



Mr. Hiesel

Inside Labor

CIA Charge May Backfire

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — There will be less cloak and more dagger in the upcoming escalation of the CIA saga. The ramparts are quiet now in the private war of Walter and Victor Reuther against labor's elder statesmen. But not for long.

The Reuthers are continuing their barrage of charges that the nation's number one labor leader, George Meany, and his AFL-CIO International Affairs Dept. were the conduit of CIA cash being funneled to anti-Communist forces abroad. Now it can be expected that the charges will reverse — perhaps boomerang.

These elder statesmen are wise. Their private intelligence networks — without which no leader succeeds — report that the accusers themselves may have been conduits for an extraordinary flow of cash to favored foreign leaders especially in Germany and Italy.

Despite Mr. Meany's skilled use of the "cool" there's no doubt that the CIA-Reuther story will get a full treatment during the AFL-CIO's high command session here shortly.

There must be a review of the CIA "story." It is momentarily out of the headlines — but not out of this world. The underground battle for labor leadership continues across the world. Tough forces which reflect Mr. Meany's immovable opposition to accommodating the Communist lands are battling against the accommodationists inside every international labor secretariat — and fight fiercely inside every national labor movement across the world.

They fight because they know that the labor leader of yesterday quite frequently becomes the prime minister of tomorrow. He who leads labor abroad frequently leads his nation.

Mr. Meany, just back from Germany, believes the U.S. should get something for its "bridges to the East." Like the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. Value for value, says he.

And in these background battles, the forces and philosophers of Meany's tradition have been hurt by charges that they front for the CIA — meaning, in the final analysis, the White House and the Pentagon.

The Meany forces are not quite certain just why the Reuthers unleashed the CIA saga. The record shows that the CIA was told bluntly to "Keep its hands off American labor."

That occurred early in '33 in the office of the late Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, then CIA Director. This never has been reported, but Meany, David Dubinsky, Jay Lovestone and the late AFL vice president, Matthew Wolf, creator of the federation's global Free Trade Union Committee, visited him in his office. They told him to keep CIA agents away from labor and not to harass the committee or its officials, nor to attempt to use it as a cover. Smith agreed.

Since then the AFL — especially Dubinsky's ladies garment workers — has given the Communist-besieged European labor movement millions of dollars. Dubinsky, for example, even lent the Dutch railroad workers \$100,000 right after the war so they could rebuild their union and stave off the Communists.

True a few unions did run "cover" for CIA ten years later. But some were units of Walter Reuther's own CIO.

And as of the moment, at least one of them has not yet been publicly exposed.

What confounds the Meany bloc of leaders is the persistent Reuther criticism of the national labor movement's spending abroad.

The Reuthers have long been active on foreign fronts. They spent considerable cash in the early days of the German Federal Republic, building a man named Otto Brenner into a power in that country's Metal Workers — now the world's largest union — of which Brenner is today president. Also, the Reuthers spent heavily of time, money and resources in France and Italy. Generally they back forces to the left of those supported by Mr. Meany.

Today the Reuthers are active in the Spanish labor and youth underground. The auto union funnels money into underground schools for activists there — especially through the metal trades unions.

The Reuthers have also shifted their concentrations from the European mainland to Africa, Latin America, and even to Japan.

It is an understatement merely to say that this war within a war is vital. A world's at stake. Remember, the labor leader of yesterday is the prime minister of tomorrow — from Singapore to Kingston, from Conakry to Caracas.