

Staff



OCTOBER 1988

news



THE FUND UNDER SIEGE

Staff members who attended the Annual Meetings in Berlin (West) this year came away with plenty to think about. It must have come as an exciting but uncomfortable change of pace for those who remember other Meetings abroad as dull affairs enlivened by exotic tourism and parties. Berlin was not dull. Nor was it a pleasure trip.

At all Annual Meetings, the interesting action takes place in private and off the public record. What made Berlin different was that the substantive developments—mostly involving tensions or potential touchiness on the part of some major member countries—were well publicized. There was also activity in the streets, in the form of anti-Fund and anti-Bank protests. We were constantly aware that the Fund was being subjected to close and usually hostile scrutiny. The demonstrations and other protest activities directed against the Fund were new experi-

ences for most of the staff, and made it all disquieting and unforgettable.

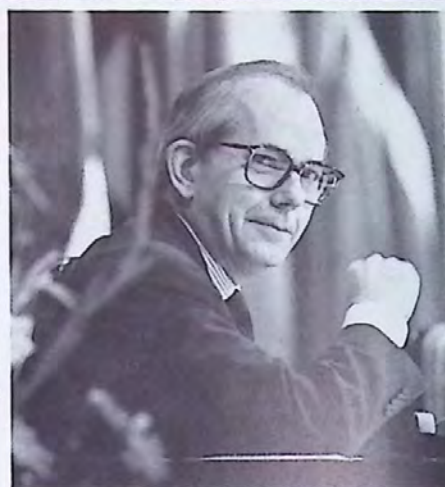
The setting for the Meetings was the International Congress Centre Berlin (ICC). From a distance it looks like a model factory made by a clever child out of Lego, in battleship gray. Close up, you realize that it is enormous; depending on their taste, people found it either monstrous and inhuman or beautifully efficient. Outside it does have an ominous appearance; inside it is cavernous and rather handsome. It is also a marvel of modern conference technology. For the most part everything worked so efficiently that soon no one noticed how smoothly it all came together. Our German hosts had clearly thought everything through, in collaboration with the Joint Secretariat staff. The organization was truly impressive.

New arrivals at the ICC, however, looked bewildered at first. The security checks at the front entrance were

far more strict than in Washington. The long main hall had the atmosphere of a busy railway station, with people milling about trying to find their way. Luckily the computerized registration system worked like a gem.

For new arrivals, the main difficulty after registration was to find their office. These were not in the ICC itself but in an adjacent building, which was joined to it by an enclosed bridge. A map of this huge complex consumed five pages, and people tended to get lost; my first attempt to find my office took 15 minutes. But really it was very simple, once you knew how.

Starting at the security checkpoint, I kept to the right, past the registration desks, then took the escalator to the next level, crossed the bridge, took a left turn down a ramp, then kept going, angling to the right, then right again past a long string of offices, then a left, then a right, then



round a corner, then down one flight, round another corner, then I found an escalator up two flights, then a right, then a left, then straight on. One colleague remarked at the beginning of the week that we'd all be a lot fitter by the end of the Meetings; and afterward another was delighted to have lost three pounds.

Security arrangements in and around the ICC were elaborate and thorough. A few days before the Meetings began, there was an attempted shotgun assassination of Mr. Tietmeyer, the State Secretary at the German Ministry of Finance, by a

left-wing terrorist group called the Red Army Brigade. Then in Hamburg about thirty masked demonstrators with clubs burst into a seminar and attacked the German Executive Director in the Fund, Guenter Grosche. In this atmosphere everyone welcomed the careful precautions that were taken.

The first major demonstration against the Fund, on the Sunday before the plenary sessions, was relatively peaceful. It was described the next day, in one of the two fat special newspapers published almost daily about the Meetings, as a "perfectly German" march of 30,000-50,000 demonstrators—an "orderly stroll of Greens, Reds, Catholics, Gays, floats, funny costumes, and very little tension." But after the march, and after dark, matters got a bit out of hand, and there were violent clashes between the militia and some demonstrators. As the week progressed, we became more used to that kind of thing. Some incident occurred every day—delegates were spat at or jostled, while demonstrators

shouted unintelligible slogans and provoked clashes with the "polizei." There were also more serious incidents, for example, when cars were torched or their windows smashed.

Delegates and staff who stayed at hotels in the city center learned to be careful in the evenings. One colleague described how his bus had to stop several blocks away from his hotel, because of a demonstration. "We were told to split up and walk singly, not in a crowd; not to react if spoken to, and to avoid eye contact with the demonstrators. Afterward I realized that some of my colleagues were walking around all week in a miasma of insecurity."

This was certainly true for some, yet the majority felt safe enough to turn up for the opera (Mozart's *Magic Flute*) or for the Berlin Philharmonic concert under Karajan, on Monday evening. Admittedly the shuttle buses were delayed and took circuitous routes; and both before and after



the performance we could see riot police breaking up demonstrations. Clearly the street activity bothered some staff members a lot, while others became rather blasé, and most of them enjoyed the opera or concert anyway.

There were also other activities organized by opposition groups, and occasionally word about these would filter through to us in the ICC. There was supposedly a "counter Congress" to debate the "crimes" of the "International Murder Foundation." A self-appointed tribunal heard evidence against the Fund, and its supposed crimes against poor people in countries at the receiving end of Fund conditionality. Robert Triffin was selected by the tribunal to defend the Fund. His defense consisted of claiming the Fund was not guilty of the crimes it was accused of, but suggesting that the tribunal indict the Fund for the far more serious

crime of not adopting the Triffin Plan a few decades ago! Afterward, we learned that the self-appointed tribunal had found the Fund guilty, as expected, of violating the human rights charter. There was a proposed punishment, that every Fund staff member should live in a slum in a developing country for a month, but we never heard what sentence the tribunal decided on.

