

Ten years of UN work for Economic progress

TEN years ago, human society was nursing grievous wounds afflicted by the most devastating war in history. It had vivid memories, too, of the great depression preceding that war. Factories and farms were badly scarred by bombs and battle. Millions were hungry. Disease lurked in the shadow of their hunger. Many nations were short of fuel and shelter. But war had destroyed neither mankind's faith in peace nor its vision of a better life for all.

The United Nations will be ten years old tomorrow (Oct. 24). This anniversary is a time for recalling that the United Nations was created in response to an age-old longing, which is man's aspiration for a world of peace and progress. The longing has not been realized, but something positive is being done in some, though not all, spheres, to bring the goal nearer. In this article is reviewed the work of the United Nations during the past 10 years "in helping to lay the economic foundations of peace."

The Second World War had not only shown that countries will unite against armed aggression. It had also strengthened the view that the edifice of world peace must rest on the solid foundation of a sound and growing world economy, that progress and better standards of life are indivisible.

The United Nations, working through its General Assembly, its Economic and Social Council, its regional economic commissions for Europe, for Asia and the Far East, and Latin America, its other subsidiary organs, and also through problems on general and specific economic progress, through collecting essential information, much of it never readily available before—with these instruments, the United Nations has helped, considerably, to create a favourable climate of world opinion for nations to work together in promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, to cite the United Nations Charter. The specialized agencies related to the United Nations have also worked for similar ends.

The great majority of the hungry, the sick, the poor and the illiterate in this world are today more aware than ever before that the means for a richer and fuller life are not to be sought for themselves. Their governments have therefore embarked on the progressive development of their countries, realizing that the permanent economic well-being of the world is indivisible, the more prosperous one country becomes, the more conscious that much of their prosperity depends on development of the less developed economies.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies now provide a most extensive apparatus for nations to work co-operatively in tackling international economic problems.

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form of fellowships and scholarships—to go abroad to study development techniques for which adequate training facilities do not exist in the home countries. More than 100 countries have received such aid.

To help pay for the skill-sharing activities of the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration and seven specialized agencies, 75 Governments have voluntarily contributed an equivalent of nearly 106,500,000 over the period from 1950 to May 1955. This is in addition to the moneys for the technical aid operations of these bodies which are derived from the regular, annual membership dues of their member nations. The voluntary contributions have come from the less developed, as well as the more developed countries, though the latter are to be expected, to have contributed in the largest individual amounts.

Awareness of their capital needs has grown in many countries. That is clear from the trend of many studies and discussions at meetings of various United Nations organs and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development—a specialized agency which is increasing the number of loans to help develop less developed economies.

Today, for instance, world opinion is more receptive than even recently as mid-1954, to the setting up of an International Finance Corporation to encourage private enterprise, particularly in underdeveloped countries. Proposals for such an institution have been the subject of many studies and discussions in both the United Nations and the International Bank. In 1955, the latter drafted and circulated a plan for the Corporation to Governments, as requested by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1954.

The subject of frequent discussion and study in the United Nations. These have led to a number of recommendations aimed at creating a more favourable climate for private investment abroad, some addressed to countries seeking to attract private capital, some to those able to provide it.

The establishment of the International Finance Corporation, it is also hoped, will act as a sort of economic catalyst to help give potential investors more confidence and more opportunities for private investment abroad.

In addition, a good deal of technical assistance has been given to various underdeveloped countries on how to mobilize, increase and channel domestic capital for development ventures. This aid includes expert advice of taxation methods.

Awareness of the need for speeding the advancement of underdeveloped economies has increased with the now widespread recognition and concern over the widening economic gap between the more advanced developed lands. That concern has found repeated expression in the reviews on the current world economic situation which are an annual feature of the Economic and Social Council's work.

In making these reviews, the Council has come to function as an economic watchdog for the world, its debates on the world economy, and the yearly global and regional surveys prepared by the United Nations Secretariat serve the function of alerting Governments both to changes and forces which may well hamper mankind's endeavours for a more peaceful world and to suggestions for aiding these endeavours.



