

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

In 1906 some tentative contacts were made between executives of several international institutions with their headquarters in Brussels concerning the future role of private international associations. This followed the Congrès d'Expansion Mondiale in Mons (1905) and was just prior to The Hague conference on peaceful relations between nations (1907). As a result in 1907 the representatives of 20 international associations with their headquarters in Belgium created the Office Central des Associations Internationales. The objectives of the organization were to establish permanent relations between international associations and institutions and to study the organization, coordination of efforts, unification of methods where feasible, and creation of cooperation between institutions (principally in the exchange of information, documentation, and external relations). The Office published an *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale* (1908-9) which gave detailed information on all international organizations at that time.

Creation of UIA

The creation of the Office lead in 1910 to the 1st World Congress of International Associations, in which 132 international bodies took part. The congress gave official birth to the Union of International Associations. The principal promoters of the congress and the UIA were Henri La Fontaine (Nobel Peace Prize 1912) and Paul Otlet who had already founded the International Office of Bibliography in 1892. They were also responsible for the elaboration of the Universal Decimal Classification system.

The aims of the UIA then became to: group international associations, establish permanent relations between them, encourage them to cooperate, unify their working methods, coordinate their organization and programme; study systematically the international mechanism, and formulate a practical conception of an organized world based on the rule of law, scientific and technical progress and the free representation of the common interests of humanity; promote international associations as the highest representation of the various categories of world interests federated internationally; encourage them to confederate freely in order to achieve the objective of organization of the international mechanism in all its parts; create an international centre for the UIA and affiliated associations and to facilitate the management of the major world interests; contribute to the development of relations between nations, increase human solidarity and ensure peace between the nations.

The UIA published the *Actes du Congrès Mondial*, the *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale* (1910-11). A monthly magazine was also produced. In 1914 65 international bodies had their headquarters in the International centre which was provided free of charge by the Belgian Government. The founders successively created an international museum dedicated to show the collective aims of mankind throughout the ages, an international library principally concerned with documentation on international organizations, and a universal bibliography (15 million cards).

The period from 1910 to 1914 was an ambitious beginning with many grand schemes which can now be seen to be premature for the period. The UIA had the support of international organizations and the collaboration of the leading internationalists of the time. Financial aid was received from Andrew Carnegie, the Interparliamentary Union, and other groups.

A 2nd World Congress of International Associations was held in Brussels in 1913 at which 175 associations and 22 governments were represented. A third session was held in San Francisco in 1915.

Dormant Period

The period from 1915 until 1948 was one of great difficulty for the UIA. The 1914-18 war completely cut the initial momentum. After the war all attention was diverted to the problem of creating and using the League of Nations which completely took over some of the tasks of the UIA. The list of international organizations was prepared by the League of Nations Secretariat with the aid of the UIA founders and published in 1919. A Repertoire des Organisations Internationales was published in 1921, 1923, 1926, 1929, 1936 and 1938 by the League of Nations. The monthly magazine was published from 1912 until 1921. A volume published in cooperation with the League of Nations in 1923 listed the resolutions adopted during 150 international meetings up to that time.

The UIA founders had to face increasing financial difficulties. Due to political problems, the League was unable to show much further interest in private international organizations. The UIA was forced into a state of vegetation during which the only activity was maintenance of the basic documentation and the addition of new information. A few controversial papers were published irregularly up until 1934. These included summary reports of further meetings in the series of World Congresses of International Associations, of which the fourth was held in Geneva in 1924.

At the end of the 1939-45 war, and after the death of Henri La Fontaine, a sum of Bfrs 500,000 was left as a legacy for the reactivation of the UIA. The work was carried out by Dr G.P. Speeckaert who became the Secretary-General. He separated the currently valuable documents on international organizations from the incredible collection of other material including the universal bibliography. This is still kept in Brussels under a separate legacy from the founders by another organization (Les Amis du Palais Mondial). The first reissue of the monthly magazine was in January 1949. It has been produced regularly since that date.

The Yearbook of International Organizations was published in 1949 using the League of Nations material by a Swiss publisher. The UIA took over the copyright to this publication and produced the 3rd edition of the Annuaire de la Vie Internationale under this title in 1950. The following editions have been printed since that time: 4th (1951-52) in English in 1951; 5th (1954-55) in English in 1954; 6th (1956-57) in French in 1957; 7th (1958-59) in English in 1958; 8th (1960-61) in French in 1961; 9th (1962-63) in English in 1962; the 10th and 11th editions have both been in English; the 12th edition published in 1968 is also in English.

Post-war Reactivation

The UIA constitution had to be adapted to the post-war situation after the reactivation in 1948. International organizations no longer wished to group together into highly structured organizations. This was not seen as the most practical means of facilitating international cooperation. In 1951 the constitution was therefore modified so that the UIA became an institute with individuals as the main category of members. A maximum of 100 such members was set. International organizations were invited to become 'corresponding organizations'. These are not members and have no voting rights. They merely indicate their general support for the UIA activity. A category of associate members was also established. The objectives were modified so that the UIA could confine its activities to that of a study, documentation and research centre.

The title became Union of International Associations - Service Centre for International Non-Governmental Organizations. The constitution was modified again in 1955. The planned activities as a service centre had not been very successful so the 'Service Centre' for International Non-Governmental Organizations' was dropped from the title.

The activities of the UIA have been approved by the UN Ecosoc which gave its endorsement to the Yearbook and the criteria for the selection of organizations.

From 1950 onwards the UIA received regular grants from the Belgian and other governments. In 1950 the Belgian Government grant represented 65% of the income but by 1960 this had decreased to 7%. The organization went through a financial crisis in the period 1956-57 due to excessive debts. A grant was obtained from the Ford Foundation for \$ 25,000 spread over a three year period which enabled the UIA to continue without difficulty. Since that time the UIA income has increased to 90% sale of publications and 10% grants and other sources.

The UIA acts as secretariat for the Federation of International Associations (FAIB) established in Belgium which it helped to found. It also helped to found the "Amis Belges de la Cooperation Internationale" (ABCI) which acts as a channel for funds for the promotion of international cooperation in Belgium.

In 1965 the constitution was again modified to allow a new category of Supporting Members. These include commercial and other organizations which wish to support the UIA and benefit from its documentary services.