The demonstrations therefore had some ridiculous aspects, and some potentially frightening ones. But other aspects of the anti-Fund activity gave staff members pause for thought. Many who criticized the Fund were not crazy, although we may have thought them seriously misinformed. It was not pleasant to find that a broad coalition of church leaders, trade unionists, environmentalists, and others were honestly convinced that the Fund and the Bank are thoroughly evil. At the very



least, this suggests that we have a lot of explaining to do. In his closing press conference, Michel Camdessus commented that "it has been important for us to perceive how intense is the request, in the youth of this country as well as in the youth of other countries in Europe, for a more broad



share of the fruits of prosperity for the poorest of our world."

The activity in the streets was not the only one unique feature of the Berlin Meetings. The other was the extent to which political tensions between some of the major member countries, and their concerns about the Fund—and in some cases irritation at the Fund's advice—were aired in public.

As the week unfolded, the atmosphere increasingly suggested a kind of family crisis, not unlike a family reunion that starts off with cosy politeness and exchanges of compliments but degenerates after a few minor slights into an unseemly exchange of home truths. By the end of the week, fortunately, as the members of this family dispersed, you had the feeling that they would meet and talk again, either forgetting their

grudges or at least nursing them in private.

It was also notable how the press tried to stir up drama by stimulating resentment. On the World Bank loans to Argentina, which were announced just before the Meetings, for example, the headlines screamed that the Fund was "furious" with the World Bank and the Bank was trying to usurp the Fund's role.

In his opening press conference Mr. Camdessus just smiled and asked, "Do I look furious"? He talked about how natural it was for the Bank to do what it had done, how good for Argentina, and how the Fund would continue to negotiate with Argentina in its normal way. Bank President Barber Conable did his best, also, to downplay the incident. Not that this satisfied all of the Governors; U.K. Chancellor Lawson was highly criti-

cal of the Bank in a BBC interview and Paul J. Keating, the Governor for Australia, made pointed references to it in the plenary sessions.

The other main topics of controversy were mostly related to Japan—its two debt initiatives, its open claim to a larger share of quotas and voting power, and its ideas for the SDR and for reducing the role of the dollar. Although nothing was decided about Fund quotas during the Berlin Meetings, it became a hot topic for discussion and speculation. Even the Fund's *World Economic Outlook* provoked controversy.

By comparison with all these dramatic and important developments, the more frivolous aspects of Annual Meeting life seemed somehow less interesting. Those staff members who were able to get out of the ICC and look at Berlin found much that

was fascinating in this cosmopolitan and lively city.

Our German hosts were very generous in providing touristic diversions for spouses, and there were various receptions; in particular a fabulous reception given on several floors of the ICC itself, with gastronomic specialties from every region of Germany, stalls with many different kinds of German beer, and waitresses bearing trays with goblets of red and white wine. There was a brass band going oompah-oompah here, and an accordion playing there, and later in the evening some impromptu dancing started, while in another corner people enjoyed a sing-along. That was a splendid party, and a welcome respite from everything that was tense and unpleasant.

In conclusion, it was not all deadly serious in Berlin, but on balance most staff members worked very hard indeed, some of them for extraordinarily long hours. They came away exhausted, but many felt that they had been close to witnessing history in the making there, as long-standing power structures showed signs of shifting.

This feeling cannot be ascribed solely to the happenings at the Meetings themselves or the surrounding events. In part it must have been due to the location, with its constant reminders of one or the other aspect of the ugly history of our century. Most staff members were able to get a glimpse of the Wall, a grim and foreboding presence, and next to it the Reichstag, with its ghosts from the 1930s, and across from it the Brandenburg Gate. We were reminded that the Thursday of the Meetings was also the fiftieth anniversary of the Munich Pact.

History kept intruding on the present, and contributed to the general mood of seriousness. I was reminded of Trotsky's remark that anyone who wanted a quiet life had made a mistake in being born in the twentieth century.

Alexander Mountford



THE FUND AND THE UNITED NATIONS: THE CHANGING FUNCTION OF LIAISON

An Interview with Rattan Bhatia, Director of the IMF Office at the UN and Special Representative to the UN

In November of last year, after 25 years in the Fund—most of it in operations and with the African Department—Rattan Bhatia accepted a position with the External Relations Department as the Fund's Representative to the United Nations. After nearly a year on the job he reflects here on the post's responsibilities and potential, as well as on some of the changes—subtle but real—that have taken place in the relationship between the Fund and the United Nations.

Is there such a thing as a typical day in New York?

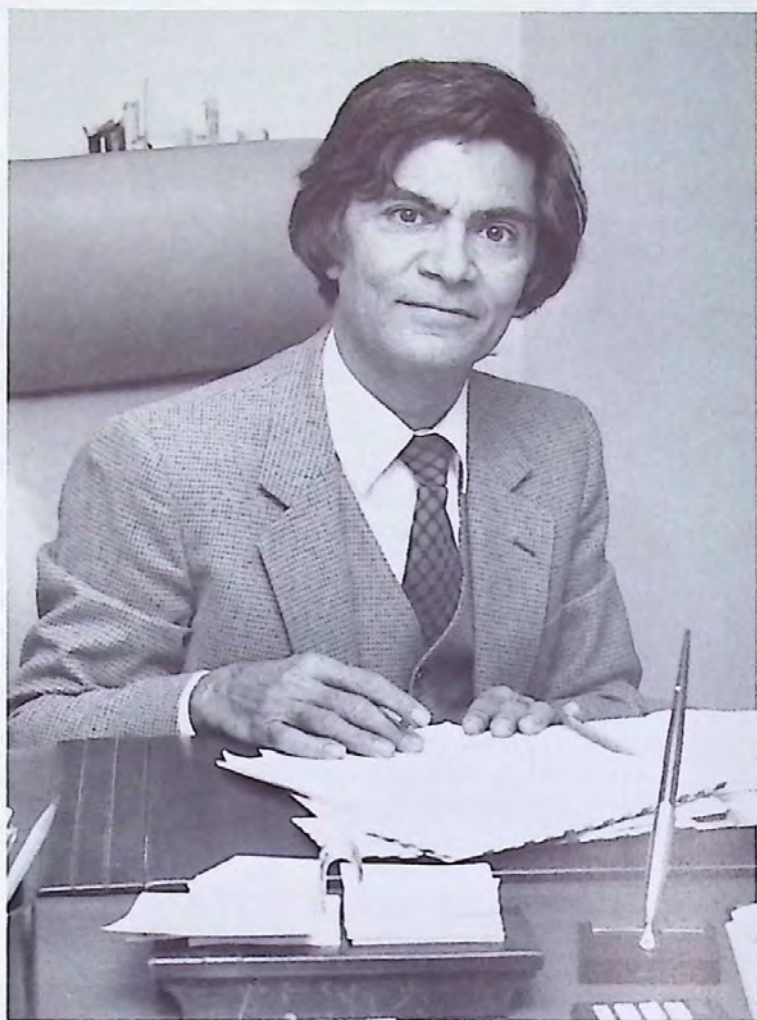
A typical day will depend upon the season there. The General Assembly usually begins on the second Tuesday of every September and runs until Christmas or so. You may have special sessions, too, such as the one on disarmament.

