



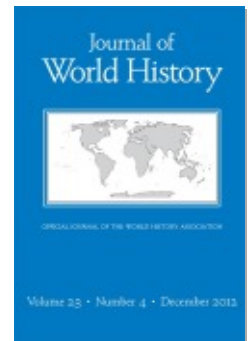
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Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945–1976*

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INTO THE HISTORY BUSINESS

“UN goes into the history business,” an American newspaper announced in December 1951, when it became official that a commission under the global umbrella of the United Nations would undertake the task of writing a history of mankind.¹

It was far from the first attempt at producing such a work. Edward Burnett Tylor, J. B. Bury Oswald Spengler, H. G. Wells, and Arnold J. Toynbee are only a few of the many of those who had taken on the daunting task. But from a postwar perspective these writers had a tendency to write history on Western premises, or—in the case of Spengler and Toynbee—of describing the world as a number of separate civilizations pursuing essentially independent careers.

A major objective of the new undertaking was to distinguish it from the ethnocentric and especially the Eurocentric world histories of the past by producing a history with no particular geographical orientation and to deal with the Spengler-Toynbee view by arguing that human

* This article draws in part on a paper presented at the international symposium “Towards the Transnational History of International Organizations,” held at the Centre for History and Economics at King’s College, University of Cambridge, on 6 April 2009. I am most grateful to a number of individuals for help and discussions during the finalization of the article. In particular to Jens Boel, Mahmoud Ghander, Guy S. Métraux Jr., Michelle Brattain, Aigul Kulnazarova, Edgardo C. Krebs, Sarah Fee, Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, Jean-François Sirinelli, Sunil Amrith, and Andrew Fish.

¹ “UN Goes into the History Business,” *Chicago Tribune*, 24 December 1951.

cultures interacted at every stage of their history. This makes it appropriate to regard the project as the earliest expression of a new trend of writing, so-called global history—the history of globalization—that came in the wake of World War II.

The most obvious explanation for the fact that the final product, *History of Mankind*, has never come to play that role in historiography is that recurrent delays prevented the work being published until the 1960s and 1970s—years after the project was initiated. Therefore almost as soon as it appeared it came across as an antiquated leftover from past decades and was better known for its other major objective of grounding its content on the consensus of the more than a thousand scholars who were involved—leaving an impression of a work that was a monument to the “commonwealthization” of history.²

In a thorough and often cited study of world history in American education that was published in 1990, Gilbert Allardyce described this ultimate failure by focusing on the American historian Louis Gottschalck. For Gottschalck, editing one of the volumes was a veritable nightmare. In fact it took him twelve years to complete the volume, exceeding the deadline by eight years, and the very same day he delivered the final manuscript, he suffered from a heart attack. For Allardyce this was probably the perfect illustration of an international undertaking that was out of control. Allardyce thus ended up giving a few American historians of a slightly later period credit for the postwar showdown with Eurocentrism and the introduction of global history as a discipline.³

This conclusion seems somewhat hasty in light of the fact that a global or at least non-Eurocentric interpretation of history was highly sought after in a number of UN member states in the era of decolonization. At the same time Gottschalck was never a key decision maker in the shaping of the work and therefore he cannot be seen as a fair personification of the whole process.

In this article, I distinguish between the History of Mankind as a long-term political project initiated and financed by the UN system on the one hand, and as a work of dubious reputation that came to be the project’s first visible outcome on the other. The reason for the distinction is that the project generated discussions of a far more fruit-

² See for instance Niels Steensgaard, “Universal History for Our Times,” *Journal of Modern History* 45, no. 1 (1973): 72–82.

³ Gilbert Allardyce, “Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course,” *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 23–75.

ful nature than the work itself. In fact the work's biggest critics were to be found within the UN system itself, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, and they did not confine themselves merely to criticizing the work; they insisted on improving it.⁴ Therefore it makes more sense to consider the *History of Mankind* volumes as a work in progress, a provisional report on the overall project, which gave rise to new activities; these included the production of a number of new history books based on thoughts about the best possible way to write history in a globalized world.

The article is concerned with the UN history project as a whole, but focuses mainly on thoughts and discussions among its key players in the initial phase leading up to the publication of the first *History of Mankind* volume. It is based primarily on documents found in the archives of the International Commission for the Writing of the History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind at the UNESCO Archives in Paris, and in the Julian S. Huxley Papers at the Woodson Research Center at Rice University in Houston, Texas. The archives give a more varied impression than present historiography of the project and of the difficult processes it involved—including a rare and fascinating glimpse of global history in the making.

LEAVING EUROCENTRISM BEHIND

In a world devastated by war there was a widespread recognition among national leaders of the need for political leadership on a global level and of the need of uniting mankind. For many of the first and mainly Western participants involved in the making of international organizations, this recognition involved a move from national arrogance and Eurocentrism to worldviews. Therefore universalism and the notion of “one world” or a standardized “world civilization” came to overshadow the idea of cultural diversity as the foundation of postwar intergovernmental relations.⁵

But right from the beginning there were two different schools of people. One school wanted to judge the new organizations' programs by their direct and immediate contribution to peace in the present, and

⁴ UNESCO, *Preparation of a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind* (Paris: UNESCO, 1985), pp. 7–10.

⁵ Alexander Ranasinghe, *UNESCO's Cultural Mission: An Evaluation of Policies, Programs, Projects* (New York: Carlton Press, 1969), p. xvi.

the other laid stress on the indirect and long-term but indispensable contribution of education, science, and culture to the peaceful unified world of the future.⁶

The English biologist Julian S. Huxley belonged to the latter school. As one of the founding fathers of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1945, he was preoccupied with identifying the tasks that could ensure peace in the long term. For that purpose he involved people around him, including his old friend Joseph Needham, the eccentric biochemist from Cambridge University, who was in charge of British scientific assistance to China at the time. Needham had become deeply interested in Chinese culture and history and had just published a book on the history of Chinese technology, in which he demonstrated the enormous and underestimated importance of Chinese inventions on developments in other parts of the world.⁷

Needham found that the principal factor promoting historically significant social change was contact with strangers possessing new and unfamiliar skills. History could thus be better understood by emphasizing the mutual indebtedness and interdependence of the peoples of the world, and Needham suggested to Huxley that the new organization took on the task of writing a history of mankind stressing cultural interchange—as an antidote to the kind of history taught in many schools focusing on military and political events and based on ethnocentric biases and preconceptions. This would be a work that could be used as a source for classroom textbooks for schools in all countries and could contribute to UNESCO's mission of education for peace.⁸

Huxley included Needham's idea in his inaugural address as executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for UNESCO in London in March 1946. In the speech, this grandson of Charles Darwin's loyal defender, T. H. Huxley, defined the organization's overall philosophy as a "scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background." This was a philosophy based on the conviction that his-

⁶ Julian Huxley, "UNESCO: The First Phase, I—The Two Views," *Manchester Guardian*, 10 August 1950.

⁷ Joseph Needham, *Chinese Science* (London: Pilot Press, 1945).