LEFT: A watercolour sketch. RIGHT: A Bengal Famine sketch.

Zainul Abedin: a victim of conflicting ideas

By Syed Waliullah

ONE cursory glance at the painting of Zainul Abedin, now being displayed at his exhibition in Karachi, immediately reminds one of the fact that the artist is definitely in his elements when he is sketching, whether in black and white or in colour. For his latest works are again sketches.

One sketch takes much less time than an oil painting on the same size of canvas. But sketches have a tendency to flow rapidly. This is perhaps truer in the case of Zainul Abedin whose imagination and artistic talent seem to find the most adequate form of self-expression in this particular mode of art. Therefore he abhors oil painting, shuns the idea of dilating on one solitary emotional experience, and whenever he takes up a painting of a grandiose size, he seeks escape from boredom of detail in wide spacing. He is unhappy, and perhaps somewhat lost, when he is pinned down to a big canvas.

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Then his imagination, bound by a single conception, ages, resulting in somewhat unscrupulous use of colour and in the curbing of his usually remarkable sense of freedom which is perhaps his strongest point as an artist.

There is, however, nothing wrong in this. With modern times we have grown to accept specialisation as strength rather than weakness by discarding worshipping of all-rounders. The days of the general practitioner are certainly over. It is, therefore, quite logical and rational to isolate for the sake of appreciation the particular field, line or style in which one shows proficiency.

At his best
Main causes

For the same reason I have come to believe and appreciate that Zainul Abedin is at his best when the mode of his painting allowed to run freely with his imagination. In return, this imagination is the liveliest when the form he adopts to express himself is the lightest, possible one. In no other mode than that of the swift, bald and bare lines, therefore, would it have been possible for him to speak with such depth of feeling and poignancy as he did about the famine that overtook Bengal twelve years ago. Perhaps he has not done so often, but his fame so suddenly, for years we have forced the artist to exhibit the same sketches over and over again. Even in the exhibition being held in Karachi now some of them are displayed.

This realisation may, I am afraid, prejudice some against these sketches, though it cannot be denied that they possess most of the qualities that characterise his best sketches. The hill people in his sketches sit near homes built on bamboo stilts, placidly smoking; their pretty women, wearing colourful dresses, weave; they and their hills and swift flowing rivers and boats are no doubt faithfully depicted, revealing to us for the first time a little earthy hidden charm. It is not the wonder whether this task of revelation should not have been left to an ethnologist equipped with a camera and colour film.

Zainul Abedin is undoubtedly a powerful artist but his recent sketches unfortunately exemplify one to wonder whether he is not somewhat lost as to what road he should take as an artist. As I have stressed elsewhere, I believe we are partly to blame for the artist's failures and lapses in the past few years. In these years we have forced him on his artistic experiments and on gathering experience, being constantly conscious of us, we have forced him to do things which are not his. He should have been allowed greater amount of privacy which is essential for his work. I feel he is like a tiger who has lost all his prowess and strength in the face of mercenaries, full-blast drum-beating.

In the case of our artist the problem is made more complicated by the fact that it is not the constant public speaking, but his spotlight personality alone that is hindering his work. There is the problem of the strong force of traditionalism as expressed by the pronounced public appreciation and support to it, coming into clash with the desire on the part of talented artists to break new grounds which, if attempted, is bound to be followed by a period of uncerainty as to the public reaction.

However, strong an artist may be in his convictions, this conflict is bound to weaken him so much that he is finally left wavering colourless and pointlessly, confused to the very core. This confusion is made more critical by the nature of the public opinion favouring production of traditionalism which is unenlightened. I say unenlightened because an analysis of our attitudes in art quickly shows that we do not know what we seek in art. We accept traditionalism in art, though nearly important to our country. It is, from the international art point of view, a much exploited mode of artistic expression. Our appreciation of this style is confined to the already accepted belief, changed since our attitude in art quickly shows that we do not know what we seek in art. It is, from the international art point of view, a much exploited mode of artistic expression. Our appreciation of this style is confined to the already accepted belief, changed since our attitude in art quickly shows that we do not know what we seek in art. It is, from the international art point of view, a much exploited mode of artistic expression. Our appreciation of this style is confined to the already accepted belief, changed since our attitude in art quickly shows that we do not know what we seek in art.