On an average day during the General Assembly you run from one place to another, because there is not just the General Assembly in session but also five committees dealing with economic, political, social, administrative, and other issues. To make things worse, you do not know ahead of time what will be discussed that day. The day's events are only announced that morning, when the daily journal is published.

At that point you have to pick and choose which meetings you'll attend, run around for documents, and decide at what point you'll enter and leave these meetings. Normally at the interagency level, we divide our work and try to keep each other informed of what is happening at the various meetings.

If you want something to be done, ultimately you move into the Delegates' Lounge where most of the informal discussions take place. Since resolutions are drafted in the committees, you must try to work out points with important members of those committees. You try to keep those members, particularly the chairman, informed.

Last year, for example, when the resolution on debt was being worked out, several issues arose. Everyone had a different interpretation of whether net flows to Africa actually declined or not. You would meet with delegates behind the scenes and explain what actually happened with the net flows. Hopefully, they would take this into account and show you the draft resolution that was being brought out. You would then get in touch with



people to see in what way you could help in the formation of the thinking in these committees.

The typical day at the UN, of course, does not end at 5:30 p.m.; it continues beyond that, well into late evening. During the various social functions, such as dinners, the whole day's developments will be discussed. This is where you really pick up information and float suggestions, because this is where all the key people are. Social contacts, particularly in the evenings, are very, very important. Since quite a few dinners are given in people's homes, rather than in restaurants, you sit down and discuss things in a more intimate way.

In some ways your job then is similar to a lobbyist's....

Am I a lobbyist? I would say no, but I certainly spend a lot of time trying to find out what's going on. It is not lobbying in the sense of pressing a Fund position here.

What you are trying to do is to give them sufficient information so that their resolutions are based on appropriate information. The only lobbying I have done is on specific Fund-related issues, such as addressing the question of whether the Fund is taking more money out of Africa or giving more money to it.

I would certainly like to see the UN produce a greater number of pragmatic reports. Their report on financial flows to Africa, for example, was a very responsible report. Credit, of course, goes to the chairman, Sir Douglas Wass, and the committee members, but I think that discussions with the Fund—with my colleagues and myself—helped inject a sense of realism and bring a sense of what was achievable. It's not a matter of whether a report is critical of the Fund or not, I just want the report to be something that people will take seriously—a serious report written by reasonable men with serious thoughts.

When the General Assembly is meeting, do you spend more time in New York, or is your two-day-a-week schedule there a fairly steady one?

I took this job in November of last year, so this is really my first full General Assembly. To perform my role effectively, though, it is equally important that I keep abreast of what's happening in the Fund.

During my first year at the UN I have been effective simply because the emphasis has been on Africa. Since I came from the African Department, I could to some extent spend my capital—my knowledge of Africa. Now, as time goes on, and I am more distanced from operations, this particular capital of mine will be spent. That's why it is absolutely important that, to the best of my time and capacity, I keep myself informed. Short of going on missions, the best way to keep informed is to attend Board meetings and read mission reports. Even during the General Assembly, I would hope to be able to spend some time in Washington. It is more commuting than I would like to do, but short of really staying full time in New York, which is what the World Bank representative does, this is the only way to do it.

Has the Fund always had a UN liaison post?

To my knowledge, yes. The two representatives who preceded me, Gordon Williams and Jan-Maarten Zegers, were each in their posts for a long, long time. I believe Maarten Zegers was at the UN for 13 or 14 years and Gordon Williams served for 25 years as Special Representative to the United Nations.

The Fund created the post because we are a specialized agency of the UN, and our agreement with the United Nations, for instance, requires us to provide for UN presence at our Annual Meetings. It is only natural that we should be keeping abreast of what is happening there. Practically all of the international agencies maintain special representatives at the United Nations. These agencies hold formal as well as informal meetings; the

formal mechanism for bringing together the various institutions is the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which consists of the heads of UN institutions and offices and is chaired by the Secretary General. It meets twice a year and the Managing Director attends these meetings.

Have the duties of the liaison office changed over the years?

The office is changing now; it is becoming more than a liaison office. Mr. de Larosière began to pay greater attention to the UN; he felt we should cooperate with it more fully and to keep them informed on what was accomplished at high-level meetings, such as the Interim Committee. Mr. Camdessus has been concerned about the image of the Fund; he believes the Fund needs to do a better job explaining what it is doing. He has placed even more emphasis on the UN.

One reason for this, I think, is that the UN is becoming more conscious of, and more involved in, discussions of major economic issues—such as debt, the recovery of Africa, and commodity prices—that are of concern to the Fund. The Fund has a very clear and direct responsibility in these matters, and the Managing Director feels that it would be useful for the Fund to have a much more open dialogue with the UN.

In turn the Fund is more conscious of social issues and the social impact of adjustment—an area in which many of the UN agencies, such as UNICEF, ILO, WHO, and others, have been very active. We have been criticized in the past for being insensitive to social issues, and only concerned with economic matters. But the Fund has been concerned with social issues, chiefly by trying to promote growth and trade, and thus promoting the overall economic capacity of these countries.

It is true that in the past we have not dealt with these issues explicitly. The Executive Board has only recently addressed these issues directly. The Managing Director made some very specific suggestions at the last ECOSOC, and sought UN help. Thus the role of the Fund office is being expanded.