⁸ Letter from Julian Huxley (Director-General, UNESCO) to L. H. Frank (Professor), 3 September 1948, 2.31 (2) — Planning of the work. UNESCO Secretariat. Natural Sciences Section (NS). File 9.3., SCHM 8, UNESCO Archives, Paris; Letter from Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO) to F. J. H. Stratton (President of Caius College, Cambridge, UK), 5 September 1950, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas; and Julian Huxley, *Memories* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 1:54.

tory was a continuation of the general process of evolution, leading to some kind of social advance, even progress, featuring increased human control and the conservation of the environment and of natural forces and culminating in a unified world civilization. As far as UNESCO was concerned, this process should be guided by humanistic ideals of mutual aid, by the spread of scientific ideas, and by cultural interchange. And, Huxley claimed, the first and “chief task before the Humanities today would seem to be to help in constructing a history of the development of the human mind, notably in its highest cultural achievement.”⁹

Needham was the first person Huxley invited to join the staff, and in March 1946 he returned from China to take office in one of the Preparatory Commission’s two adjoining small terrace houses at Belgrave Square near Victoria Station in London. Needham had already been largely responsible for having the S—for science—put into the name of the new organization, and now it was his job to build up a division for the natural sciences.¹⁰

Watching the barrage of unread documents piling up on delegates at that time, Huxley decided to wait a couple of years before initiating the process of constructing a collective memory of mankind. But he and Needham discussed the idea whenever they had time. They knew, of course, that it would require a rather drastic selection to accommodate the history of the entire world in a few volumes, and during their search for the unifying element, a member of staff recalled that a similar discussion had taken place during the war among the Allied ministers of education in exile in London. The idea of this project had been to promote European communality, but the ministers’ conclusion only confirmed Needham’s own supposition, namely that the major unifier between people of various cultures over time had been scientific knowledge and technology.¹¹

In November 1946 UNESCO moved to Paris, where it established its new headquarters in a former hotel in Avenue Kléber near the Arc

⁹ Julian S. Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy* (London: Preparatory Commission for UNESCO, 1946), p. 42.

¹⁰ Simon Winchester, *The Man Who Loved China* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), p. 165; Maurice Goldsmith, *Joseph Needham: 20th-Century Renaissance Man* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995), pp. 89–92; and Gail Archibald, “How the ‘S’ Came to Be in UNESCO,” *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO, 1945–2005* (Paris: UNESCO, 2006), pp. 36–40.

¹¹ Julian Huxley, “Notes on the History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development,” December 1961, p. 2, “0.27 & 0.28, SCHM 1 and Compte-rendu sommaire d’une reunion avec Sir Ernest Barker et Sir Richard Livingstone” (Undated), 2.31 (1) — Planning of the work before the 1st Meeting of the Committee of Experts, SCHM 7, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

de Triomphe—a beautiful old building full of elegance and gilded ceilings and chandeliers—with Huxley as its first director-general and Needham as the first head of its Natural Science Department. At about this time they hired the Portuguese historian Armando Cortesão as consultant on the project under Needham's guidance. In the following months Cortesão investigated the impact of science on philosophy, humanities, and the social sciences from a historical perspective.¹²

During the first two months of 1947 the project began to take shape and was the subject of lengthy discussions with prominent scholars, mainly from France, about science as the prime mover in history. Looking at the notes that were the immediate outcome of these meetings, the plan still seemed fairly Eurocentric in the choices of the names and events that the work was to cover.¹³

In that sense the project was—for all its good intentions—a reflection of the fact that UNESCO's principal contributors at all the various levels of the organization were at the time still primarily from France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The reason for this was that the USSR and several other communist countries had refused to join the organization, while significant portions of other continents were under colonial rule.

As the General Conference approached, Huxley and Needham ordered a report by V. Gordon Childe, head of the Institute of Archaeology in London. The report was supportive of Huxley's evolutionistic approach and of Needham's emphasis on the history of science. It therefore fulfilled its main function, which was for Huxley and Needham to add to their supporters the name of one of the greatest archaeological and historical authorities at the time before selling the project to UNESCO's member states.¹⁴

The strategy was partially successful. The UNESCO General Conference in Mexico City in November and December 1947 adopted a

¹² "The History of Science and Its Relation to Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences" (Report), 22 January 1947, 2.31 (1) — Planning of the work before the 1st Meeting of the Committee of Experts, SCHM 7, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

¹³ Memo, 14 November 1947 and "Cultural and Scientific History of the World." Suggestions by JSH — 1947, Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

¹⁴ "Cultural and Scientific History of Mankind. Draft Proposal by Prof. Gordon Childe" (Undated), Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas, and "UNESCO General Conference. Second Session. Working Paper on the Project of a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind" (by Joseph Needham and Julian Huxley), November 1947, 2.31 (2) — Planning of the work. UNESCO Secretariat. Natural Sciences Section (NS). File 9.3., SCHM 8, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

resolution that welcomed the idea of producing a history of mankind with an emphasis on the “understanding of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind, of the mutual inter-dependence of peoples and cultures and of their contributions to the common heritage.”¹⁵ But the delegates also demanded a thorough study of how the more practical sides of the project were to be tackled before recommending its execution.

Shortly after this the project faced a major blowback. UNESCO had long been under suspicion from the United States of being a cover for espionage, and the CIA had warned President Harry S. Truman that the organization was being infiltrated by communists. Joseph Needham attracted particular attention due to his interest in science and to the fact that he was a member of the Cambridge University Communist Group. UNESCO’s involvement in the debate about atomic energy made the United States fear that Needham would soon be able to bring secret information or even uranium samples to the USSR.¹⁶

Needham felt under pressure to resign, and in the beginning of 1948 he moved back to Cambridge, where he began working on what was to become his masterpiece on science and civilization in China.¹⁷

With Needham out of the picture Huxley and Cortesão had to take on the task themselves, and in May 1948 Huxley presented a plan of a work consisting of three volumes to be written by a single author whose immense task would be eased by having at his disposal so many resources that he would be able to draw on all the best scholars in the world. The work should be elaborated along the lines described in Gordon Childe’s report, with its emphasis on science as the prime mover in the evolution of human history. Huxley had even placed the world’s cultures in various evolutionary layers—primitive, barbaric, intermediate, and advanced—not much different from the hierarchy to be found in Charles Darwin’s *Descent of Man*.¹⁸ It was obviously a tough job to abandon well-established Eurocentric perceptions of the existence of dominant and subordinate cultures.

¹⁵ *Records of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization, Second Session, Paris, UNESCO, 1947, resolution 5.7.*

¹⁶ “Evaluation of Communist Infiltration of UNESCO. Report. Central Intelligence Agency. Top Secret,” 7 February 1947, Declassified Documents Reference System, Ohio University.

¹⁷ Winchester, *Man Who Loved China*, p. 166.

¹⁸ “Notes on the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind,” May 1948, Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

APPROACHING GLOBALISM

In the light of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 and of the organization's debates on decolonization, the world was about to change, and this was soon to be reflected in UNESCO's work, too.

In late October 1948 Huxley and Cortesão had meetings and correspondence with European scholars to discuss Huxley's plan and its execution in order to sell it at the coming General Conference. Among the invitees were his friend Joseph Needham and his own brother, the author Aldous Huxley, now based in the United States. Also invited was the French historian Lucien Febvre, professor at the Collège de France, who was already a living legend among fellow historians for his journal commonly known as the *Annales*, with its emphasis on social rather than political and diplomatic themes, and for his own agenda of organizing the past in accordance with present needs.¹⁹

Febvre stressed that the History of Mankind project should in his eyes attempt truly to integrate all cultures in the new world civilization. Thus the final plan wiped out cultural hierarchies and emphasized the "exchanges" between all cultures. To ensure this global approach, the work was to be written by an entire group of specialists representing all continents. Huxley the evolutionist insisted, however, that the interactions should only be chosen when they indicated a direction that pointed forward toward greater unification and integration. The plan's "universal character and the factors which it will take into account will invest it with a new meaning and a new scope," Huxley concluded, fully content with this outcome.²⁰

Huxley also proposed to divorce the project from UNESCO by allowing an independent institution to deal with its execution. This had a double purpose. The first was to give the future authors a sense of working without pressure from UNESCO and its member states, thereby ensuring that the outcome would be an "objective and dispassionate" work. The second was to make sure that Huxley, the project's

¹⁹ "Comments by Aldous Huxley," October 1948, Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

²⁰ "Draft Document for the General Conference. Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind" (Undated), p. 1, 2.31 (1) — Planning of the work before the 1st Meeting of the Committee of Experts, SCHM 7, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

most dedicated advocate, could continue to work on the project when his term as director-general was over.²¹

This it soon was, as the Americans, for various reasons, did not support his continued candidacy. Huxley and Needham came along to the General Conference in Beirut, Lebanon, in November 1948, and Huxley describes in his memoirs how his last and most difficult task was to persuade the delegates to implement his proposals for a history of mankind. He managed to get the plan approved and entrusted to a subcommission under UNESCO, but at the same time the delegates demanded that the views of the various national commissions and non-governmental organizations should be taken into account by this subcommission before the project got underway.²²

On his return to Europe, Huxley had been replaced as the organization's director-general by the Mexican writer and diplomat Jaime Torres Bodet.

