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VICTOR RIESEL: INSIDE LABOR

Ignoring Meany a Mistake

WASHINGTON—Someone in the White House has pulled the political boner of this skittish season. The error was made by failing to name a labor leader as one of the sixteen distinguished citizens who will be consulted on international affairs when new crises flare abroad.

Insiders were surprised at the by-passing of AFL-CIO president George Meany, whose effective, relentless international anti-Communist operations have made him Khrushchev's pet hate.

If there is any unanimity among the Soviet and Chinese leaders, it is in their common enmity toward George Meany. There is reason for their distaste. Meany has thrown the power and finances of the American labor movement against them on a global front reaching from Chile, to Saigon. Successfully, too.

Recently Meany and some of his colleagues helped smash the Communists' political offensive in Chile. For years, as I reported when I was there in '63, the Chilean Communist party, oldest in the world, has been planning to take power with the "via pacifica"—the peaceful road through the ballot.

The C. P. of Chile is wealthy. I found it operating movie houses, businesses, printing presses and even a taxi fleet. The knowledgeable anti-Communist were virtually without sufficient money even for a routine campaign in the presidential race earlier this month.

Under Meany's leadership American labor—working through the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT)—helped to send speakers, literature, money and strategists into Chile. Though the Communists rolled up almost one million votes, they were beaten. Thus over 50 years of Communist concentration was balked, at least for another six years.

Furthermore, guided by Meany, labor and American businessmen have organized the American Institute for

Free Labor Development (AIFLD).

Led by Meany and such industrialists as J. Peter Grace Jr., AIFLD has raised tens of millions of dollars to build decent housing for working people from Mexico City to Buenos Aires. Thus it has become a terrific anti-Castro force by proving that we Americans have a heart as well as a purse.

Within a few hours after the anti-Communist revolution succeeded in smashing the Communist apparatus in Brazil, the new leaders asked American Labor specialists to fly down to Rio and help resurrect an anti-Communist labor movement. Thus a Soviet-Castro-Chinese Communist labor counter-offensive was choked off.

But Latin America and the Caribbean are not the only fronts into which Meany has thrown U. S. labor influence. Just last week, for example, he dispatched Dave Sullivan, president of the Building Service Employees' International Union, as a fraternal delegate to the conference of the socialist British Trades Union Congress. Meany and Sullivan agreed that the time had come to talk bluntly to the British labor leaders who believe the U. S. is making "too much of a fuss over Castro." Sullivan, a transplanted Irishman, proved to them that the U. S. had not mellowed him.

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Sullivan got up in that big hall in Blackpool, England, and let them have it. He told them that "Castro's Cuba is still a most dangerous center for the subversion of all Latin America." He was booed. But he continued with an attack on the Communist terror in British Guiana, where scores of anti-Communist unionists have been killed in recent rioting. The Communist there, Sullivan said, "have all the makings of another very grave threat to the freedom of all Latin America and to the peace of the world." More boos.

Sullivan is but one of American labor's emissaries dispatched to challenge communism. There is also the globe-hopping Irving Brown, who has just returned from Viet Nam, where Meany sent him to help the labor movement. This is a vital move in the duel between the Chinese Communists and the anti-Communist world for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people.

Thus, on every continent, from the devastated European nations of postwar Europe to the Chinese-invaded lands of Africa, I have found Meany's colleagues in action—often sabotaged and insulted by representatives of softer labor leaders of other lands.

For years democratic labor leaders, some now heads of state, have been backed by American labor—some 24 percent of whose funds are spent annually to beat back the Sino-Soviet-Castro operations.