In the past we kept the UN informed of what we were doing, but did not emphasize the two-way nature of the exchange. My office now makes a much greater effort to keep Fund staff conscious of the concerns of the other UN institutions.

And we are going beyond just providing information. We are also looking at the technical input we can offer on data and analyses. We place at their disposal whatever technical expertise we possess, and give their discussions a dimension of feasibility. Politicians, like philosophers, recognize no boundary conditions, and one of the functions of this office is to say: "well, everything has its boundary conditions; you have to operate within certain constraints; you have to know what is feasible to make an impact."

When I took this job, I asked management what I was supposed to do. I was told "You make the job and then let us know what the job should be." I am still in the process of defining my job and meeting management's mandate. In this connection the decision last year to integrate this office in the External Relations Department is important as this unifies the external relations efforts of the Fund and provides me with Department-wide support and advice.

Do you deal with other agencies, for instance, those based in Geneva or Paris?

As you know, basically it is the function of the Geneva Office to maintain liaison with UNCTAD on trade issues and with GATT. Similarly, if there were something at UNESCO that was of importance to the Fund, the Paris Office would normally take care of it. Otherwise we would simply duplicate each other's work and waste resources.

But many issues are dealt with at the UN as well as at the various other agencies. An example is the current discussion of the debt issue. The Secretary General is expected to write a report on the debt issue for the General Assembly, so it's a UN issue. However, the Secretary General has asked UNCTAD, which is in Geneva, to draft the report. Once the draft report comes here, it is discussed at a meeting of high officials, where I represent the Fund.

Our responsibilities are fairly clear, and the system is operating extremely well; we do not have any problems. Normally if I do anything that has to do with Geneva, I check with Eduardo Weisner, the Director of the Geneva Office, to make sure that we are operating on the same lines. In New York I meet informally once a week with representatives from the ILO, UNICEF, UNIDO, IAEA, WHO, FAO, UNDP, and World Bank. We exchange information and try to coordinate our work with the UN.

Are other agencies now coming to the Fund for information, for data?

Perhaps in the past we did not pay as much attention as we should have to the work at the UN. But the UN, too, has changed. In the past it did not view economic issues as matters of immediate concern. It tended to be more conscious of political concerns, but now it seems to recognize that economics is often at the root of issues. It really has nothing to do with me or my predecessors, it's purely a change in circumstances both at the Fund and the UN.

We are becoming more conscious of the social aspects; the UN is becoming more conscious of the economic aspects. The UN is providing what it calls "moral leadership," and we are prepared to help them determine what is feasible. We deal with each other as colleagues of equal sincerity and expertise, albeit in different areas.

This should strengthen the sense of mutual respect and mutual recognition that has always been there but per-

haps has been muted because there has been little interaction. The Fund and the Bank retain operational responsibility for dealing with economic issues, such as debt, but the UN feels that it is the only world forum where these issues can be given their proper political and global perspective.

Do you enjoy the change?

I would think so, yes. I wish it were a bigger change than it has been. I thought I would be getting away from my work on Africa, but I have not. After twenty-odd years in the African Department, I would like to have gone on to something new, but this is what's happening in the UN. Africa is *the* main thing.

The UN is interesting, because it is a unique collection of people—politicians, economists, sociologists, environmentalists, philosophers, and so on. It is a big melting pot. When you go there, you always learn something. In a way it reminds me of my days at Oxford. When I went back there as a visiting fellow, I had the privilege of dining at the high table where the dons eat. I found that everyone at the table talked about everything except their own subject. I never came out from dinner without having taken mental note of something I should do or books I should read. It enriched me every time I went.

A similar thing could be said about the UN, although it does not possess that type of academic rigor. Whenever I go there I always see a different trend or a thread of a trend that broadens my horizons. It opens you up to different things; you know what you already knew—that the world does not consist only of ministries of finance and central banks, but you tend to see what these other things are.

With one foot in each of these organizations, do you find yourself comparing the two?

Oh yes, absolutely. I initially felt frustrated at the UN. I wondered what I was accomplishing and whether I was wasting my time. It almost corresponded to my student days when I was doing philosophy along with economics. During a one-to-one session one day, my philosophy teacher almost literally threw my thesis paper into the fireplace.

I was frustrated that there were really no rules for philosophy; I felt it was totally useless. When I went to an art gallery and saw a painting, my professor asked, what did I like about it? I said I simply enjoyed it. He asked if I saw any rules in that painting compared to another. I said no. Well, he said, read philosophy and enjoy it—don't look for rules.

My initial reaction to the UN was similar—I was looking for certain rules. I think I have moved beyond that now to where I feel that constructive contributions are being made by the United Nations in spheres of interest to the Fund and that my office can add to that. I hope I am learning from my experience there.

THE (NEW) DOORS OF THE FUND



Over the years there has been much figurative discussion about whether the doors of the Fund have been open or closed. Fund staff might have commented that they were just plain heavy. Since its new building opened in 1973, staff members have passed through the Fund's front doors often, but never easily. The larger-than-standard doors, with bronze-coated steel frames surrounding large sheets of tempered safety glass, weighed 265 pounds each. These weren't the type to swing open at the flick of a wrist. They usually, reluctantly, responded to a determined push, but sometimes didn't budge for anything less than an application of brute force.

Over time the weight of the Fund's front doors produced more than something to wrestle with; it produced a structural problem that, over the past five years in particular, created a major maintenance headache. The front doors were, as Geoffrey Vaughan, Chief, Facilities Section, observed, "in a permanent state of disrepair." He estimates that the Fund has spent \$40,000 over the past five years maintaining the doors. Some of that money went into obtaining miscellaneous parts that needed to be replaced, but the bulk of it was spent on labor costs associated with frequent realignments. The doors required monthly adjustment and still managed to go out of whack two or three weeks after each resetting.

While the doors' hinges held, the doors themselves were beginning to tear away from their frame. The company that made the original doors had since gone out of business, so replacement parts were limited to the dwindling stock at hand. Faced with the prospect of serious structural damage, a potential safety hazard in an emergency (such as a fire), and rising maintenance costs, the Fund decided to replace the doors.

