

by Victor Riesel

Blocking The KGB

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WASHINGTON — It's not surprising that the Central Intelligence Agency secretly read the mail of labor chief George Meany and his two top international affairs specialists — and probably, it can be reported advisedly, the letters dispatched by the late Walter Reuther.

This was done under two CIA directors — the late Gen. Walter Bedell Smith and the wraithlike Allen W. Dulles. They trusted no one. It was they who decided to attempt to use a handful of American unions to counter the Soviet's money, manpower, goon squads, killers, organizers and centrally commanded political functionaries in postwar Europe. Democratic forces were weak and penniless in Western Europe, the Middle East and Northern and Eastern Africa in the late '40s and '50s.

Communist control of labor in Italy, France and Germany would have meant the end of democratic governments and free capitalism there. In Italy the Communist party had an underground army of 60,000 — armed with artillery, if you please. In France, they had over 5,000 factory cells. In Germany they were so well organized they had smooth-coat paper for their magazines and newsprint for their Stalinist press, while democratic anti-Communist unions had to scrounge for a sheet of carbon paper.

Meany has said bluntly that the AFL built the German labor movement. Provided them with organizers. Care packages. And, I believe, money.

But all this jumps the story. It's not ancient history. It is today. Some evenings ago, for example, I sat in a small group listening to one of the world's leading political savants and analysts.

He predicted grimly, that the petrodollar crisis would hurl France, Germany, Italy and even Britain into searing revolutionary upheavals before 1975's end. The Communist-controlled French CGT (General Confederation of Labor) and the

Italian CGIL (General Confederation of Labor) are the most powerful political and economic para-military forces in their nations.

Remember, too, that it took only six Communist members of the British National Union of Mineworkers executive committee to extend a coal digger's strike long enough to push the U.K. into economic chaos. And it toppled the Heath government. No less a dedicated Socialist than Prime Minister Harold Wilson has publicly denounced some British dock strikes as Communist efforts to destroy his nation's economy.

If we swing back to the '40s and '50s we see a war-devastated U.S.S.R. using its underground forces and GPU-NKVD and MVD and KGB to smash democracy while Stalinism recovered.

Today the Soviets are a mighty military state. And the West, pouring hundreds of billions of dollars a year into the oil-producing lands, is a mighty weak economic force. Thus more than ever the U.S. needs to reinforce weak democratic unions abroad.

Only the naive still fail to understand that organized labor can make or break, support or smash a free government.

American labor is still helping unions abroad — unions which are even today under Communist or other totalitarian siege. Thus, our unions are bolstering our allies. And never before have we the people, or American industry, culture and freedom needed allies as we do now.

This is being done through the Agency for International Development. It contracts out at the rate of some \$9 million annually to the labor movement which in turn virtually administers three freedom forces (sometimes jointly with American industry); The American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in Central and Latin America, the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), and the

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On one continent they opened union housing developments; elsewhere it's a school, or a joint union-medical welfare center.

In eastern Brazil I have seen little huge-bellied starving children brought back to life in small AIFLD medical-social centers. In Africa I've seen auto repair shops, needle trades training centers made by the AALC. In Asia, Korea, the unions stand for freedom all over the land.

But that's only part of the story. Some 20 years ago or so, one top American labor chief took \$25,000 to Italy. This money was to help finance the counteroffensive by free labor against the Soviet-front forces.

But it was American labor money and the report is that he returned with \$10,000 saying the \$15,000 left was enough.

But this wasn't CIA money.

There are reports that some CIA funds went through an AFL European representative, Irving Brown, to France during the so-called cold war. Whatever the source of the money, it went to fight off Communist goon squads who were closing French Mediterranean ports to American relief supplies needed by lands recently occupied by the Nazis.

There is Portugal today, much as Western Europe was in the early '50s. Communists, well equipped with money and muscle, control virtually the entire so-called labor movement. Why should we see the wonderful Portuguese people captured so obviously — without our moving in as we did way back then?

Meany says, "Neither the AFL nor the AFL-CIO ever received any funds from the CIA or ever served as a conduit for CIA funds. Any allegations to the contrary are false."

There are many labor leaders in many other lands who can't say that about what they've taken from the KGB.