at the Hague (though President Nixon once named a political crony with no legal stature to the post, only to be forced to withdraw the nomination under pressure from the American Bar Association). The present court has ruled on border disputes, laws of the sea, air rights, and the seabed.

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