The Fund's new capital budget, which Geoffrey Vaughan commends for the flexibility it provides to

multiyear projects, allowed the Facilities Section to design a new system for the main entrance in fiscal year 1987, approve the project in fiscal year 1988, and provide for the installation of the new doors in fiscal year 1989.

The new front door configuration, whose installation was substantially completed by September 23, consists of two revolving doors and four conventional doors. Revolving doors are more energy efficient, but they do not, in themselves, constitute legal egress. The new conventional doors do. These are aluminum and, Geoffrey Vaughan estimates, are one third the weight of the original doors and will require half as much energy to open. The project should pay for itself in seven years through greater energy conservation, lower maintenance (the lighter aluminum conventional doors should not require frequent adjustment), and more reliable service.

The big question mark seems to be how the revolving doors will be accepted. Though hardly a recent invention, revolving doors still manage to elicit strange behavior in humans. If, despite their novelty, the relatively airtight revolving doors manage to attract the greater part of the traffic at the main entrance, the Fund will consider removing the second (inner) set of doors, which was originally needed to save energy. In the meantime Facilities has replaced several glass panels broken while the doors were in storage, has been adjusting the revolving doors to determine their ideal speed, and has opened the inner set of doors to make access easier and quicker.

Of course the installation of revolving doors has not gone without comment in the Fund. In the dark and somewhat cynical mood that currently tempers much of the humor in the institution, there have been a number of explanations offered for the new doors. One wag suggested that the real reason for the revolving doors "was to get all the consultants in and out of the Fund faster."

ENJOYING A FRIENDLY GAME

Take the Twentieth Street elevators down to the Green Level, cross through a bit of the garage, open a door and take maybe fifteen steps. There's a large table there in the middle of the floor. Half-hidden in the shadows, it looks like something about to be moved or something that had been moved and perhaps forgotten. It's neither. Flick the light switch on and the table is ready. It took some doing, but the Fund's Table Tennis Club finally has a home.

If this is an unlikely spot for a table tennis match, it's an even more unlikely spot to find the top-ranked professional player in the United States. But every once in a while John Onifade is there, playing a friendly but competitive game with Claudia Cabib, President of the Fund's Table Tennis Club, or with one of the other club members. John Onifade, who is from Nigeria and is a Library Clerk with the Joint Library, is easy going but assured. His head moves rhythmically, tilting up and

then back down as he follows the ball. He laughs softly and often, but there is no mistaking the confidence he has in himself and his game. "If you watch me practice, you wouldn't even pick me twentieth," he smiles. "I play soft and steady in practice. I play wild in the tournament. When competition starts, I feel big. I feel different. The tension and the spectators will make me play better. I'm not afraid of anyone."

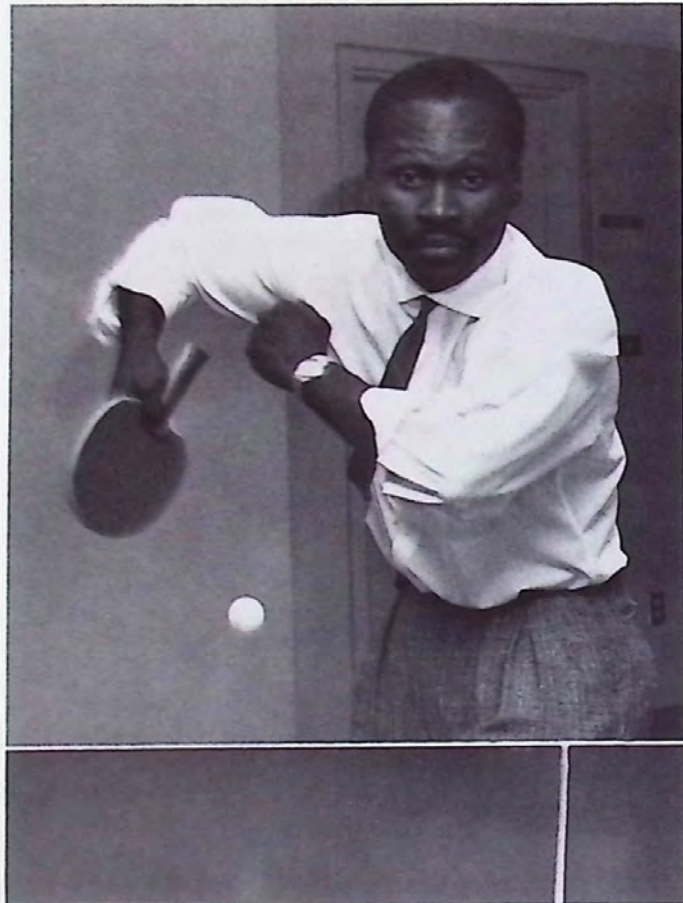
John Onifade has been playing since he was eight. Table tennis may not be a sport many readily associate with his home country, but he begs to differ. "Table tennis is very popular in Nigeria—just like basketball in the United States. We used to have tables in the street. Even at the airport as you get off the plane there are four or five tables."

Each year China provided Nigeria with a new coach for its national team; many coaches stayed another year or two to help train the state teams as well. Interest in the sport grew rapidly. Young players were scouted and quickly signed by local clubs or state teams, and the more aggressive players learned to seek out the state teams that featured the best players. Practicing with better players quickly improved their own game. By the time John Onifade was 18, he had turned professional, eventually signing with a Lebanese team. There were tournaments once, sometimes twice, a week, and international competition meant trips throughout Europe and to Asia.

He was ranked among the top 98 in the world before coming to the United States. He has ranked no lower than fifth in this country since he arrived here. John Onifade skipped a number of international tournaments as well as the world championships in 1987 in India, because he wanted to get himself settled in this country and because he had just begun his job at the Joint Library. It cost him his world ranking, but he has plans to compete in the 1989 world championships in Germany.