SELLING FEBVRE

Suddenly and unexpectedly thrown open to national commissions and nongovernmental organizations, the project was all at once at the mercy of a welter of new inputs. Huxley tried desperately to set the direction of the project by quickly sending Torres Bodet a revised and expanded version of his plan, but the former Mexican minister, well known for his educational reforms and effective fight against illiteracy, did not pay attention, more occupied as he was with projects that had an immediate impact.²³

One of the first nongovernmental organizations to intervene was the newly founded and UNESCO-sponsored International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, whose bureau was dominated by French scholars. This council asked Lucien Febvre to immediately write a report presenting his personal views on the project.²⁴

²¹ "Rapport sur les Réunions du 25 et du 27 Octobre 1948" and "Addendum (October 1948) to Notes by Dr. Julian Huxley (May 1948) on Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," 26 October 1948, 2.31 (1) — Planning of the work before the 1st Meeting of the Committee of Experts, SCHM 7, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

²² Huxley, *Memories*, 1:69.

²³ Memorandum from Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO) to Jaime Torres Bodet (Director-General, UNESCO), 17 January 1949, Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

²⁴ "Meeting of the Standing Committee of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (May 1949)," 8 June 1949, UNESCO, Paris.

Febvre undertook the task in close collaboration with Paul Rivet, director of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. Indeed the collaboration was so close that members of the UNESCO staff criticized Febvre and Rivet for appropriating the collective project by refusing Huxley's cooperation.²⁵

The report was finalized in May 1949. According to Febvre, the overarching theme should be "the history of peaceful relations" based on the convictions that communication and exchange of knowledge, products, and values between cultures had occurred for centuries; that all cultures had contributed; and that only cultural loans could explain the sudden appearance of large arrogant civilizations. This approach was not only directed against Eurocentrism but also against what, in Febvre's eyes, appeared to be the one-eyed evolutionism characterizing Huxley's plan.

Febvre imagined a work consisting of six volumes of a more encyclopedic appearance. Two of the volumes should clarify "everything that had been subject to circulation" such as technical knowledge, systems of ideas, beliefs, material objects, animals, and so forth. "From that will emerge the image of a moving humanity since its origins, travelling permanently through a perpetual series of transcontinental migrations."

Two other volumes would be divided geographically in order to see what each of the continents had contributed to or received from other parts of the world, starting with Asia. "From this picture would emerge the idea that separations in the world are mere illusions, and that the earth never ceases to diversify, to enrich, to mutually fertilize with streams of peaceful exchanges."²⁶

But even Febvre's plan received only minimal attention from Torres Bodet, and immediately before the General Conference the new director-general ordered his own report, written by the Brazilian physiologist Miguel Ozorio de Almeida, which was supposed to bring together the diverse wishes and ideas of those interested in the project.

Huxley saw Almeida's sudden intervention as a chance to reintroduce his idea of history as a continuation of biological evolution and looked forward to a visit from him. But Almeida never turned up at his house on Pond Street in Hampstead, London. "I have been trying

²⁵ Patrick Petitjean, "Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science," in *Situating the History of Science: Dialogues with Joseph Needham*, ed. S. Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 177.

²⁶ "Rapport de M. Lucien Febvre," (May 1949), Box 118, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

to find out from the authorities at UNESCO when he was coming to England," Huxley wrote in a letter of complaint to Torres Bodet, "but I now understand that he is engaged in writing his report, apparently before having discussed the matter with the experts who had previously considered it! I must confess that this seems an unsatisfactory procedure."²⁷

It turned out that Almeida had felt uncomfortable with the idea of the history having an underlying doctrine or philosophy and thought that Febvre's plan had a better chance of getting the approval of the coming General Conference. For these reasons he stuck to a repetition of Febvre's main points and his encyclopedic approach in presenting his plan in June 1949.

Huxley, in return, only received a copy of Almeida's report and responded right away by sending a long series of comments, claiming that the work "should be written from the definite angle of what I might call 'scientific humanism,' treating the growth of civilization as a continuation of the process of evolution," even suggesting that the final title of the entire work should be "The Natural History of Civilization."²⁸

However, Almeida's report had been somewhat hazy in nature. It contained no timetable or economic perspectives, and as a result the delegates of the various member states could only confirm the request of the previous General Conferences for a more detailed and accurate plan before recommending the project's execution.²⁹

None of this came to Huxley's knowledge, and this obviously annoyed him. "For although I have been made 'Honorary Counsellor to UNESCO,'" he wrote in a resentful letter to René Maheu, director of Torres Bodet's Executive Office, "I have so far received no information whatsoever as to the General Conference and its results!"³⁰

²⁷ Letter from Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO) to Jaime Torres Bodet (Director-General, UNESCO), 6 July 1949, Box 18, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

²⁸ "Memorandum by Julian Huxley on the Report of Professor Ozorio de Almeida," July 1949, 2.31 (2) — Planning of the work. UNESCO Secretariat. Natural Sciences Section (NS). File 9.3, SCHM 8, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

²⁹ [A. Cortesão], "Committee of Experts Responsible for Preparing the Plan of the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," (26 January 1950), 2.31 (3) — Planning of the work. UNESCO Secretariat file (PHS). Dr. Huxley's file on Cultural History of Mankind (NII i), SCHM 8, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

³⁰ Letter from Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO) to René Maheu (Director, Executive Office, UNESCO), 11 October 1949, Box 18, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

Huxley did not even receive a response to his letter, for as a private person his views were not interesting, and the British UNESCO National Commission, which did not like his evolutionary approach, passed him over as their representative on the subcommission that was supposed to carry out the project, while the French immediately asked Febvre and Rivet to be theirs.³¹

"I trust that you will not imagine that I look upon your absence from the progress of this work with anything other than shame and disgust," Needham told Huxley. "I have a good deal that I should tell you about what I have heard concerning your relation with it, and the extreme disinclination of UK officials to agree to your continued association with it. I cannot put this in writing . . ." Needham himself only just managed to be accepted onto the subcommission in his capacity as a scientific advisor for UNESCO. He was the organization's last choice, but "by the mercy of God the names they [UNESCO] suggested were all unable to go."³²

MAKING A DEAL

In December 1949 the new subcommission or group of experts, including Febvre, Rivet, and Needham, met at the UNESCO House in Avenue Kléber, and within a few days they held a further ten meetings to finalize the plan.³³

Febvre and Needham, whose views of history were not as different as Huxley's and Febvre's, soon found a common understanding, which included an opposition toward strictly positivistic, evolutionistic, and Eurocentric approaches. Highlighting the "exchanges and borrowings between peoples and countries" would be plenty in their eyes, and throughout the days that followed terms like "culture contacts," "interrelations of cultures," "interchange between peoples," and "cul-

³¹ Letter from Jean Thomas (Assistant Director-General, UNESCO) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 9 December 1949, Box 18, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

³² Letter from Joseph Needham (Professor, Cambridge University) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 17 December 1949, Box 18, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

³³ "Report of the Committee of Experts Responsible for Preparing the Plan of the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," (12–16 December 1949), 2.633 (1). Committee of Experts 12–16 Dec. 1949," SCHM 23, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

tural exchanges and transmissions” were used frequently in the spirit of the Febvre plan.³⁴

Febvre even admitted that science and technology played a larger role in bringing about exchanges and a deeper understanding between people than art, religion, and philosophy, which, according to Needham, had a tendency to divide rather than bring together.³⁵