NEW ISSUE OF UNICEF GREETING CARDS

A series of colourful greeting cards for the holiday season designed by two internationally known artists are now on sale for the benefit of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The series of five designs, the noted French illustrator Edy Lorand has depicted the excitement with which children go "Holiday Bound" to the World Around. The Uruguayan-born woodcut artist Antonio Frasconi has created a symbolic United Nations card.

For the series of five cards, Edy Lorand who lives in French Morocco has projected his imagination from the North African Desert to the Arctic Circle, the Orient and the Americas. He depicts the holiday joy of children with typical schoolroom scenes set during the last classroom hour and festive illustrations of youngsters already enjoying holiday fun.

In the Arctic Circle design, midday moonlight reveals reindeer, a comely sled and festive two gaily capped Lapp children as they dash over the snow toward home to their Christmas gollys.

The sun-filled Orient card depicts three beautifully gowned Japanese girls at a favourite holiday pastime, the conversation of a cup of tea.

The scene of another card is the North African desert, before the dawn of the Muslim Eid-ul-Fitr

holy day. It shows petal-crowned Algerian boys learning a lesson on the Sahara sands.

On the first of two scenes of the Americas, a teacher turns storyteller during the last hour of school. In the second joyful Guatemalan youngsters dance to the music of pipe and drum to mark the end of school and the beginning of the holidays.

The United Nations card by Frasconi depicts the unity of all countries rather than a scene from a single one. The artist has surrounded a polar view of the world with a colourful holiday wreath of UN member flags, symbolically uniting all people within the United Nations.

UNICEF greeting cards sell at Rs. 5/8 for a box of two each of the five "Holiday Bound—the World Around" series, of ten of the United Nations card. With the UN cards are inserts which give a key to the flags. Inside the cards red and green inscriptions express Season's Greetings in the mother tongue of each of the 51 nations. The cards are also available without greetings, for use as notepaper or holiday gifts.

They may be ordered by cheque or money order from UNICEF COUNTRY OFFICE, CENTRAL SECRETARIAT, KARACHI, TELEPHONE NO: 5712.

Mathematics of brain

Still a mystery to scientists

By Earl Ubell

Nature is probably a fancier mathematician than the most sophisticated number jugglers, according to Dr John von Neumann, mathematician-extraordinary.

Dr von Neumann, the newest of Atomic Energy Commissioners, told the American Psychiatric Association meeting here that brain cells, for example, operate on a mathematical principle that has no far deeper explanation by ordinary mathematical techniques.

Thus the man who supervised the mathematical research on the hydrogen bomb, said that to new mathematics difficulties facing any scientist to describe brain operations in exact mathematical terms. As of now, he said, it can't be done.

"We just don't know enough about nerve cells to do it yet," Dr von Neumann said. "We have to make a minute examination of that biological system and discover its mathematics by experiment."

In effect, he called for more biological exploration of the brain. This view is in a greater understanding of the human brain, Dr von Neumann said, but to new mathematics and new logical systems that mathematicians would probably not invent by themselves. Operating as it does on electrical and chemical technique, the nervous system may use a mathematical logic never dreamed of in any man's philosophy.

The problem

Here's the problem as outlined by Dr von Neumann who, having supervised the design of the atomic bomb, recently bent his talents to explain the operation of the human brain.

First, electronic brains appear to be not at all similar to human brains, as has been suggested. The electrical devices are simpler, act a million times faster and have only a millionth the number of active parts of a human brain.

The human organ handles information coming to it from the eyes, ears and sense organs in a manner that is completely inexplicable in terms of computing machine elements.

In the brain the active element is the nerve cell, which connects by a long and short nerve fibres to near and distant nerves and sources of information. The cell is equipped with an electro-chemical device, whose action is still largely a mystery. No one knows how a nerve remembers anything.