With his job in the Fund he no longer practices as much as he had before. "I practice now on Saturday and Sunday at the Potomac Community Center. I have three regular partners. They have different styles and different skill levels and that helps me to be able to play all types of opponents. I also jog and play basketball and soccer to strengthen my feet and thighs. You have to be physically fit. Your eyes must be good and your reflexes excellent. It's important, too, to have good footwork to keep your feet and thighs steady."

John Onifade is surprised that so many U.S. players resist coaching and refuse to listen to criticism. "They don't want to listen to anyone talking about their mistakes. If you know something about table tennis and you give me advice, I will listen and try to change my game. I will do anything you say, because spectators are the best coach."



John Onifade occasionally uses the Green Level table to play a relaxed noontime game. The top-ranked professional table tennis player in the United States, he uses the "pen hold" that Chinese players prefer. He competes regularly in local and national matches but is also looking forward to the 1989 world championships.

He is also astonished at how badly some opponents take losing. "It's a friendly game. I know I will lose sometimes. If I do, I just go out with friends and talk about something else. I forget about the game. When I'm about to sleep, I might think about the game and the bad shots I made. I'll correct myself while I'm eating or sleeping—that's it."

He is, he says, content to lay back and let others take their shots. "I know others are spending much more money than me. And I know they must be angry when they do this and I defeat them. I make it cool. I'm not mad at anyone. I give them a chance to practice and improve. Then we play again. If they don't win, it's because they have not improved."

After an off-season that runs from June through August, the tournaments have begun again in earnest. There are weekly local tournaments and at least one big tournament each month. This can mean traveling to Canada, California, Georgia, or elsewhere. Maintaining top ranking is difficult. The standings are determined by the number of points a player has. If John Onifade loses a match, he can lose as many as 35 to 50 points. If he wins a match, he often is awarded no more than one point.

John Onifade is eagerly looking ahead to the world championships in 1989, but he is also anxious to do well in his job at the Joint Library. "I want to know everything," he smiles, "and I want to learn it as quickly as I play table tennis."

Claudia Cabib, a Periodicals Clerk at the Joint Library, got a few shots by John Onifade in a very informal lunchtime match recently. She beamed. "John usually kills me when we play," she says. "I had to stop playing him for a while. He was winning every point and my confidence was evaporating." Claudia Cabib has been playing table tennis since she was a child, but has only recently begun to compete in tournaments.

"My father is Italian and we are from Argentina. He taught my two sisters and I how to play table tennis. We learned in our basement. We were always running into pipes or walls, but I enjoyed playing. When I learned the Fund had a table tennis club, I joined right away. I was the only woman, though, and I was a little intimidated at first. I didn't know if my skill level was up to the men's or if they would mind me violating their space. But it worked out okay."

Playing at lunch or after work, the Fund fueled her interest in the sport and she eventually began to play weekends at the Potomac Community Center and the Chinese Community Center as well. The Chinese Community Center in Bethesda is a favorite spot now—it's less crowded than Potomac and attracts a number of fine players. "The coach at the Chinese Community Center taught me the forehand, backhand, and the loop," she remarks. "The Chinese play a particular type of game. They use the 'pen hold' for the paddle rather than the 'shake hands' style that I use and that is more common



Claudia Cabib prefers the "shake hands hold" for her paddle. She is the President of the Fund's Table Tennis Club and has just begun to compete for ranking points in the U.S. Table Tennis Association.

here. They also play a defensive game and put a lot of backspin on their balls. I've kept my own personality. I'm an attacking type. Any opportunity I get I love to slam."

"In 1985 I entered the annual open competition that the Montgomery County Recreation Department sponsors. It was my first tournament and I found I enjoyed it. Friends encouraged me to play for ranking points and I've just begun to do that now. When you are low ranked you end up playing a lot of eight or ten year olds, but I don't mind. Actually the field is wide open for women now in table tennis."

"I play at lunch time to relax. It's good exercise. I'm competitive, sure, but I don't get so bent out that I scream at my partner. You can take your frustrations out on the ball rather than on each other. I love playing tournaments too. It's a great feeling to win and you meet lots of people. People don't think you break a sweat playing table tennis, but a good match is very vigorous. It's excellent exercise. It's a sport that requires great stamina and demands a lot of patience."

In the Fund it is also a sport that has required a lot of perseverance as well. The Table Tennis Club lost its playing area to aerobics classes in 1985. Claudia Cabib protested. The Club eventually spoke to the Ombudsman and another spot was found. The first solution—

moving a table into the weight room—pleased no one. The players felt cramped and the exercisers were less than happy at having the occasional stray shot whiz by them. Space was finally found on the Green Level in 1987. The Fund cleared the area of storage boxes, the lighting mysteriously improved, and the Club found a home. Playing conditions were fine but the location is so hidden that few people have found it.

"I'd really like to encourage staff to play," Claudia Cabib says. "We've had a lot of people who used to play and now, with their work, have little time for it. There are a lot of people who would enjoy playing if they tried. Ours is a very informal club. The table isn't reserved. We bring our own paddles and balls, and just come down and play. If people are waiting to play, usually the winner of the previous match stays at the table and the next person waiting becomes his or her opponent. I know I don't

mind teaching people who haven't played before or who would like to know more. If there is a difference in skill level, we just take it easy."

Claudia Cabib values the etiquette and the sportsmanship that is, she feels, the best part of the game. "Some players storm around, slam the table, and curse. It's not the way to play and if your opponent isn't unsettled by all that, it just makes you more vulnerable. I like Andre Agassi's attitude. He applauds the good shots his opponents make. That's the right way to compete."

It's a friendly and competitive game that Claudia Cabib and John Onifade settle into. They volley rhythmically until Claudia feels she can smash the ball just outside of John's reach. The shot is too low; it catches in the net. John Onifade flashes a quick grin, "You tried to catch me with that." Claudia Cabib grimaces and then laughs. And readies another serve.

Q & A

A QUIZ ON FUND HISTORY

With few members of the Fund's early staff on hand now to regale us with tales of the institution's origins and development, it might be useful to stimulate our general knowledge with a few questions about the Fund's past.

A. Vasudevan, who is an Advisor in OED, has developed a quiz, excerpts from which will be printed in *Staff News* over the coming months. Here is the first set of questions; the answers appear below.