As soon as Needham returned from Paris he enthusiastically explained to Huxley that Rivet and Febvre had been “at the top of their form and very helpful,” and in all secrecy provided Huxley with a detailed plan of the more or less topic-based work in six volumes.³⁶

Huxley was not surprised but rather disappointed, and sent Cortesão, who was in charge of the daily affairs of the project at UNESCO House, a handful of objections, in which he appealed for a chronological approach. “I would like you to see,” he almost commanded Cortesão, “how best you can get in, at the outset, the evolutionary idea, and that the book is a natural history of the evolution of man, from the evolutionary (historical or developmental) angle.”³⁷

Cortesão had no authority to change a word, and soon the various national commissions also welcomed the new Needham-Febvre plan, especially the fact that “cultural exchanges” were going to be the central pillar of the entire work. The objections centered rather on whether the results would justify the great expenses or related to details that were supposed to take national demands and wishes into account, all of which Febvre characterized as the result of “the obstinacy with which so many representatives of so-called ‘European’ or ‘Western’ civilization regard the latter—their own—as the only true civilization.”³⁸

In London, however, Huxley still refused to give up and managed

³⁴ Summary records (12–16 December 1949), “2.633 (1). Committee of Experts 12–16 Dec. 1949,” SCHM 23, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

³⁵ [A. Cortesão], “Report of the Committee of Experts Responsible for Preparing the Plan of the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind,” (10 February 1950), 2.31 (3) — Planning of the work. UNESCO Secretariat file (PHS). Dr. Huxley’s file on Cultural History of Mankind (NII i), SCHM 8; Records of the drafting committee, December 1949, 3rd Session, SCHM 23, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

³⁶ Letter from Joseph Needham (Professor, Cambridge University) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 17 December 1949, Box 18, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

³⁷ Letter from Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO) to Armando Cortesão (Counsellor, SCHM), 13 January 1950, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

³⁸ 2.324 — Comments on the Plan, 1950, SCHM 8 and Report 5C/PRG/2, SCHM 7, 2.225, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

to convince the hostile British UNESCO National Commission that it should at least create a small committee with the sole purpose of reconsidering the plan. Besides Huxley and Needham this committee consisted of a few other scholars including the infamous British historian A. J. Toynbee. It turned out to be a relatively difficult task to agree on much, including Huxley's evolutionistic approach. Instead they decided to recommend a more open approach in order to give the individual writers more freedom, and the National Commission was asked to work for a complete separation of the History of Mankind project from UNESCO's control at the forthcoming General Conference.³⁹

That was intended to pave the way for Huxley's comeback.

NONE OF UNESCO'S BUSINESS

At the General Conference in Florence in May and June 1950, around eight hundred delegates were sitting with their headphones on, listening in silence and not smiling, to an update of the organization's various projects. All the arguments for and against the history project arose once again, but having secured the support of each national commission, its progress was considered a formality.

This at least was how it appeared, until the philosopher Benedetto Croce, in his capacity of Italian delegate, delivered a surprising and unprecedented attack in which poured scorn on the whole organization, which he characterized as an association of Western scientists, who were invited to support the organization's apparently worthy cause while failing to address the world's real problems. As an example he drew attention to the many appealing phrases in the outline for the project, such as "the need" for an "objective and dispassionate" history of mankind, though it seemed clear to him that all history was written by men of passion. Unless UNESCO openly declared that it was a Western organization and that its work would follow the tenets of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this large and expensive project would be stillborn due to the lack of a

³⁹ "Special Committee on the UNESCO Project for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," 13 March 1950; "Tentative Personal Suggestions by A.J. Toynbee for carrying out the Plan of the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," 1950; "Report of a Special Panel of the U.K. National Commission set up to Consider the UNESCO Project for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind," March 1950, and "Notes by J. S. Huxley," March 1950, SCHM 8, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

unifying idea or vision and be the ultimate expression of UNESCO's uselessness.⁴⁰

It would have been comfortable to regard Croce as a grumpy old man, whereas he was in fact one of the most influential intellectuals in Europe at that time, and news stories soon started appearing, lampooning the History of Mankind project as an illustration of how the huge hydra, UNESCO, could spawn countless numbers of useless projects.

The criticism had to be faced one way or another, and the delegates responded by giving their blessing to the position of the British UNESCO National Commission, accepting their claim that history writing was not UNESCO's business and should be handed over to a commission totally independent from anything resembling pressure from the outside. With this adjustment the delegates asked the director-general to proceed immediately with the project's execution. Altogether "the resolution accepted at Florence was largely drafted by us," as one of the British delegates later with some slight exaggeration recalled the event.⁴¹

DEALING WITH THE DELICATE

The academic cockfight between Huxley and Febvre was a fair indication that the question of choosing the representatives for the new commission would be "sans doute la plus delicate."⁴² Therefore a small working group was formed with the sole purpose of dealing with this issue. Besides UNESCO staff it included representatives of the International Committee of Historical Sciences and the International Council of Scientific Unions.

"Your name is mentioned by practically everybody with whom I have so far discussed the question," Cortesão told his old protégé, Huxley, "but I have met with some sort of resistance somewhere in this same floor of the House. As you know, I think it essential that you

⁴⁰ *Il Mondo* (Rome), 8 July 1950, "Should UNESCO Die?" *Manchester Guardian*, 19 July 1950; and "Croce Puts the Liberal Case Against UNESCO," *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1950.

⁴¹ Charles K. Webster, "Letters to the Editor: Should UNESCO Die?" *Manchester Guardian*, 10 August 1950; "Scientific & Cultural History of Mankind. Approved at Florence, 9 June 1950," "0.22, 0.24 — Outgoing letters and memos, 1950–53," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁴² "Memoire. Conférence avec M. Thomas," 20 July 1950, "0.22, 0.24—Outgoing letters and memos, 1950–53," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

should represent the UK in the Commission, and eventually become its President, of course."⁴³

Huxley now knew that he had Cortesão's full support, and by pulling a lot of strings he also managed to convince the International Council of Scientific Unions to appoint Joseph Needham as their representative.⁴⁴

The small working party met in October 1950, and the support of Cortesão and Needham made it impossible to maintain Huxley's continued exclusion from the project. On the contrary, he was appointed as the very first member of the new committee.

The group also considered Febvre and Rivet but could not agree on them—officially due to their advanced age—and ended up appointing Febvre's coeditor of the *Annales* journal, Charles Morazé, a professor at the Université de Paris.⁴⁵

Other appointments went more smoothly, though it proved hard to find "suitable" names from non-Western countries. This was partly because of the lack of knowledge and partly because China, the USSR, and other communist countries failed to respond to any requests sent to them. The final commission thus consisted of ten scholars from France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, the United States, Brazil, Mexico, India, and Syria. They were joined by representatives of the International Committee of Historical Sciences and the International Council of Scientific Unions. As a form of consolation to the non-Western countries, the new commission would be obliged to co-opt a large number of correspondents from all parts of the world, so that all interest groups would have a voice and would be able to provide specialist advice on the project.⁴⁶

⁴³ Letter from Armando Cortesão (Councillor, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 25 July 1950, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁴⁴ Letter from Ronald Fraser (Liaison Officer, International Council of Scientific Unions) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 28 September 1950; and Letter from Joseph Needham (Professor, Cambridge University) to Julian Huxley (Former Director-General, UNESCO), 14 October 1950, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁴⁵ A. Cortesão, "Draft. Introduction to the special document requested by Mr. Maheu on 2nd Jan. 1951," "o.22, o.24—Outgoing letters and memos, 1950-53," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁴⁶ "Geographical Distribution of Persons Associated to the International Commission," 19 November 1952, "o.22, o.24—Outgoing letters and memos, 1950-53," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

HUXLEY BACK IN BUSINESS

In December 1950 the new International Commission for the Writing of the History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind met in Paris.

The American member, Ralph E. Turner from Yale University, immediately insisted on taking the floor. During the war Turner had written *The Great Cultural Traditions*, in which he had developed his own ideas on the history of mankind, and he was thus the only member of the commission who had a working knowledge of the task ahead.

