

Foreword

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The papers and discussions in this volume are the product of the first Nitobe Symposium of International Organizations (Prague, July 20-23, 1996). Organized in conjunction with the 81st World Esperanto Congress, the Symposium commemorated the official visit of Dr. Inazô Nitobe, Under-Secretary General of the League of Nations, to the 13th World Esperanto Congress held in the same city in 1921. Among the participants invited to the Symposium were former and current officials with the United Nations and Unesco, representatives of linguistic and political institutions within the European Union, and researchers in the fields of linguistic imperialism and linguistic rights.

As explained in Section I, Dr. Nitobe's report to the League of Nations, reprinted here, initiated the first serious discussion of Esperanto by an intergovernmental organization. The Symposium's goal was to pick up the threads of this discussion by examining the relevance of Esperanto to international life today, from the perspectives of insiders and outsiders alike. This resulted in a stimulating and wide-ranging exchange of views.² It is my hope that this volume will encourage international policy-makers of various persuasions to think hard about the linguistic choices inherent in communication, and about the long-term and systemic consequences of those choices. It also identifies some challenging questions for the Esperanto movement which need to be further explored.

The Symposium was conducted in Esperanto, English, and French, with simultaneous interpretation. Costs precluded the publication of a separate set of proceedings in each language; instead, we have elected to reproduce each paper and large parts of the discussions in the original language, together with summaries of the papers in all three languages. The summaries are followed by a concise set of recommendations, and by the text of the Prague Manifesto of the Movement for the International Language Esperanto, an independent initiative which nevertheless bears closely on the Symposium's themes.

On behalf of the Universal Esperanto Association, I wish once again to express our thanks to the Japan Foundation, whose grant made the Symposium a possibility; to Oomoto and Institucio Hodler, whose generous contributions enlarged its scope; to our invited guests, whose enthusiastic participation made our efforts worthwhile; to the Congress audience, whose careful attention and penetrating comments greatly enhanced the proceedings; to our translators, who did a difficult job well; and not least to my fellow editor Suzanne Bolduc, who transformed a disparate collection of papers, diskettes and tapes into a highly readable and engaging work. May all our readers share our enjoyment!

²The main themes of the Symposium are discussed in some detail in Mark Fettes, "Esperanto and Language Policy: Exploring the Issues," *Language Problems and Language Planning* 21/1, 1997, 66-77.