1) The first meeting of the Governors of the Fund took place in

Washington, D.C.
Bretton Woods, New Hampshire
Savannah, Georgia

2) Was the U.S.S.R. given a quota determination at the time of the setting up of the Fund?

Yes
No

3) Which member country was the first to approach the Fund for a drawing?

France
Netherlands
Ethiopia
Germany
Brazil

4) Which country's request for a drawing in 1947 was higher than its gold subscription?

Netherlands
United Kingdom
Chile
Mexico

5) When was the policy on drawing from the Fund formally laid down?

At the inception of the Fund
At the time of the very first drawing
In 1951.
In 1973.

The answers: (1) Savannah, Georgia; (2) Yes; (3) Ethiopia; (4) Chile [see page 192 of Volume I of *The International Monetary Fund*, 1945-65 for the details]; and (5) In 1951 [This is distinct from the decision on stand-bys, which was taken in 1952. See page 281 of *The International Monetary Fund*, 1945-65].

WHEN STAFF HIT THE PANIC MODE

The Panic Mode. The Information Center for Computing Systems, the ICCS, sees a lot of it. Nerves are normally pretty well frazzled by the time a distress call is made. Frozen cursors, downed ICUs, fried monitors—the specifics rarely seem as important as the acute anxiety they induce. Deadlines and complex technology, sent fatefully amok by the wrong key stroke, do amazing things to the human psyche.

No one is likely to accuse the Fund of dashing willy-nilly into the computer age, but within its generally conservative approach, the use of computers and word processors has jumped dramatically in the past five years. With the Fund's reliance on personal computers growing, and these increasingly used to operate software rather than function as terminals connected to a mainframe, the Bureau of Computing Services found itself handling more and more calls from personal computer users who had questions to ask.

In 1985, BCS created a separate group to handle these calls—the Microcomputer User Service Information Center, more commonly referred to as the MUSIC Room. Staffed by two people, it provided backup when problems arose.

In 1986 the MUSIC Room became simply the Information Center for Computing Systems. It was reorganized in May of this year to incorporate the services of the microcomputer technicians—the hardware experts. Adolph Limarzi was appointed its head and the ICCS, with its five microtechnicians, now has a staff of 22. Inclusion of the technicians "has been enormously helpful," Adolph Limarzi insists, because software problems were commonly intertwined with hardware problems.

ICCS currently handles 12,000 calls a year—50 a day. Deborah Smith, Technical Consultant for the Information Center, estimates these are almost evenly split between problem resolution and "how to" calls. After an installation normally nine out of ten calls are from staff seeking reassurance about the proper procedures to follow. That lack of confidence is expected, Deborah Smith says. "Actually overconfidence generally creates the more serious problems we see."

For Fund standard equipment, she adds, "If we don't have an answer to a question, we are required to find one." The Fund has roughly three classifications for its hardware and software: standard, which receives full support from BCS; recommended, on which BCS has



Team meetings each week review problems and procedures. Adolph Limarzi (left foreground) discusses issues with (left to right) Gail Neal, Eric Sosnitsky, Patty Brown, Kittiya Amatayakul, Yasoma Llyanarachchi, and Cathy Wright.

some expertise and can offer limited support; and non-standard, on which BCS has little or no expertise and can offer little or no support. The Fund currently has standards in all major categories except desktop publishing.

BCS regularly publishes its list of standard hardware and software, but the standards are dynamic. For example, the Fund currently uses the 4.2 version of Word Perfect; the most recent upgrade, 5.0, is still being tested and is not yet standard or supported. Adolph Limarzi encourages staff who might have questions about what is Fund standard to call the ICCS.

Many software and hardware products are not standard because their applications are too specialized to be used Fund-wide. As a rule of thumb anything for which more than 100 copies have been ordered automatically becomes a standard. Prior to its release, however, the Information Center vigorously tests standard software. "We try to massacre it," says Deborah Smith. "If there is a problem in a system we want to know about it during this testing stage."

The Information Center is also involved in testing upgrades and new software, developing and adapting software for the specific needs of the Fund, and converting documents from one format to another (for example, from PFS, which is used on missions, to NBI or Word Perfect). To manage its other functions, particularly the more intensive aspects of development, the ICCS has begun to allot time for its staff to pursue individual projects. Three of its staff are on call during normal working hours (9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday) and it encourages callers to use ICCS's main number (X6631) rather than attempt to reach individuals.

Adolph Limarzi believes that keeping his own staff up-to-date is critically important. He holds a team meeting

each week to discuss problems and to exchange information. On a more informal basis ICCS staff regularly keep each other informed about problems they have encountered and the types of solutions they have come up with. Contact with personal computer users often produces very useful exchanges. "Some of the Fund's staff are very good with computers and very familiar with the programs they are using. We do learn from them, but we always try," Adolph Limarzi adds, "to keep one step ahead. That's why ongoing training and keeping current with our technical reading is so important."

Predictably the newer the hardware or software, the greater the frequency of "how-to" questions. "For established products, such as NBI," notes Carol Weeks, who is ICCS's coordinator for NBI support, "most of our calls now tend to be related to 'environmental issues' like network connections or upgrades rather than questions about the product itself." The ICCS keeps a record of its calls, noting the nature of the problem and the resolution.

In the process of testing new software and resolving problems with existing equipment, the Center has also developed a library—actually two libraries: one a hardware library—the BCS Technical Library, which largely consists of technical documentation on mainframe operations, and another, the Microcomputer Software Library, which currently includes 170 different software packages (all compatible with Fund standard hardware) and has another 130 software products awaiting processing.

The Software Library is intended to help staff who are considering purchasing a software product but might be uncertain whether it will meet their needs. Software can be checked out and evaluated over a two-week period. Products are ordered on the basis of their potential usefulness within the Fund environment and the amount of interest shown in them by Fund staff.

