

## A Lesson for Liberals: This Is How It All Started A Quarter Century Ago

# The Folly of Appealing to the Un-American Committee on the John Birchers

There are several points of interest in the exchange of letters between Congressman Henry S. Reuss (*D. Wis.*) and Chairman Walter of the House Un-American Activities Committee over the John Birch Society. The first is the extent of the Society's campaign against Chief Justice Warren. Mr. Reuss wrote that his office had been "flooded with letters from throughout the country suggesting that Chief Justice Warren is a traitor and demanding his impeachment."

The second point of interest is that Mr. Reuss should turn to Mr. Walter's committee for an investigation. In his press release, Mr. Reuss said he was not asking the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee to investigate because it was already sending out a form letter over the signature of its chairman, Senator Eastland, calling the Society "a patriotic organization."

### Infested by the Same Types

But anyone who has been around the Capitol for any length of time knows that the staffs of both these witch hunting committees are infested with the same types who are running the Society.

In addition, as we revealed last week, the ranking Republican on the Un-American Activities Committee, Mr. Scherer of Ohio, is an endorser of the John Birch Society. Mr. Walter himself is too able a lawyer to join in with such crackpots but basically he would regard the Society as at worst a misguided ally rather than an enemy. In any investigation by his Committee, the Society would find itself among friends.

Congressman Reuss may have written his letter to put the House Committee on the spot, but the price was to accept the assumptions on which the Committee operates. Mr. Reuss in his letter said "it would be hard to imagine more un-American propaganda activities" than those of the Birch Society and therefore asked Mr. Walter to investigate. Then Mr. Reuss went on to say:

"Propaganda organizations have the right to free speech and the right to have any investigation of their activities conducted with due process of law and full regard for fair play, but the public has the right to know who is behind these activities, how they are financed and how they are carried on."

This all sounds very plausible and attractive but this is how it all started a quarter century ago. The Un-American Activities Committee was originally set up by the Dickstein-McCormack resolution in 1934 to investigate Nazi and Fascist propaganda activities in this country. Far-seeing liberals like Maverick of Texas and Warren of North Carolina

### Ronald W. May

We note with sorrow the untimely death at 38 of our good friend, Ronald W. May, gifted Washington correspondent for the Madison, Wis., *Capital-Times* and the York, Pa., *Gazette and Daily*. He distinguished himself in the fight against McCarthy and it was he who last year exposed the racist influences at work behind the Un-American Activities Committee and forced the retirement of its counsel, Richard Arens.

warned that it would become a menace to free institutions. Soon, under Dies of Texas, the main target of the Committee was the New Deal and its first great success, in 1938, was to defeat the saintly Frank Murphy for reelection as Governor of Michigan.

During the 30's and 40's it held an occasional hearing in which native Fascist groups were interrogated, never very harshly. This served only to give the House Committee a veneer of impartiality. To summon the John Birch Society would be a resumption of these old tactics at the expense of making it more difficult to fight the witch hunt in principle. The only firm principle is that in a free society it is no business of the government to police the arena of free debate and decide what ideas are outside the pale, or "un-American." A vigorous press is the best protection against crackpot conspiracies and the press has been doing an extraordinarily good job of exposing the John Birch Society.

Mr. Walter's reply to Mr. Reuss revealed that the House Committee "has received numerous letters regarding the John Birch Society." Mr. Walter said "most of them contain the general complaint that the organization is 'un-American', and the specific complaint that the leader of the Society has made charges of impugning the patriotism and loyalty of certain individuals."

Mr. Walter expressed the view that the individuals maligned have their remedy in the civil courts; we can just see the Chief Justice suing for libel. As for the general complaint, he said "no material information" had been received to indicate that the Committee "should, or could, be made by us under existing statute defining the authority of the Committee."

The Committee's authority is sweeping enough to cover any activity it considers un-American, but a secret society under a Fuehrer, Nazi style, subverting faith in the Supreme Court and the White House, somehow doesn't seem "un-American" enough for Mr. Walter.

## The Acquittals in the South African Treason Trial and Our Supreme Court

All who love justice must salute with reverence the three judges, Rumpff, Kennedy and Bekker, of the South African special court which last week acquitted the remaining defendants in the South African treason trial. It is extraordinary that in the tense atmosphere of South Africa three judges would have the courage to defy white supremacist pressure and throw the State's case out of court after a four year prosecution which cost South Africa close to a half million dollars.

