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Inside Labor

Criticism Of Fulbright

By VICTOR RIESEL



Mr. Riesel

Senator J. William Fulbright is being tackled by some heavyweights who are coming in from left of center and not from the right wing.

Influential labor leaders represent the Senator's statement that Fidel Castro is a "distasteful nuisance but not an intolerable danger." The national union leaders, especially those close to Mr. Labor himself, George Meany, interpret this to mean that the gentleman from Arkansas believes the cold war is over.

They don't agree. Furthermore, they plan to take their viewpoints directly to the White House and to Secretary of State Dean Rusk to make clear that they see a parallel between Fidel Castro's iron Communism and Adolf Hitler's iron cross Nazism.

They are flatly charging Senator Fulbright with appeasement. And they are aiming for a head-on collision with him if he continues his effort to make his views the nation's foreign policy.

The Senator already has been hit hard by AFL-CIO President Meany, who eschews diplomatic talk for the bluntness of which he is a master. Meany's first attack on Fulbright was unleashed recently at the United Auto Workers' Convention. His criticism of one of the nation's top foreign policy makers went unnoticed by the public.

"...As you know, we are not only interested in international labor, we are interested in foreign policy," said Meany whose organization spends over \$1.5 million annually to aid anti-Communist movements abroad. "We are interested in preserving a type of society in America under which it is possible to maintain free trade unions.

"The chairman of our Senate Foreign Relations Committee came out...with a suggestion that we should accept this idea of Castro as a permanent way of life. While he concedes it represents a threat to all of Latin America as well as us, he says we must be realistic and practical and accept it. I would like to say that this is the sixth year of the reign of Mr. Castro and he is still going strong.

"Cuba is still a base of Soviet Union anti-democratic propaganda for the Western hemisphere, and I don't think we can afford to get tired and just say that this man is a fact, a reality, and we have got to accept him."

After this call for a continuing fight on Cuban Communism, Meany hit Fulbright with the appeasement charge.

"Back in 1938 the democracies of Western Europe got tired," Meany said. "They got tired of fighting for freedom and at that time, of course, very few people in America were concerned with the problem of Adolf Hitler. The labor movement, of course, was concerned. We recognized what was happening 4,000 miles away as a threat to our way of life..."

"England and France were close to this problem, but they got tired, and in 1938 they decided to accept Hitler as a way of life, as a fact, and at Munich they turned over to him the Sudetenland. This, of course, was when France was relaxing behind the Maginot line and while England was asleep. Oh, yes, you remember. Hitler wasn't so bad, they said."

Meany then pointed out that the Hitlerian gas chambers and other persecutions followed the Neville Chamberlain "peace in our time" statement after Munich.

"We all know the result of that," Meany concluded, "and we all must know by now that appeasement of any form of dictatorship has no real future as far as those who believe in freedom are concerned. We can't afford to get tired..."

It is certain that this attack on the Senator was only the first of many which will come out of national AFL-CIO headquarters here. There is concern in Meany's circle that national silence will be taken for acquiescence to Fulbright's policies.

The unionists believe that the Senator's speech is a trial balloon sent aloft for the State Dept. There is fear that some elements in that Department are planning to pressure President Johnson into attempting a rapprochement with Fidel Castro on the theory that he is a Castro-ite first and a Khrushchev-ite and Mao-ist last—and that he might be induced to "Tito" (break) his close ties with Moscow and Peking.

The AFL-CIO International Dept., which has been revitalized under its new director, Jay Lovestone, will seek conferences with President Johnson, Dean Rusk and other government leaders in an effort to head off what they believe is a concerted move to recognize Communist Cuba.

There's a showdown in the making — and not behind the scenes either.