

U.S. TO EXIT UNESCO

Freedom of the press is at issue.

The International Theatre Institute, along with world cultural, scientific and educational programs, finds itself in the middle of a raging and Byzantine political storm that has caused the Reagan Administration to put UNESCO on notice that the United States will pull out of the organization in December.

"We're not waiting for one big mushroom cloud," commented State Department official Michael Ussery. "UNESCO is sick and dying of politicization." The furor stems from the fact that UNESCO—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization—is two-thirds funded by the Western powers but is dominated by the more numerous and militant Third World countries.

In his Dec. 31, 1983 note of intent to director general Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, U.S. secretary of state George Schultz said that UNESCO has "extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with; has exhibited a hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society and a free press; and has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion." The U.S. portion of the total UNESCO tab is 25 percent and our withdrawal will undoubtedly hit the organization hard.

Many UNESCO member countries charge that America is perpetrating "cultural imperialism" (through world domination of television programming and the global spread of trend-setting pop culture), and that Western news agencies distort coverage of Third World issues. But UNESCO's blatant attempt to control Western news coverage by establishing a "New World Information Order" is what has precipitated the U.S. action. The United States objects to the fact the NWIO stresses the governments' "right to communicate" over individual freedoms. The NWIO seeks to restrict freedom of the press worldwide by proposing such methods as required international licensing of journalists and an international "code of conduct" for

NEA PANEL FOR '84

The Theatre Program of the National Endowment for the Arts has announced its 27-member Advisory Panel for 1984:

Vince Anthony, executive director, Center for Puppetry Arts, Atlanta

Andre Bishop, artistic director, Playwrights Horizons, New York

Robert Brustein, artistic director, American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, Mass.

Ed Bullins, playwright, Oakland, Calif.

Ellen Burstyn, president, Actors' Equity Association, New York

Richard Christiansen, drama critic, *The Chicago Tribune*

Maria Acosta Colon, business manager, San Francisco Mime Troupe

Gloria Foster, actress, New York

Ralph Funicello, designer, San Francisco

Amlin Gray, playwright-in-residence, Milwaukee Repertory Theater

David Hawkanson, managing director, Arizona Theatre Company, Tucson

Jorge Huerta, director/educator, Cardiff, Calif.

David Henry Hwang, playwright, New York

Michael Langham, director, Theatre Center, Juilliard School, New York

Marshall Mason, artistic director, Circle Repertory Company, New York

Frank McGlinn, member, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Harrisburg

Gregory Mosher, artistic director, Goodman Theatre, Chicago

Angela Paton, artistic director, Berkeley Stage Company, Calif.

Robin Reiter, business executive/patron, Miami

Barbara Rosoff, artistic director, Portland Stage Company, Me.

Ron Sossi, artistic director, Odyssey Theatre Ensemble, Los Angeles

Howard Stein, chairman, Hammerstein Center for Theatre Studies, Columbia University, New York

Daniel Sullivan, artistic director, Seattle Repertory Theatre

Megan Terry, playwright-in-residence, Omaha Magic Theatre

Jennifer Tipton, lighting designer, New York

George White, president, O'Neill Theater Center, Waterford, Conn.

William Wingate, managing director, Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles

members of the press. U.S. objections are exacerbated by the fact that the NWIO is backed by the Soviet bloc, and France's expulsion of 12 Soviet UNESCO employees last year for spying has heightened concerns over increasing Soviet influence within the organization. The Reagan Administration is disturbed by mounting costs of operating UNESCO programs with which it does not agree and for which it is paying the largest share.

UNESCO's rules require a year's notice for member nations to pull out and, according to the State Department, the intervening year will give UNESCO an opportunity to respond to U.S. concerns. Schultz stated that the U.S. is open to "indications of significant improvement"; however, with most of its programs committed through 1985, insiders consider it unlikely that UNESCO can demonstrate much change by December.

What does this withdrawal mean to the arts? The cultural section of UNESCO is the smallest of its four divisions. According to the *Arts Reporting Service*, the U.S. has always maintained a "distant absentee landlord" approach, so "we aren't losing much from the cultural point of view, except a wonderful opportunity of which we never took advantage."

Yet UNESCO is the parent organization for the International Theatre Institute, a non-governmental

cultural organization operating in some 60 countries. Canadian ITI head Curtis Barlow believes that member dues paid to the ITI secretariat in Paris by the various national ITI centers will skyrocket to offset lost subsidies from UNESCO. Martha Coigney, director of the New York-based U.S. ITI center agrees and fears that ITI will "become a luxury" when the U.S. pulls out, since UNESCO will most likely cut subsidies to all its non-governmental organizations first.

Its critics notwithstanding, UNESCO has some important accomplishments to its credit, including a literacy program that has taught millions worldwide to read and heroic efforts to save the sinking city of Venice. "What depresses me," said Coigney, "is that people get so excited about the political squabbling in UNESCO, but the organization's programs—99 percent of what it does—are never taken into account in the reporting, even in our own country. The theatre community and the American people should be aware of these programs. UNESCO is an intellectual forum where the whole point is to hear all sides of the story."

If the U.S. is not present, not only will our government not hear other sides of the story, Coigney believes, but other governments won't hear ours.

—Lindy Zesch