Turner proposed making an entirely new plan for the project. Given the many previous unfinished plans, the other committee members only reluctantly agreed to give this a try.

Turner worked all night and returned next morning with his plan. It included a strict timetable for the elaboration of the six volumes without changing much at the heart of the Needham-Febvre plan, with its emphasis on cultural exchanges and its global scope. There was one noteworthy exception. Turner reintroduced Huxley's idea of a clear chronological line of development from prehistory to the present time, which through a selective progress had reached its preliminary climax in—as the French representative, Charles Morazé, bitterly described it—“the American way of life.”⁴⁷

Huxley was deeply impressed with Turner's “knowledge and clear-cut points of view,” and immediately proposed him as the commission's president,⁴⁸ a suggestion that got only a lukewarm reception. Morazé, in particular, voiced his discomfort, and Turner, who, albeit an energetic man, had worked all night and could barely tolerate criticism, began shouting at Morazé. The atmosphere turned aggressive, and the session was postponed.

Over dinner Huxley and Morazé agreed to approve Turner's plan but to propose the biochemist Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro from the University of Brazil for president of the commission. Carneiro, being Brazil's permanent delegate to the organization, knew UNESCO from

⁴⁷ Charles Morazé, *Un historien engagé: Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), p. 181; “Plan of the History of Mankind,” (January 1951), “2.632 (4). Working Papers 1–6,” SCHM 24, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁴⁸ Letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Luther H. Evans (Member of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO), 25 January 1951, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

within, and this could prove to be an advantage when it came to selling Turner's new plan to Torres Bodet and the national commissions. This would not be an easy job, considering that the plan demanded considerably more time and money than had been envisaged by Torres Bodet in his report to the Florence conference—five years instead of three. Then Turner, who obviously had flair for the practical work, could get the post of chairman of the editorial committee to ensure that the editors and authors followed his own schedule. In this way Huxley kept his evolutionistic approach, while Morazé got Huxley's support for his idea of publishing an additional journal called *World History*.⁴⁹

Huxley felt that the meeting had been the most constructive of all the dozens he had had to take part in over the years, and he returned from Paris well satisfied with the outcome. Not so Morazé, who, when the Turner plan became known, immediately came under severe attack from the French UNESCO National Commission and from several French historians, mostly because the plan favored Huxley over Febvre.⁵⁰

The commission feared that the Franco-British differences would cause problems when trying to get the new plan adopted by the General Conference, at least until Carneiro for the first time displayed his obvious flair for diplomacy and ensured that the plan would pass even with French support. "You will have heard that a story blew up in the French Commission, largely over Febvre," Huxley wrote to Turner. "However, Carneiro reported that Febvre would be extremely happy to take over the editorship of the Cahiers [the new journal] . . . and this I am sure would remove the difficulties."⁵¹

In February 1952 the commission was officially made an independent association under contract to UNESCO and had to establish its own secretariat in three rented offices at UNESCO House. Shortly afterward it managed to get the Turner plan with its rather extended budget approved by the General Conference in Paris. But Torres Bodet,

⁴⁹ Morazé, *Un historien engagé*, pp. 181–182.

⁵⁰ Letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Joseph Needham (Professor, Cambridge University), 19 December 1950, Box 19, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas; Letter from Charles Morazé (Member of the Editorial Committee, SCHM) to Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM), 20 December 1953, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁵¹ Letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM), 5 February 1951, "2.624 (1). Dr. Julian Huxley," SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

who was shocked by the enormous amount of money offered to the project by the General Conference, gave his approval with the sarcastic remark that UNESCO intended to sponsor “a” history and not “the” History of Mankind.⁵²

All practical difficulties had been solved. But the process had left Armando Cortesão, the commission’s new secretary-general, so devastated by the months of preparation that he had to leave the position in urgent need of rest far away from UNESCO House. His successor was the Swiss-American historian Guy S. Métraux, who was appointed on the recommendation of Turner and Huxley in fear that the French would use the situation to gain control of the commission and the secretariat. This was not good news for Charles Morazé, who had pictured himself in that position.⁵³

FEBVRE’S COMPENSATION

In early 1952 Lucien Febvre began a new chapter of his life as editor of the new magazine that the commission had created for him, as a kind of retirement scheme for the man whom Morazé considered to be the intellectual father of the History of Mankind project.⁵⁴

The journal was the only one in its field, and Febvre immediately received so many articles that the Commission had to hire a young historian, François Crouzet from the Université de Lille, as Febvre’s editorial assistant.⁵⁵

In the early days of July 1953 the first issue of the *Journal of World History*, *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale*, or *Cuadernos de Historia Mundial*,

⁵² Contract between UNESCO and the International Commission for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind, 21 January 1952, “2.41 (1). Office of the Director-General,” SCHM 9; Letter from Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 26 May 1952, “2.624 (1). Dr. Julian Huxley,” SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁵³ Letter from Armando Cortesão (Secretary-General, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 16 October 1951, “2.624 (1). Dr. Julian Huxley,” SCHM 17; Letter from Armando Cortesão (Secretary-General, SCHM) to Guy S. Métraux (Future Secretary-General, SCHM), 21 January 1952 and letter from Armando Cortesão to Guy S. Métraux, 17 February 1952, “1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files,” SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁵⁴ Patrick Petitjean, “Needham, Anglo-French Civilities and Ecumenical Science,” in *Sciences and Empires: Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion*, ed. Patrick Petitjean et al. (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), pp. 174–176.

⁵⁵ Letter from R. C. Mujumdar (Member of the Editorial Committee, SCHM) to Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM), 6 May 1953, “0.22, 0.24—Outgoing letters and memos, 1950–53,” SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

to give it the names of the three editions, hit the streets—including abstracts in German, Russian, and Arabic.

The journal inspired a mixed bag of commentaries. A French journal criticized the articles for appearing almost inaccessible to non-specialists, while other reviews showed great interest in the many new themes it brought up.⁵⁶

In the following years, Febvre and Crouzet printed about one thousand pages of original contributions annually, published on a quarterly basis, and made it possible for researchers of all kinds to help shape discussions on the design of the plan.

Several contemporary scientific authorities contributed. Among them were the American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, the German historian Werner Conze, the Polish philosopher and sociologist Florian Znaniecki, and the British American historian, orientalist, and political commentator Bernard Lewis. In fact, the scholarly quality of many of the first contributions to the *Journal of World History* proved to be very high. In the long run, however, the most cited article was written by Marshall G. S. Hodgson, who was still a young and relatively unknown historian at the time. He argued that a postwar world history needed to be a systematic critique of the basic presuppositions of Western historiography. Nothing less than a radical reorientation of the contemporary historical and geographical attitudes about the world could produce the kind of world history that the History of Mankind project was supposed to express.⁵⁷

Some of the articles addressed global-scale issues, but most of them focused on the historical development of a single nation or region, and especially the articles on Middle Eastern history were often quoted in contemporary literature.⁵⁸

As time passed, thematic issues were added, often treating themes and parts of the world that had previously not been given much attention, such as the history of Africa, India, Japan, and Latin America.

In one sense the journal proved to be a success. "Every day we are getting better and better materials but, at the same time, the publisher proves his total incompetence," Métraux informed Turner in wake of

⁵⁶ *Revue de Paris*, April 1954 and "Press Review, March–April, 1954," 17 May 1954, "0.30," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁵⁷ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "Hemispheric Inter-regional History as an Approach to World History," *Journal of World History* 1, no. 3 (1954): 715–723.

