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Org - American Security Council
Freedom Studies Center

EX-COMMUNISTS, GENERALS MEET

'Cold War College' Trains Hundreds

By BRIAN KELLY
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BOSTON, Va — Generals dressed in subdued mufti, former Communists, student leaders, a Cuban who taught Fidel Castro, educators, writers, industrialists, political figures — all have discussed revolution and communist dreams of empire in a luxurious stone mansion here in recent months.

A leftist plot? A right-wing citadel? A secret CIA sanctuary? Actually the Freedom Studies Center here is none of these.

3 Years old

Now three years old and still offering only short seminars, the Freedom Center remains the base for what may be America's "West Point" of the Cold War.

It is operated in a 24-room gabled and chimneyed fieldstone mansion in this gently rolling countryside.

John M. Fisher, 47, a former FBI agent and World War II bomber pilot who directs the center, said it fills a critical need.

"Political Warfare"

Noting that the Communist world has an estimated 6,000 political warfare schools, he said, "Nowhere do we have a school to teach how to fight what we call the Cold War. Nowhere do we teach experts for what they (the Communists) call political warfare."

But to the extent that any such program is being carried out in the United States, he added, "This is it."

Fisher, an Ohio native, is president and chief executive officer for both the broad-based American Security Council and the more scholarly Institute for American Strategy. The institute operates the Freedom Studies Center.

While the center is the closest approximation in the country to a "Cold War college," its founders still aspire to a full campus here with classrooms, a library and research building and dormitories for some 400 graduate students.

The center's present facilities are concentrated in the mansion which adorns a 683-acre estate, nine miles west of Culpeper and a short distance from Boston, a tiny village whose landmarks consist of a roadside marker and a combined post office, general store and filling station.

Founders of the Freedom Center four years ago purchased the estate, built by the late Texas newspaper publisher Charles Marsh in 1934, for some \$285,000.

Another \$200,000 was spent for refurbishments, including the \$100,000 conference room in what used to be the garage.

That facility seats 35 persons at table-desks and more than 60 in auditorium fashion, and boasts an elaborate projection room with tape recording equipment and audio-visual projectors for visiting lecturers.

Financial backers of the project include many names well known among the nation's social and corporate registries.

More than 1,300 persons attended the center's dedication in 1966, where they were addressed by some 30 speakers, including Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr., D-Va.

Since that time, nearly 1,000 persons have studied communism and related subjects at the center in brief seminars, usually of three days.

Fisher said the participants come from all walks of life, but the objective is to reach "those with some position of responsibility."

In one of the seminars, he noted, "We found that three of them (participants) previously had been members of the Communist party."

Lecturers have included members of Congress; a civilian-clad Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Army chief of staff and former U.S. commander in Vietnam; and Professor Hermino Portell-Vila, who flunked a history student named Fidel Castro at the University of Havana some years ago.

"We will not accept anyone who's active in an extremist organization," Fisher said. "We represent the middle 95 percent in America."

He noted the center has been "blasted" by both liberal and conservative spokesmen and added with obvious pride, it has drawn sharp criticism from writers for Izvestia and Pravda in Moscow.

Currently, Fisher said, the center is focusing its attention on revolutionary trends in America.

A study of domestic revolutionaries is scheduled to be published next year.

Fisher said that lack of money and demands of such projects as the revolutionary study have kept the Cold War college from getting "as high off the ground as we would like."

"But we're still headed in the direction of a training center," he said, with plans now under way for a \$12 million fund drive.

"The way things are going now, there should be in five years a private version of the Freedom Academy, as we set out to do it."

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