

# U.N. WATCH

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## Changing of the Guard

Every U.S. administration changes its U.N. delegates and has a different concept of what the United Nations is all about. This is not true of Europeans, who have a long history of involvement in international organizations and regularly attend sessions of bodies called the Council of Europe, the Western European Union Assembly, and the European Parliament. Skeptical, wary, and adept at diplomatic noncommitment, European delegates generally refuse to become embroiled in volatile disputes and tend to follow a consistent line on economics, trade, human rights, disarmament, oil, whatever. It is easy to anticipate how the British, French, or Russians will vote in the General Assembly or Security Council, but Americans act like floating arrows, uncertain of the target.

The most recent fiasco, caused by a "communications gap," was the disavowal by the Carter administration of Ambassador Donald F. McHenry's vote on Israeli settlements. Earlier, there was Andrew Young's on-and-off game with the PLO. And then there was the time when the Kennedy administration so misled Adlai Stevenson on Cuba that he sounded like a hypocrite in a major U.N. speech. Listening to Ronald Reagan, it is hard to believe that President Eisenhower called the U.N. the "world's best hope for peace."

The sad fact is that most of the members of the U.N. look to the United States for leadership—not out of love or respect, but because we have the strongest economy and the greatest military force. Our new ambassador to the U.N., Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, got the job as chief delegate by being severely critical of the "soft" Carter style of diplomacy. Presumably the new team will take a consistent line, in the ambassador's words, to "restore United States strength and influence in the world." It would be nice if the change led to disarmament and world peace rather than confrontation and chaos.

## Now You Sea It, Now You Don't

Puns are inevitable when commenting on the U.N. Law of the Sea conference. From the *Wall Street Journal*, "...Sea Pact Takes U.S. For a Ride" and "Water Chestnut"; from the *New York Times*, "Don't Sink the Sea Treaty" and "Sudden Sea Change." What appeared to be one of the real achievements of the U.N., a draft treaty covering every aspect of sea law, has been torpedoed by the Reagan administration, at least for a time.

For seven years every conceivable maritime problem was placed on the agenda of the U.N. Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). At UNCLOS III in Geneva last summer delegations from 143 countries completed the third and final revision, called a "Draft Convention." The provisions, too numerous to list, range from seabed mining to freedom on the high seas. The treaty is a compromise between the industrialized nations, who have the equipment and the funds for sea mining, and the developing nations, who want their share of ocean riches from what the U.N. has pro-

claimed "the common heritage of mankind." The treaty was to be signed this summer, before the General Assembly convenes in September.

The need for a sea conference became obvious after World War II, when disputes arose over inflated claims to territorial waters and fishing arguments in Europe and South America resulted in armed confrontations. Also, the great naval powers were concerned about rights of passage through critical straits in case of war. At the same time, the industrialized countries, particularly the United States, were perfecting the technology for deep seabed mining. The prospect of capitalist exploitation of the seabed brought a call from Third World members for a U.N. meeting on laws of the sea.

The existing treaty has disturbed private mining interests because it sets up an Authority with wide powers to control mining licenses. The Authority will also do mining on its own with technology purchased from private companies. Money earned by the Authority will be distributed to the poorer countries.

To anybody who read the Republican party platform, Secretary of State Haig's call for a policy review should come as no surprise. One party plank specifically objected to the Law of the Sea conference, calling it detrimental "to the United States long term security requirements." What *did* come as a surprise was the abrupt firing of the U.S. negotiators, one of whom learned of his dismissal in the *New York Times*.

## The Forked Tongue

Once again freedom of the press is a fighting issue at UNESCO, and from its Paris headquarters come mutterings about the "ethics" of foreign correspondents and a sudden concern for their "safety." The debate is heating up, as it should, because what is at stake is nothing less than the freedom to write the truth as one sees it, not as it is dictated by a government, a censor, or a gun-toting popinjay.

One argument against a completely unfettered press in a struggling, developing country is that overemphasis on inefficiency and corruption can be destabilizing to a government fighting for survival. Many Third World countries insist they are being maligned by the Western-dominated news media, which judge poor, almost primitive societies by Western standards.

In South America, Africa, most of Asia, and a good slice of Europe, little gets into the local press critical of those in power. But the international press can get pretty nasty. Delegates from countries too poor to have large media resources of their own, and extremely sensitive to criticism, see a chance through UNESCO to control the news by licensing all foreign correspondents. They also want UNESCO to establish an international news service of its own—which, of course, they can control by a voting majority.

The question to be asked is what kind of correspondent would have received a license from Idi Amin or Pol Pot? With more government control, what kind of news will we get about Libya, Argentina, Bulgaria, or China, not to mention Bolivia, Ethiopia, Nicaragua—or a country run by Nixon plumbers?

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