⁵⁸ Especially H. A. R. Gibb, "An Interpretation of Islamic History," *Journal of World History* 1 (1953): 30–62; and Bernard Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey," *Journal of World History* 1 (1953): 105–125.

the first handful of issues.⁵⁹ The problem was that the channels for distributing the journal were almost nonexistent. Despite the commission's subsequent press campaigns, the journal never managed to become a publication with a broad readership. But it appeared in bookshops and in libraries all over the world for as long as the commission worked on the project, with Guy S. Métraux and François Crouzet as the editors after Febvre's death in September 1956.⁶⁰

Altogether, the journal was supposed to capture materials relevant to the History of Mankind project, and it was envisaged that the knowledge gathered in the journal should eventually be reflected in the manuscripts of the work. It was also Huxley's view, and UNESCO's whole philosophy, that the organization and all related commissions should generate knowledge useful for maintaining peace, and that this knowledge would subsequently trickle down through the educational system almost by itself.⁶¹

This is not quite what happened in practice, since the quantity of inputs was too overwhelming. Selected writings from the journal were, however, published in separate volumes, so-called mentor books or "readings in the History of Mankind," which could be used for educational purposes and which were widely distributed.⁶²

TURNER'S TEMPER

Within the commission two members set the agenda: Turner and Morazé. Both were energetic, eloquent, and proud historians, and these similarities brought them onto an increasingly confrontational course.

Turner's enthusiasm for the project and immense knowledge of early history on a global scale was a thorn in the side of Morazé, because Turner's arguments often proved to be decisive when giving the volumes their definitive form and selecting the editors and authors. It was, for instance, Turner's idea to avoid national biases by

⁵⁹ Letter from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM), 22 October 1954, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁶⁰ The first *Journal of World History* was published until 1972 and should not be confused with this journal of the same name, first published in 1990.

⁶¹ Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*.

⁶² Among the titles were *The Evolution of Science* (1963), *The Nineteenth Century World* (1963), *Religions and the Promise of the Twentieth Century* (1965), and *The New Asia* (1965) edited by Guy S. Métraux and François Crouzet for the New American Library.

appointing authors who were experts on periods that were different from the heyday of their own culture. This meant planning for the first volume, dealing with prehistory, to be written by scholars from the United Kingdom, while the following five in chronological order would be written by people from Italy, France, the United States, Peru, and India. It was also at Turner's initiative that the commission was enlarged to include additional members, to widen its geographical and cultural representation—which had a positive impact on the project and gave it the much needed and enthusiastic support of countries like India, Pakistan, and Iraq.⁶³

But Turner's ideas were never adopted without intense clashes with Morazé. Each and every time these two men met there were thunderstorms, and, in addition to the difficult task of extracting additional money out of the UNESCO Budgetary Commission, a second equally difficult duty soon fell to President Carneiro, namely to smooth ruffled feathers and maintain order whenever these disagreements occurred.⁶⁴

Turner's occasional outbursts of temper when his ideas were opposed soon became legendary and gained plenty of attention within UNESCO House. The most dramatic meetings attracted so many spectators from all parts of the organization that even its great hall could not hold them all, and people from outside were eventually banned from entering the doors to listen.⁶⁵

Morazé felt that his position in the commission continued to deteriorate. "And particular through your doing," Morazé later accused Turner. "My letters left unanswered, your evident desire not to have me replace you, even for a single year, as chairman of our committee, your failure to inform me of your consultations with our colleagues on the editorial committee and with the directors of volumes, have ended by creating around me an isolation which the slightest incident could transform into open hostility."⁶⁶

By October 1953 Morazé had had enough and sent in his resignation from the Editorial Committee.⁶⁷

⁶³ Huxley, *Memories*, 1:70; "The Seventh Session of the General Conference of UNESCO," 18 December 1952, "0.30," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁶⁴ Huxley, *Memories*, 1:70.

⁶⁵ Morazé, *Un historien engagé*, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Letter from Charles Morazé (Member of the Editorial Committee, SCHM) to Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM), 20 December 1953, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁶⁷ Letter from Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 21 October 1953, "2.624 (1). Dr. Julian Huxley," SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

Only a month later, however, UNESCO's new director-general, Luther H. Evans, announced a reduction of the commission's budget. It generated a sudden feeling of living on borrowed time that made Turner reflect on his behavior, and he decided to write to Morazé in an attempt to save what was left of their relationship to overcome the crisis, and, faced with this state of emergency—and with the prospect of writing and editing one of the volumes himself—Morazé finally gave way.⁶⁸

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

In the early 1950s the Cold War was a harsh reality. Until the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, the Soviets had refused to have anything to do with UNESCO, but the Khrushchev administration inaugurated a reappraisal of the USSR's foreign policy priorities, and the country joined the organization in April 1954.⁶⁹

That was bad news for Turner, who certainly wanted the commission to be international but never missed a chance of depicting politicized Marxist history writing as the image of what the History of Mankind project was not. Now he feared that these historians would ask to join the commission, and it was far from helpful for him to have Carneiro express his eagerness to cooperate with anybody willing to participate in making it a truly international undertaking. This inevitably led to a clash between Carneiro and Turner. During a meeting at which feelings ran high over the Soviet question, Carneiro flung down his napkin on the table and stormed out of the room, leaving Turner very much inclined "to drop the whole business," concentrate on his own work, and leave the project to Carneiro.⁷⁰

But Turner, whose life had become more or less synonymous with the project, was no longer capable of taking such a drastic step, and he was still chairman of the editorial committee in November 1954,

⁶⁸ Letter from Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM) to Charles Morazé (Member of the Editorial Committee, SCHM), 16 December 1953, and letter from Charles Morazé to Ralph E. Turner, 20 December 1953, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁶⁹ Ilya V. Gaiduk, "L'Union soviétique et l'UNESCO pendant la guerre froide," *60 ans d'histoire de l'UNESCO* (Paris: UNESCO, 2007), p. 282.

⁷⁰ Letter from Ralph E. Turner (Chairman of the Editorial Committee, SCHM) to Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM), 19 October 1954, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

when the commission received commitments from the Soviet delegates at UNESCO that the Soviet scholars were prepared to take “an active part in this important, interesting and valuable undertaking of UNESCO.”⁷¹

The Soviet representative, Alexandre A. Zvorikine (Зворыкин Анатолий Алексеевич), who was a professor at the Institute of History at the USSR Academy of Sciences in Moscow, arrived in Paris in January 1956 and was—despite Turner’s objections—appointed vice president of the commission.

Zvorikine proved to be a pleasant man, liked by all members of the commission but, of course, very much influenced by the system that had sent him. He explained that he and his Soviet colleagues had already been working on a series of detailed, in-depth comments on the plan, and he intended to return to Paris as soon as possible, at his own expense, to present them.⁷²

Turner, who feared that an alternative philosophy of history would change the basic approach of the entire project, informed Zvorikine that he and his colleagues could only expect the commission to accept minor modifications at this advanced stage of the process. When Zvorikine later returned to Paris, it did also appear as if the Russian threat had been exaggerated, since the corrections only involved the inclusion of a few extra Russian names and reference works in the various volumes. Furthermore, during the months that followed Zvorikine proved to be a highly efficient addition to the workforce, ensuring that any request was promptly granted and meeting all discussions, corrections, and challenges with laudable openness.⁷³

But the Soviet scientists would soon manage to remove the shine from the miracle of a truly international history of mankind that the commission was in the process of compiling. In November 1956, addressing Western ambassadors at a reception at the Polish embassy in Moscow, the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, made his dramatic claim: “Like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.” This was

⁷¹ “Fifth Plenary Meeting [UNESCO],” 15 November 1954, “0.30,” SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁷² Letter from Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 31 January 1956, “2.624 (1). Dr. Julian Huxley,” SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁷³ Answers from Louis Gottschalck and Caroline F. Ware (Author-Editors, SCHM) on A. A. Zvorikine’s (Vice-President of the International Committee, SCHM) comments, 1.6 and 10.7.1956, “0.25 & 0.26,” SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris; Morazé, *Un historien engagé*, pp. 183–184.

a shock to everyone present. Khrushchev later claimed that he had not been talking about nuclear war but about the historically determined victory of communism over capitalism.⁷⁴

At almost the same time as this was happening, Turner received the first full manuscript of one of the volumes. The commission circulated it to their members and to consultants all over the world and to the UNESCO National Commissions, from where the authors then would receive comments that would be incorporated before the volume was prepared for publication in September 1957. But this time the Soviet comments were so voluminous that they verged on the absurd, and, since several of the Eastern European countries that had also been included in the work sent in alterations on a similar scale, the commission realized that there was no way that the authors could possibly comply with the deadline, and Carneiro once again had to go to UNESCO to ask for additional funds.⁷⁵

The field of history had now taken on a tangible reality as a major political battlefield of the Cold War, where the different sides of the Iron Curtain fought over the correct interpretation of their common past. As a Czech commentator concluded after having read one of the manuscripts: "Summarily it can be said of this study that the fact that the authors do not see the economic and political development in the world in the 20th century from a class point of view leads them to a positivist and unscientific interpretation of the events of this century."⁷⁶ It was that kind of comment that prompted participants from the United States to object to any acknowledgment given to the communist scholars.

