

Thomas M. Franck Turning UNITAR Around

■ The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has been one of the more misunderstood bodies in the UN system. Some people would say that it has really been misguided, and that, since being set up in 1965, it has wandered off the course that was marked out for it. Certainly it was thought necessary in 1984 to produce a pamphlet entitled *The Real Face of UNITAR*, with a final section on "the new face"; and William Barton, as chairman of UNITAR's Board of Trustees, wrote in it of plans "to revitalize the institution ... and to fulfill its mandate, provided it is given the means it needs for meaningful action."

With a touch of self-criticism, the pamphlet also says that "the real mandate of UNITAR" had been overshadowed by other things. Article 1 of UNITAR's statute defines it as an autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations established "for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in achieving the major objectives of the Organization, ... in particular the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development." No other UN body has this mandate.

Thomas Franck, born in British Columbia, is professor of Law and director of the Centre for International Studies at the New York University School of Law. He became director of research at UNITAR in late 1979 and, during his three years in that post, obviously proved to be a brisk broom. He says: "It was really our intention simply to focus again and again, against all of the odds, people's attentions on the problems of bureaucratic redundancy. Were they wasted years? Not at all. They were wonderful years, and they indicated what could be done."

Later, on sabbatical leave from New York University, Franck wrote a provocative critique, well supported with case studies, of the record of the United Nations from the viewpoint of American national interest. His book, *Nation Against Nation: What happened to the UN dream, and what the U.S. can do about it*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1985. But the following comments, focusing on UNITAR and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), comes from a conversation in New York in 1986:

"When UNITAR began, it was going to be the training ground and think tank of the United Nations. It was originally thought to be the place where the staff college would be located, that there would be a central place to which people in transit from one level of the civil service to another would repair for short or long courses of a staff college type. They would come from the whole UN system, and it would be one of the unifying factors. Of course, one of the problems in the system is that it is so hard to maintain any sense of a unified system. There are so many baronial fiefdoms. The barons intensely resisted the idea of a bottleneck through which all of their liege lords would be passing, and the idea [of a staff college] never got off the ground.

"On the research side, it was intended that there should be a single place at the United Nations where there would be middle-range contingency planning, where options would be examined, where you would look to see how various parts of the system were operating and test that against the missions that had been assigned to those parts of the system when they were first