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Setting the Record Straight on Vietnam

By GEORGE MEANY

IT is my pleasure and privilege to greet you in behalf of the millions of workers who are members of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The American Legion and the AFL-CIO have had friendly relations for years. These have been years crowded with tension, turmoil and tragic conflict. In these turbulent times our nation has been beset by grave problems and perils. In this connection, I recall that, several months ago, President Johnson told the world that the United States welcomed the fact that "history and our own achievement have... thrust upon us the principal responsibility for the protection of freedom on earth... No other people, in no other time, has had so great an opportunity to work and risk for the peace and freedom of all mankind."

Text of address by the AFL-CIO president to the American Legion convention in Portland, Oregon, August 26.

ordered and prepared by the Moscow-Peiping Axis. It was the Chinese Communists who launched military assaults against the peace and freedom of India. The Caribbean missile crisis, which placed the entire world on the brink of a nuclear war in October 1962, was the infernal handiwork of Khrushchev and his Cuban puppet, Castro.

And today, it is the Chinese Communist dictatorship which is the principal force for violence against Vietnam. That is why our country is now so deeply engaged in bitter and costly "work and risk for the peace and freedom of all mankind." I said that the Chinese Communist dictatorship was the principal, though not the sole, source of

enable its people to set up a government of their own free choice. This decision was never carried out because the Communists, who have been in complete control of North Vietnam, would never permit a free election in that territory—no more than Communists could permit a free election anywhere else.

Instead, the Ho Chi-minh dictatorship—with the help of Moscow and Peiping—set about to conquer the entire country. This Communist campaign of military subversion and aggression went on for years. The South Vietnamese government sought relief by complaining to the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam. This commission had been established by the Geneva Accord. It consisted of representatives from India, Poland, and Canada. It investigated the complaints and sent its report to the Soviet and British governments which had co-chaired the Geneva Confer-

Our Commitment

I tell you nothing new when I say, with all the conviction and energy at my command, that the American trade union movement is wholeheartedly committed to enabling our nation to fulfill this enormous responsibility. We have honored and will continue to honor this commitment with full dedication and without hesitation, freedom and peace are the burning needs of all mankind. Our organizations can do much to help our country in its efforts to have the world meet these needs. The present critical hour calls for close cooperation between our organizations in the pursuit and support of the aims proclaimed by President Johnson.

Let us look at the pages of history in the years since the American Legion was founded and our cooperation began. From where have come the threats to world peace and freedom? It is an undeniable fact that despotic dictatorships, brought into being by violence, have been resorting to force of arms in the settlement of international disputes and in the furtherance of their basic aim—world domination. These dictatorships, singly or together, in partnership or apart—whether they were Fascist, Nazi, or Communist—have been the source of catastrophic violence and war.

World War II was triggered by the Stalin-Hitler Pact. The civil war in Greece was instigated and directed by Moscow. It is the Soviet dictators who have been threatening the peace and freedom of Berlin, even at the risk of provoking another World War. The Korean War came as a result of an attack

all its differences with the Chinese, despite Soviet Union shares with the Chinese, the act of destructive aggression against the people of South Vietnam. Moscow could, if it wanted to, hasten the end of bloodshed in Vietnam by saying just one word. That word would be "Yes" in answer to President Johnson's repeated calls for negotiating peace in Vietnam.

Many Misinformed

I have recently come back from an international trade union conference in Amsterdam, Holland. I can tell you that many people in Europe and elsewhere simply do not know the facts of this tragic and expanding conflict. Too many of them are misinformed about its origin, our role in it and the vital stake in its outcome. It is most important for the people in our own country and the people of all other lands that the record be set straight about the bloody war which the Communists have been waging for years against the people of South Vietnam. Our government, our press, our radio and television circuits, all informed and patriotic organizations should again, and again, and again speak out on the facts of the Vietnamese crisis which, if misunderstood or mishandled, could lead inevitably to a worldwide nuclear conflagration.

The 1954 Geneva Accord to end the war in Indo-China decided that, for the immediate, there would be a division of the country into North Vietnam—north of the 17th parallel—and South Vietnam, south of this parallel. The conference also agreed that, within a year, there would be held an election within this entire territory, so as to

ence.

Evidence Presented

The Commission's report stressed that it—and I quote—"has come to the conclusion that . . . there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South. . . . The Committee has come to the further conclusion that . . . the People's Army of Vietnam has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the South aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South."

The record is clear. Every university professor seeking the truth can see it clearly. No student really thirsting for knowledge can fail to see it. Every sincere pacifist—with whom we all share a deep concern for the sanctity of human life—must face realistically the facts brought out by the International Committee. All Americans, and the entire world, must put first things first: The first fact of the matter is that it is the North Vietnam Communists—backed by Peiping and Moscow—who have been infiltrating, subverting, attacking and invading South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese authorities and people—backed by the United States—have never invaded North Vietnam.

Effective educators, sincere students and honest pacifists can serve the cause of peace only by supporting, as we of the AFL-CIO do, the President's persistent efforts to bring an end to the war in Vietnam—through meaningful negotiations, if possible, and through military strength to halt aggression.

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