Of course the manuscripts also provoked other comment. Israel was riled by passages highlighting Arab objections to the State of Israel. A number of Muslim countries were provoked by the interpretation of the Christian crusades. The Catholic Church did not like the representation of religion as something that had a tendency to divide rather than unite people. There were also objections to the lack of priority given to African and South American history. And so on and so forth.

⁷⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), p. 84.

⁷⁵ "Notes made by G. S. Métraux in the course of several meetings held with Mr. R. Williams of Little, Brown & Co. (February–March 1957)," "o.27 & o.28," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁷⁶ Memo from the author-editors of volume VI to the Bureau of the International Commission, SCHM, 14 April 1960, "o.27 & o.28," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

But most of these disagreements could be solved by quiet diplomacy, by removing the more sensitive phrases in the text or by inviting more non-Western scientists to take part in the editorial work. However, when these had been dealt with, what remained were the more fundamental ideological differences, and there was nobody on the commission who had a clue how to overcome these.

“THAT DAMNED COMMISSION”

As UNESCO moved into its new headquarters of cement and glass on la Place de Fontenoy at the foot of the Eiffel Tower in November 1958, the History of Mankind project was in decline.

Turner, a man of vigorous opinions and unbound energy, was furious at the sheer quantity of mainly Soviet objections and at the prospect of repeatedly having to ask the authors to change and reshape their contributions. Several authors had already died or resigned by this stage, causing severe delays to some of the volumes, and there were rumors that the early death of one of them had been provoked by the overwhelming amount of comments flooding his mailbox.⁷⁷

Eventually even the physically strong Turner was laid low by work. In late January 1959 he suffered two heart attacks and was hospitalized.

In February and March the work came to a complete standstill, while Turner's health slowly improved. His mind soon proved to be perfectly clear, but the attacks had caused a considerable slurring of his speech, he couldn't walk, and he also had problems with writing. "It's a difficult situation because we suppose that the UNESCO history and its progress is what our friend is living for," a colleague from Yale University told the project's secretary-general, Guy S. Métraux. "To take it away would be a considerable responsibility."⁷⁸

But there was also a job to be done, and as soon as it was clear that Turner would not be able to accomplish the work of editing the final texts, Carneiro, the diplomat, solved the problem. It involved Turner

⁷⁷ Morazé, *Un historien engagé*, p. 183; Memo from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to the International Commission, SCHM, 14 October 1964, "o.29," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris and letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Guy S. Métraux, 6 November 1964, Box 37, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁷⁸ Letter from George W. Pierson (Chairman, Department of History, Yale University) to Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM), 17 March 1959, "1.36. G. S. Métraux: personal files," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

remaining the editor, but his workload being greatly reduced. In practice Métraux would take over some of his duties, while a number of eminent historians were appointed as special consultants with the task of going through the entire manuscript.

Turner objected, but there was nothing he could do. His continued illness prevented him from attending meetings, and he spent his days wheeling himself about in his wheelchair, trying to keep up with the progress of the project and feeling somewhat hurt that he was not receiving more material from Paris.⁷⁹

With Turner out of the picture, the Soviet objections to the manuscripts reached their culmination point. This happened when the commission received the final manuscript for volume 6, covering the twentieth century. Only a few days after the manuscript had been handed over to the Soviet scholars, Zvorikine and his colleagues returned a comprehensive critical review—a total of five hundred pages of objections to the treatment of communism, of technological developments in the USSR, of the Soviet economy and political system—not to mention a very detailed guideline for the rewriting of the entire manuscript.⁸⁰

Several attempts at reaching a compromise failed, and once again Carneiro had to face UNESCO's director-general with a demand for additional money.

It was difficult to see how to reach agreement, for how should the concept of democracy be dealt with when, according to Soviet historians, it only expressed "the will of the economically and politically dominant class"?⁸¹ And could the concept of "colonialism" be used only about past Western phenomena, or could it also be used about Tsarist Russia, or the huge investments in other countries made by American companies?

The American author-editor felt obliged to incorporate into her text "contra-notes" to her Soviet colleagues' notes, which they tried to

⁷⁹ Letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM), 27 May 1961, "2.624 (2). Dr. Julian Huxley," SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁸⁰ "Résolution adoptée par le Bureau au Cours de sa XV^{ème} réunion," 27–28 February 1961, "0.30," SCHM 2; Letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM), 17 April 1961, "2.624 (2). Dr. Julian Huxley," SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁸¹ Notes on the revised manuscript of volume VI, April 1963, p. 17, "0.27 & 0.28," SCHM 1, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

prevent, and when they failed, they demanded space for notes to the author's notes.⁸²

From the sidelines, Turner could only watch the conflict escalate without being able to take action himself. He remained chairman until his death in October 1964, and his old rival, Charles Morazé, was sure that it was the project that ultimately cost him his life. One of Turner's last statements, allegedly had been: "That damned Commission!"⁸³

"A GREAT STORY LEFT UNTOLD"

In June 1963 the first volume of the work was published simultaneously in London and New York, marking the first achievement of an international endeavor without parallel in history. To UNESCO and the members of the commission it was a great relief, and even more so as it turned out that the reviewers treated the volume kindly.

Behind the scenes the commission was still awaiting half of the final manuscripts, of which one was way behind schedule. "Every time I tried to satisfy one critic, I would dissatisfy another," one of the authors told Carneiro. "So I plead incompetence."⁸⁴ Only in 1965 was the second volume released, and this was accompanied by positive reviews in some newspapers, but this time also by rather more critical comment. This was particularly the case in the influential *New York Times*, whose reviewer characterized the volume as a history with no soul, a mistaken enterprise with a lot of distracting notes. "The total effect is of an encyclopaedia gone berserk, or resorted by a deficient computer," the reviewer claimed, concluding that it was altogether "a great story left untold."⁸⁵ The review surprised the members of the commission, and, according to Métraux, some American scholars regarded it as "one of the most savage reviews ever published in the *New York Times*."⁸⁶ The

⁸² Letters from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM), 18 and 30 March 1965, "o.29," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁸³ Morazé, *Un historien engagé*, p. 183; Memo from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to the International Commission, SCHM, 14 October 1964, "o.29," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris, and letter from Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM), 6 November 1964, Box 37, Julian Sorell Huxley Papers, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁸⁴ Allardyce, "Toward World History," p. 34.

⁸⁵ J. H. Plumb, "A Great Story Left Untold," *New York Times*, 1 August 1965.

⁸⁶ Memo from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to the members of the International Commission, SCHM, 5 October 1965, "o.29," SCHM 2, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

review had the immediate and negative consequence that a number of publishers in various countries withdrew from their initial agreement to publish the entire work in their respective languages.

In the following years volume after volume was published, and the criticism grew no less trenchant as time went, despite the fact that reviewers could never agree on alternative approaches to the writing of a global history of mankind. Nevertheless the commission managed to have the volumes published in translation in several languages. In 1967 the first volume in French appeared, and one year later came the first versions in Serbo-Croat, Slovene, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Dutch, and Japanese.