When light strikes the eye, for example, it activates tiny nerve endings at the bank of the eyeball. This stimulation is carried some way by nerve impulses to higher brain centres to be analyzed and interpreted, and it appears to take only two or three nanoseconds in a chain to do this.

Attempts to make electric machines "see" letters and numbers have resulted in devices that can "recognize" the letter A, but which takes some hundreds of electrical operations, where the brain takes only two or three.

The machines break down all the mathematical problems into four simple operations of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. From these, all the other complex mathematical flows.

"Nature," Dr von Neumann said, "may not mathematise itself so easily."

The basic mathematical operations, he added, may not be the only four, but something else, more sophisticated, more elegant, and it may be that the human mathematicians who have built the world in the past 200 years, may be simply an accident.

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Dr von Neumann, the newest of Atomic Energy Commissioners, told the American Psychiatric Association meeting here that brain cells, for example, operate on a mathematical principle that has so far defied explanation by ordinary mathematical techniques.

Thus the man who supervised the mathematical research on the hydrogen bomb pointed out the tremendous difficulties facing any scientist to describe brain operations in exact mathematical terms. As of now, he said, it can't be done.

"We just don't know enough about brain nerve cells to do it yet," Dr von Neumann said. "We have to make a minute examination of that biological system and discover its mathematics by experiment."

In effect, he called for more biological exploration of the brain. This will not only lead to greater understanding of the human brain, Dr von Neumann said, but to new mathematics and new logical systems that mathematicians would probably not invent by themselves. Operating as it does on electrical and chemical techniques, the nervous system may use a mathematics and logic never dreamed of in any man's philosophy.

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One sketch takes much less time than an oil painting on the same size of canvas. But sketches have a tendency to flow rapidly. This is perhaps truer in the case of Zainul Abedin whose imagination and artistic talent seem to find the most adequate form of self-expression in this particular mode of art. Therefore he absorbs oil painting, shuns the idea of dilating on one solitary emotional experience, and whenever he takes up a painting of a grandiose size, he seeks escape from boredom of detail in wide spacing. He is unhappy, and perhaps somewhat lost, when he is pinned down to a big canvas.

Then his imagination, bound by a single conception, sags, resulting in somewhat uninspired use of colour and in the curbing of his usually remarkable sense of freedom which is perhaps his strongest point as an artist.

There is, however, nothing wrong in this. With modern times we have grown to accept specialisation as strength rather than weakness by discarding worshipping of all-rounders. The days of the general practitioner are logically over. It is, therefore, quite logical and rational to insist for the sake of appreciation the particular field, line or style in which one shows proficiency.

At his best

For the same reason I have come to believe and appreciate that Zainul Abedin is at his best when the mode of his painting is allowed to run freely with whatever medium he returns. This imagination is the lightest when the form he adopts to express himself is the lightest possible one. In no other mode than that of the swift, bald and bare lines, therefore, would it have been possible for him to speak with such depth of feeling and poignancy as he did about the famine that overtook Bengal twelve years ago. Perhaps we have discussed much too often these famine sketches which won him fame so suddenly. For years we have forced the artist to exhibit the same sketches over and over again. Even in the exhibition held in Karachi now some of them are displayed.

The years following the production of the famine sketches have, however, been comparatively barren. However, recently the artist gave us a slip and went to the Chittagong Hill Tracts where he quickly finished scores of water-colour sketches. He lived among the simple honest, but colourful hill people (perhaps, aesthetically speaking, the only colourful people in the whole of Pakistan), was presented with the free gift of a hill and also bitten by some poisonous insects, the prominent marks of which he still proudly wears as battle-scars.

Hill Tracts

Because the water-colour sketches done at the Chittagong Hill Tracts are his latest production and because they are done in the manner he excels most, one is likely to attract attention to them. Undoubtedly, in these sketches he has physically introduced to art a sector of the country, the hill people. But somehow they seem to arouse geographical rather than artistic interest.