Statistical packages are the software most requested, Sandii Lwin reports, but the software library's holdings extend from data base management to econometric packages to graphics software, with numerous Lotus enhancers and a handful of spreadsheet packages also available. The Software Library's word processing collection includes 17 items and its project management selection contains 5 packages. "We have the DOS-based systems pretty well covered," Deborah Smith admits. "Probably our only weak spots are desktop publishing and hard-disk management." The Software Library also includes paperback editions of various "how to" books on major systems (such as Lotus and Word Perfect), and it subscribes to 17 personal computer magazines.

Mission support is a priority. "We feel," says Deborah Smith, "that the Information Center does a very thorough job in mission preparation." The Fund's Training Unit is responsible for offering basic instruction in PFS, the software used on mission, but the ICCS supplements this with "brush-up" courses offered each week. It also checks computers prior to departure. Currently in prepa-

ration is a Mission Guide that will cover all the equipment used on mission (printers as well as computers) and discuss the steps that should be taken in order to protect and maintain equipment in the field. Also included is a customs packet to facilitate clearance of mission equipment. The Mission Guide is expected to be available in October.

As the ICCS looks ahead, it sees itself becoming increasingly involved in the Fund's ambitious networking efforts. Over the shorter time frame the Information Center will be concentrating on providing complete system installations for the Data General equipment (used on missions), as well as the installation of all supported software. The ICCS will shortly be organizing seminars in each of the area departments to cover all aspects of the Data General equipment. "Our greatest constraint is always manpower," notes Alain Coune, Chief of the Systems Resources and Control Division:

As the Economist Work Stations project evolves, the ICCS will also be assisting with the implementation of a universal menu system (adapting software so that each package—whether Aremos, word processing, or communications—can be accessed through the same menu) and helping staff customize their own menus. The ICCS is, Adolph Limarzi points out, "the front lines. If there is a problem, we hear about it first." The challenge for the Information Center will be to convert its very considerable first-hand experience into a resource for improving software applications and facilitating the smoother running of the Fund's personal computer systems.



Amelia de Lucio (foreground, right), of the Western Hemisphere Department, receives a few pointers from Deborah Smith. The Information Center offers brush-up courses on PFS for staff going on mission.

STAFF NOTES

September 1-30, 1988

TWENTY-FIVE YEAR STAFF

Reimer O. Carstens
Hepzi Ohal

TWENTY YEAR STAFF

David S. Cutler

RESIGNATIONS

Daniel Gros
Catherine A. Kimmins
Pier Luigi Parcu

EXPIRATION OF APPOINTMENT

Daniel Gottlieb
Vincent Rousset

DEATH OF RETIREE

Ignacio C. Tandeciarz
Margaret Crown

BIRTH

To Chris Clarke (SEC) and his wife, Nilgün Clarke, a son, Kamer Devon Clarke, on June 10, 1988.

TRANSFERS

William J. Byrne to AFR from Office in Europe
Marie Therese Culp to AFR from BLS
Louis D. Dicks-Mireaux to ASD from AFR

Robert H. Floyd to BUR from ADM

Olav Gronlie to WHD from Support Group, Resident Representatives and Advisors (Egypt)

Ali A. Hassan to SEC from ADM

Peter M. Keller to Office in Europe from ETR

Ewe-Ghee Lim to external assignment with Monetary Authority of Singapore from BUR

Jan F. van Houten to EUR from Office in Europe

NEW STAFF

September 1-30, 1988



Abdolreza Abbassian Iranian, is a Research Assistant with BUR. He previously worked for OECD and FAO; he holds an M.A. from SAIS. His interests include photography and travel.



Tamim A. Bayoumi from the United Kingdom, is in the Economist Program with RES. He received his B.Sc. from Cambridge and holds his doctorate from Stanford University.



Hugh W. Bredenkamp a U.K. citizen, is an Economist (EUR). He previously served as an economic adviser in the U.K. Treasury. Educated at Reading and LSE, his interests include films, music, and tennis.



Teresa I. Cutolo Peruvian, is a Secretary with WHD. Educated at Morris County College, she previously worked for the New Zealand Embassy. Her interests include aerobics and tennis.



Jacques Gautier French, is an Advisor with CBD. Educated at the Paris Political Studies Institute and the Paris Law Faculty, he was previously Inspector, Bank of France. His interests include chess and music.



Peter G. Gerridge from the United States, is a Service Officer with ADM. He was educated at Carnegie-Mellon University and was previously an architect with the Kling-Lindquist Partnership.



Jeremy J. Heywood a U.K. national, is a Technical Assistant (OED). He was previously an economist with the U.K. Treasury and Private Secretary to the Treasury Minister. He was educated at Oxford and LSE.



Junji Hiwatashi Japanese, is an Economist with AFR. Educated at Northwestern University, he previously worked for the Bank of Japan. His interests include travel, tennis, and jogging.

NEW STAFF



Ravina Naresh Malkani Indian, is a Research Officer with RES. She holds an M.Sc. in Computer Science from Johns Hopkins University and her interests include sports, travel, and sewing.



William Howard Pfister a U.S. national, is Supervisor of the Messenger Unit, ADM. Previously employed by the U.S. State Department, he was educated at Mary Washington. He enjoys custom furniture crafting.



Silvana Revello Uruguayan, is a Secretary with AFR. She previously worked as a bilingual secretary with the Inter-American Development Bank. She speaks Spanish and Portuguese.



Marjorie B. Rose a U.S. national, is in the Economist Program with CBD. A Ph.D. candidate at UCLA, she previously served as a junior economist with the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers.



Georges Serre French, is a Technical Assistant (OED). Educated in law and anthropology, he has worked for the Caisse centrale de Coopération économique (Niger). His interests include aviation.



J. Claudine Simon-Bollon French, is a Secretary (FAD). She previously worked in the private sector (France and Canada) and for the World Bank, and is interested in wildlife and the environment and enjoys horseback riding.



Hanan S. Younis Jordanian, is a Clerical Assistant with OED. She previously worked for the Embassy of Saudi Arabia and is attending Northern Virginia Community College. Her interests include tennis.

Photo credits: Denio Zara (page 1-5, 16) and Padraic Hughes-Reid (pages 6, 9-11, and 13-15), with special thanks to both for working long and hard to have the Annual Meetings photographs ready for this issue.

**Staff
news**

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