The prosecution began in December, 1956, with country wide police raids in which 156 men and women, white and non-white, were arrested on charges of treasonable conspiracy. The aim of the raids was to destroy the African National Congress which was accused of being Communist infiltrated. The atmosphere may be inferred from the fact that the chief export for the State testified that frequent use of the words "the people" and "democracy" were indi-

cations that the ANC's Freedom Charter was Communist inspired!

The position of the non-white in South Africa is far worse than in Mississippi. The African National Congress is regarded by Afrikaan majority opinion with far more horror than the NAACP. Yet three judges threw out the case without waiting for the full defense to be submitted.

Our Supreme Court, by comparison, has acquitted itself very poorly. Though the atmosphere here is far milder than in South Africa, our Supreme Court during the past two cold war decades has upheld one repressive measure after another, notably the first peacetime sedition act since the Administration of John Adams, in the Smith Act trials and the powers of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the Barenblatt, Braden and Wilkinson cases. We hope Justices like Frankfurter and Harlan study the South African case and see how it puts them and their pretensions to shame.

## The Fate of Nagy Is The Fate We Are Preparing For Castro

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regime, reported after a recent trip to Cuba: 'For the first time, in talking with Fidelista intellectuals, I felt that Cuba was on its way to becoming a Soviet-type popular democracy.' But, of course, the document is careful not to quote my repeated warnings against intervention in Cuba. This is a quarrel in which each side is its own worst enemy. Fidel, by the unbridled demagoguery he has permitted in his press and radio attacks on other Latin American leaders, makes friends for the U.S. The U.S. government, on the other hand, makes friends for Fidel by talking as it does in this document of "the principle of non-interference by any American state in the internal or external affairs" of any other American state, while so openly fostering and training rebel forces for sabotage and civil war in Cuba. The U.S. laws and inter-American treaties against foreign intervention which we quoted in our issue of March 27 were never more openly violated than in our current efforts to overthrow Castro. For all the eloquence and polish of this new document all it adds up to is to provide the forces of reaction in our own country with a smoother sales talk for the interventionist plans begun under Eisenhower and stepped up, I regret to say, under Kennedy.

### Compounding Folly With Crime

I appeal to American liberals to face up to the realities without being sucked into the war camp. Policies of which we all disapproved helped push Castro into the Soviet orbit, and now we are asked to compound those past follies with the crime of war against a neighboring people. The rationale for the attack on Cuba is exactly the same rationale with which the Russians excused their attack on Hungary.

The simple premise of this "white paper" is that since Cuba is becoming Sovietized, any action against her is justified. The simple premise of Russian action against Hungary was that since it was threatening to leave the Soviet camp any action against Hungary was justified. The fate of Nagy is the fate we are preparing for Castro, and if one was an immoral crime, so will be the other. As the tempo of intervention in Cuba rises, so will rise the tension all over Latin America. Civil war in Cuba will be accompanied by civil strife else-

### Fresh Idea on the Congo

"While the constitutional problem is bound to come to the forefront of any discussion, there are, of course, underlying it several fundamental and inescapable economic and financial problems. I would draw attention in particular to the investments—investments of which the status now seems to be uncertain—which belong to the Central Government in the large mining and other companies. If the profits on these investments were available to the unified federal government envisaged in the report [of the Conciliation Commission on the Congo], it would be of great assistance to it in its work. Indeed, if the proposed Central Government were to ask the United Nations to buy out the foreign interests in these companies, as the Government of Ghana recently purchased the foreign-held gold mines, I would strongly advocate that we should meet their request. An international company in which the Congo already owned a large part of the capital could run the various enterprises for a period of years, train Congolese citizens to operate them, repay the capital out of profits, and then hand them over to the Congolese State."

—Mr. Aiken, Ireland, UN General Assembly Mar. 28

where in the hemisphere, making impossible all our plans for fostering gradual reform, forcing us to strengthen the military again in Latin America, and thereby speeding up the chain reaction of repression and revolt. Never did our country have so much need for patience and magnanimity. Never was it in greater danger than in this Lilliputian quarrel which may easily end by tearing the hemisphere apart. Cuba is not Guatemala. Time may bring many surprises, as it has in our dealings with Tito and Iraq. Let us turn back from the course of intervention before it is too late.

Latin American policy is the weak point of the Kennedy administration and may destroy its bright hope. Kennedy is following in the weak footsteps of Eisenhower, notably in maintaining the ban on travel to Cuba which Eisenhower imposed just before Kennedy's inauguration. We call attention to the document we publish this week on page two as an example of Iron Curtain tactics. The bar against travel is an effort to build a monolithic public opinion behind the interventionist forces.

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