“Now we no longer talk of the *preparation* of the History of Mankind, but of its publication,” Métraux noted with a great deal of relief in a letter to Huxley, but he was also worried about the possibility of the last volumes being outdated even before they hit the streets due to the changes and confusion of the time. “The year 1968 has changed in a considerable way the fundamental orientations of society in the Twentieth Century,” Métraux continued. “It will be most difficult to assess the direction which mankind will be taking in the last third of the century.”⁸⁷

That also applied to the relationship between the two friends and colleagues. Huxley was eighty years old and on his way into retirement, while Métraux’s work was reaching its conclusion after fifteen years, when he had initially thought that it would last for a maximum of only five years. The commission was dissolved in September 1969, while Métraux and the publication of *History of Mankind* became officially incorporated into UNESCO.⁸⁸

The last volume of the *History of Mankind* was published in 1976.

THE MENTAL DECOLONIZATION

For its time—not the time of its publication but that of its long preparation—the *History of Mankind* stands as an intellectual landmark. Not so much in the form of a concrete achievement but as a process. It was

⁸⁷ Letter from Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 17 March 1969, “2.624 (3). Dr. Julian Huxley,” SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

⁸⁸ Letter from Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro (President of the International Commission, SCHM) to Julian Huxley (Vice-President of the International Commission, SCHM), 30 June 1969, “2.624 (3). Dr. Julian Huxley,” SCHM 17, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

the first coordinated attempt to involve experts from around the world to reach agreement on a common understanding of history and thus the first truly international account of the history of mankind.

It was, however, precisely the ambition to achieve international uniformity that also proved a major obstacle toward the other ambition—that of analyzing global cultural diversity and its mutual influences. The priority of universalism over cultural diversity caused a number of problems that undermined the value of the work. Achieving “truth” through majority voting and relying on the ponderous movement of official envelopes to and from the far reaches of the globe, involving more than one thousand sometimes unwilling scholars, caused major delays, and, when the work was finally released, it had already passed its own sell-by date.

When the last volumes were published, social scientists were already busy reconciling themselves with the elitist notion of “civilization,” which was frequently used in the work as a synonym for a more refined form of “universalistic culture” with the UN system as its provisional culmination. Although the title of the first volume talked about several “beginnings” of civilization, the tendency was still to discuss it in conventional terms: it was born in the Middle East, its backbone was modern science, and it had been the driving force in the creation of the UN system. Intervention by non-Western critics had come too late to challenge this tendency, with the result that the final outcome was slightly more Eurocentric than the participants of the late 1960s and early 1970s wished. Even “mankind,” the work’s central concept, which had enjoyed very positive connotations when the project had been initiated, was under attack at the time as it was seen as a sexist relic with “humankind” or “humanity” as more appropriate conceptual replacements.

At the same time the focus on consensus history—especially after the involvement of the USSR in the work in 1956—turned its content into an extensive, highly complex, and diverse text dissected by marginal annotations and additions. And where that was not the case, the texts tended to follow the lowest common denominator, that is a harmless, smooth, and harmonized history that did not really bring satisfaction to anyone—not even to the authors, who in several cases found it necessary to distance themselves from parts of their own text.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Caroline Ware et al., *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 6:xii, xiv, xvii–xx.

Several authors were on the verge of giving up on a number of occasions but felt obliged to do the hard work and take up the sometimes dramatic challenges—in long periods even without remuneration—out of goodwill and in honor of the organization with the perfect name, the United Nations.

The hard work therefore barely had a fraction of the impact that some of them had envisioned in wake of Turner's claim that it was going to be the most influential history book ever written.

The problems were compounded by the lack of a single author to unite the entire work, and here Gilbert Allardyce's important article on world history in American education seems to offer a credible explanation by focusing on the similar and yet so different careers of Louis Gottschalck, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, and William McNeill. They were all historians at the time, they were all from Chicago, and they all shared the same ambition: to write a truly global world history. Of these three Hodgson prepared materials on Islamic culture for the *History of Mankind*, while Gottschalck—as mentioned earlier—was preoccupied for years with writing and editing an entire volume of the *History of Mankind*, which he himself characterized as “the first global history of mankind.”⁹⁰ And that might just be the very reason why their names and the names of the many colleagues from Chicago they involved in the process as specialists and researchers today appear to have been buried in the long list of faceless UNESCO historians. McNeill on the other hand received all the attention he could ever wish for when in 1963—same year as the first volume of the *History of Mankind*—he released his major work, *The Rise of the West*, a work that had a similar evolutionistic approach, even with a Eurocentric focus, and that was also employed with the Spengler-Toynbee approach, namely that various civilizations had undergone essentially different and independent lines of development.

McNeill's name gave his work a profile and at the same time he clearly possessed some star potential. His book was also shorter and easier to understand for ordinary people, and more money was spent on advertising it. Altogether, McNeill's book had better press, immediately reached the American bestseller list, and has sold in great numbers ever since. It was, therefore, not the UNESCO concept of “cultural exchanges and transmissions” but McNeill's idea of “cultural

⁹⁰ Louis Gottschalck, “Writing World History,” *The History Teacher* 2, no. 1. (November 1968): 17–23.

encounters” that became the cornerstone of the new genre focusing on the history of globalization. This became even more evident after yet another historian from Chicago, Leften Stavrianos, popularized the concept of global history.⁹¹

Unlike the scholars who initiated the History of Mankind project and believed that they could create an internationally authoritative work on global history once and for all, those who completed the *History of Mankind* volumes were more modest, more aware of the great limitations of bringing together the world’s historians to create a common but nevertheless useful understanding of human history, and more inclined to consider the publication—mainly because of the content’s global approach—as “a transitional document with good insights and many flaws of interpretation.”⁹²

Today the final version of *History of Mankind* does not play a role in historiography as an example for imitation but rather as a monument of a universalism that did not quite succeed. But it would be unfair to regard the entire process leading up to the publication in that perspective, groundbreaking as it was as the first trial of nationalism and Eurocentrism after World War II and as the expression of how far it was possible to extend a Eurocentric view in an era of burdensome ideological divisions and a time when Western colonialism was still very much both a political reality and a relevant frame of reference for the way historians looked at the world.

It is rather meaningful to characterize the process as the starting point of the postwar trend of writing global history because of the early start of the entire project and its ambition of focusing on “cultural exchanges and transmissions,” but also because UNESCO used this particular project to form its so-called World Heritage List (1972), which is probably UNESCO’s most widely known activity today, as well as the fact that UNESCO maintained the ambition of writing history with global approach in wake of this first major attempt.

In 1978 the organization decided to embark on a new and completely revised edition of the work along the same basic principles to

⁹¹ Bruce Mazlish, “Global History and World History,” in *The Global History Reader*, ed. Bruce Mazlish and Akira Iriye (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 16–20; Patrick O’Brian, “Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 4–7; and Gilbert Allardye, “Toward World History,” pp. 40–45, 23–75.

⁹² Told to me by Professor Guy P. R. Métraux, son of Guy S. Métraux (Secretary-General, SCHM), on 24 January 2008. See also Charles Morazé, *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), 5: xiv.

include those parts of the world—particularly Africa and South America—that had been heavily underrepresented in the previous version. This time the work was under the guidance and Presidency of Charles Morazé, among others, and was published under the new title *History of Humanity* (1994–2005).

The work was followed by several others, supporting the United Nation's decolonization practice through a kind of "mental decolonization," rehabilitating countries and continents by giving them a place in the history of humanity. The most noteworthy was the work initiated in 1966 as a response to the lack of information on Africa in the *History of Mankind*, which resulted in the *General History of Africa* published in the English edition from 1981 to 1993 in eight volumes. UNESCO's series of area studies also include the important multi-volume works *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (1992ff.), *General History of the Caribbean* (1997ff.), *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture* (1998ff.), and the *General History of Latin America* (1999–2009).