Perhaps a reference to Gauguin will explain the point I have in view. When Gauguin left France to paint the people of the South Sea Islands, he was not attracted to them as a people who were entirely different from his own, but in the eyes of the western world, confused by the first impact of materialistic industrial society, was beginning to hunger for as an escape. But the manner in which Gauguin depicted the islanders suggests a feeling of superiority, a sense of feelings instead of an exotic interest. The genius of the artist showed no ordinary curiosity for the uncommon subject matter. He was not a mere traveller ready to swoop down upon anything that was bizarre, eager to tell what he saw, perhaps exaggerating his experiences in a feat of boastfulness. He went there with the mission to be an artist first and then an explorer of a society which he felt did not give him enough freedom to express himself. He remained a creative artist, deeply involved in the environment he believed was best suited for his artistic expression.

Zainul Abedin's Hill Tracts sketches, however, seem to bring to one mind the question: For what purpose did he go to the Chittagong Hill Tracts? Was it for the sake of new subject material which he considered to be novel enough to excite his imagination? Was he motivated by a geographical rather than artistic interest? Or did he find the material there emotionally and ideologically closer to him?

Things seem to be certain. It is that the artist did not go there to seek such environment as would be more congenial to the expression of his artistic genius. Then it is probable that what took him there was merely the desire to depict a little hill community which is removed from the rest of Pakistan from the religious, social and ethnological points of view. Obviously he was in search of

new painting material and not a new mode more adequate for expressing his ideas.

This realisation may, I am afraid, prejudice some against these sketches, though it cannot be denied that they possess most of the qualities that characterise his best sketches. The hill people in his sketches sit near homes built on bamboo stilts, placidly smoking; their pretty women, wearing colourful dresses, vevas; they and their hills and swift flowing rivers and boats are no doubt faithfully depicted, revealing to us for the first time a little artworld hidden charming world. But one wonders whether this task of revelation should not have been left to an ethnologist equipped with a camera and colour films.

Main causes

Zainul Abedin is undoubtedly a powerful artist but his recent sketches unfortunately compel one to wonder whether he is not somewhat lost as to what road he should take as an artist. As I have stressed elsewhere, I believe we are partly to blame for the artist's failures and lapses in the past years. In these years we have looked him on his artistic experiments and on gathering experience, being constantly conscious of us grazing at him. He should have been allowed greater amount of privacy which is essential for his work. I feel he is like a tiger who has lost all his prowess and strength in the face of merciless, full-blown drum-beating.

In the case of our artist the problem is made more complicated by the fact that it is not the constant public gaze on his spotlighted personality alone that is hindering his work. There is the problem of the strong force of traditionalism as expressed by the pronounced public appreciation and support to it, coming into clash with the desire on the part of talented artists to break new grounds which, if attempted, is bound to be followed by a period of vexed uncertainty as to the public reaction. However, strong an artist may be in his convictions, this conflict is bound to weaken him so much that he is finally left vacillating colourlessly and pointlessly, confused to the very core.

This confusion is made more critical by the nature of the public opinion favouring repetition of traditionalism which is unenlightened because an analysis of our attitude to art quickly shows that we do not know what we seek in art. We accept traditionalism in art which, though newly imported into our country, is from the international art point of view, a much exploited mode of artistic expression. Our appreciation of this style is confined to the already accepted belief, changed since the discarding of the one-dimensional, perspectiveless oriental style of painting, that anything which is made to attractively resemble something, is

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OF UNICEF G CARDS



holy day. It shows pigtail-crowned Algerian boys learning a lesson on the Sahara sands.

On the first of two scenes of the Americas, a teacher turns storyteller during the last hour of school. In the second joyful Guatemalan youngsters dance to the music of pipe and drum to mark the end of school and the beginning of the holidays.

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ZAINUL ABEDIN

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good art. We are, therefore, not surprised to find in the drawing room of a Pakistani the colourful, nicely-framed picture of the Britons in red jackets, fox-hunting.

There is no doubt that the water-colour sketches of Zainul Abedin would be accepted by the public. But because of our unquestioning approach to them, they will fail to serve the purpose of art; which is to create vital, aesthetic spirits that are capable of changing the way of life of culturally dormant people. We cannot expect to create life with an imported carcass.

All that I have seen of Zainul Abedin's paintings of recent years do strongly suggest that he is a victim of this conflict of the public dictate, on the one hand and the desire to be what he wants to be, on the other. I feel more convinced about it when I see the few works he produced some months ago which may be broadly termed as unacademic. With faintly coloured cubistic graphs forming the background, these few experimental works portray human figures in a style which definitely shows an originality that is worth pursuing. "The woman and the Cat", "The Snake Charmers" are prominent among these new efforts which were first exhibited at the exhibition held by the Pakistan Art Council in Dacca last year.

While experimenting with these he also conceived the idea of painting, using, exclusively locally-produced colours, unconventional designs on cane mats. (He has already given a design to the cane mat weavers for mass reproduction). To my mind, here is something extremely original which combines a break from the academic traditionalism with something that has deep roots in the soil. Yet we find the artist, instead of directing all his energy and imagination towards a fuller discovery of the original style revealed in "The Women and the Cat" and the cane-mat design idea, run to the Chittagong Hill Tracts to emerge later with heaps of watercolour sketches. No wonder that these sketches raise questions as to the motive behind their production instead of normal critical questions pertaining to their art value.

We must realise that art and culture blossom not when tradition is repeated endlessly, unchanged and unaltered, but when it is changed through a process of receptive synthesis into something that is dynamically progressive. The artistic potentialities of our people will remain latent as long as they are fed with such specimens as for instance, the water-colour sketches of a Spanish city lane or a French garden corner which Zainul Abedin produced during his visit to Europe. Nor the well-drawn water-colour sketches of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are going to catch the imagination of the people. Their failure lies in the fact that they are, on the one hand, a repetition of a much-used, much-stretched style, and, on the other, they are without any roots in the indigenous traditions of the country. In other words, they are incapable of producing new artistic spirits that would, so to speak, set the imagination of the people ablaze.

It is a really unfortunate that our country has no dissecting, progressive cultural section of any size. Had there been one, the burden on the shoulders of the few lone talented artists like Zainul Abedin would have

been considerably lightened. At the moment such burdens are bound to weigh heavily on them inasmuch as their battle is a lonely one and they alone have the responsibility of making a decision as to the course to be chosen and followed. Perhaps they are like the captain of a ship in moments of crisis with no help and no equipment but entrusted with the task of taking a shipload of people to a land better than the one they have left behind.

But perhaps we can justifiably hope that Zainul Abedin will ultimately be able to overcome the material obstacles and fulfil his task. He has talents. His knowledge of his own people, their emotions, dreams and aspirations is intimate. He also knows their shortcomings; knows where the void is the widest and where the lack of sensibilities about form and colour and the way of life stands gaping, unconscious and unaware of its ugliness. He has also vision and the strength to translate it into reality.

OUR MAGIC CARPET

By Joe Jones

How fast are eyes?

The fastest action in seeing is the speed of light that travels to your eyes at 186,000 miles per second. The slowest action in seeing is the adjustment of your eyes to the dark, sometimes taking up to half an hour.

In their new book, "Our Wonderful Eyes", researchers Jeanne Bendick and John Perry report that you can see a bright flash of light that lasts for less than one-thousandth of a second—but its image will be seen for much longer.

Aircraft observers are taught to identify planes by looking at their pictures as they are flashed on a screen. A picture can be recognized if it is flashed for one-fiftieth of a second.

Unless we are concentrating on some specific point, our eyes are seldom motionless for more than one-tenth of a second. Concentrating, we may keep them almost motionless for one or two seconds, but then some involuntary motions occur. We can glance from one point to another in one-fiftieth of a second.

Nerve impulses travel more than 300 feet per second. This is much slower than the speed of light, slower than the speed of sound. But the distance from eye to brain is so short that the time-lag is imperceptible. N N N NNNNN NNNNNNN

The magician boots "The hand is quicker than the eye". No, Sir! The eye is much, much quicker than the hand. And a rapid motion of the magician's hand would be sure to attract your eyes and call attention to what he was doing.