

The AFL-CIO refuses action on Chinese threat of war

The AFL-CIO Executive Board concluded its semi-annual week long meeting in Bal Harbor, Fla. without taking any policy stand whatsoever on the Chinese invasion of Vietnam and its threat to global peace.

The U.S. media has chosen to focus on the Executive Board's ample criticisms of Carter Administration domestic policy — most of which are incompetently formulated. In an upcoming issue we will more closely examine them. Such "pronouncements" are not the most important story of the Executive Council meeting; they are misdirection — and the media knows it.

What we present below won't be found in any other paper or magazine.

According to sources close to the meeting, a debate raged within the Executive Board up until the last moments of its meeting on what to do about the Chinese invasion.

One grouping centered around the leaders of the Building Trades, the Steelworkers and the Longshore union, viewed the Chinese action as contrary to U.S. policy interests and endangering the nation with potential, unnecessary thermonuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. These leaders viewed the Carter Administration as "stupidly playing with fire," with its implicit encouragement of the Chinese during the Teng visit to the USA. From early last week, this grouping, some of whom were receiving updated briefings on developments in Indochina from the U.S. Labor Party, attempted to hammer out a policy statement that would place the Chinese on notice that the United States did not support their invasion. They further wanted to demand that the Chinese withdraw and to call on the President to state publicly that the U.S. would not come to China's aid — even if the Soviet Union was forced to

Kirkland: Let the Soviets and Chinese fight

In an interview last week with a foreign journalist made available to this news service, AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Lane Kirkland stated that it was his "opinion" that it would be in the U.S. strategic interest to "let the Chinese and Russians bleed each other."

Kirkland stated that he found former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's recent interview in the London *Economist* as a "good summary of our strategic situation worldwide.... I find little to quarrel with in it ... we are getting pushed around everywhere by the Soviets and we are letting them get away with murder with the SALT negotiations." He called for the rejection of the upcoming SALT treaty.

"Let me paraphrase an old maxim from Napoleon," Kirkland said, "when your enemies are chopping each other up, don't interfere.... The Soviets, the Chinese, the Cambodians — they are all our enemies. Let them bleed...."

There is "no real threat" of any kind of war that would involve the U.S., Kirkland assured the repor-

ter. "We have no real interest in this affair...."

He further stated that while he personally had "some criticisms of the Administration's foreign policy and China policy," the current war in Indochina had nothing really to do with it. It is an outgrowth of ancient hostilities.... The Chinese hate the Vietnamese and vice versa.... This could have happened any time...."

Told that some analysts in Europe and elsewhere thought that it was likely that if the Soviets were forced to intervene they would use nuclear weapons on China, Kirkland became agitated: "Sure that's a possibility.... But nobody I'm talking to says its likely and I don't think that the Soviets would use nuclear weapons.... Do other countries think that? What do the British think?"

Stressing that the above were all "my own personal opinions," Kirkland said that "the AFL-CIO has found that in this case, silence is the best policy...."

take action in defense of its Vietnamese allies.

Such leaders were stymied by the efforts of Lane Kirkland, the AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer, his side-kicks on the Executive Board such as Zionist lobby operative Sol Chaitkin of the Garment Workers and the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department, under the effective control of long-time Anglo-American intelligence operative Irving Brown. These networks are plugged directly into the State Department and into the National Security Council and Zbigniew Brzezinski — the American players of the “China card.”

The fight

Kirkland and the people who were pulling his strings tailored their operation to the profiled weaknesses of the best of the AFL-CIO leaders. These leaders, while attempting to shoulder their responsibility to their memberships and the nation, have, over time, been made to feel totally dependent on a gaggle of so-called experts who “advise” them on their opinions. Kirkland has been carefully cultivated as an expert with access to “inside” sources for national security briefings. Backed by the International Affairs Department, he is known to push AFL-CIO leaders to “trust him and the experts” on crucial foreign affairs matters. Kirkland, part of the Committee on the Present Danger circles which take a hard-line, provocative stance on relations with the Soviet Union, is occasionally challenged by “left-Fabian” social-democratic circles such as those around William Winpisinger of the machinists, on defense spending and arms limitation, but such debate is inconsequential and for the most part contrived.

What marks the policy discussions on the Chinese invasion is that they almost went out of control. For the first time in recent memory, people within the Kirkland CPD clique began to break profile. Many of these people had wandered into the Committee on the Present Danger thinking that it was an “American patriotic” oriented group. When confronted with the apparent and obvious lunacy of the China policy, these leaders bolted and began to verge on a policy position that actually represented U.S. strategic policy interests.

The weakness

But their own feeling of inadequacy and their anti-communism apparently did them in. Under pressure, Kirkland, who was reportedly kept updated by State Department sources on the projected course of the war, moved first to forestall a policy resolution. At midweek he was telling other AFL-CIO leaders that they had nothing to fear, that there was no cause for alarm. Sources in Washington indicate that the State Department backed up Kirkland by urging the council not to do anything that would interfere with U.S. efforts to force the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia in exchange for a Chinese withdrawal from Vietnam.

But many executive council members were not convinced. Pressure continued to build through last weekend for a policy resolution. Kirkland and his allies scrambled to sow confusion, adopting a consciously fraudulent line that “no one really knew what was going on in Indochina.” The AFL-CIO should not take any action, but should “wait and see what develops....” He was aided by reports in the major U.S. media which consistently played down the danger of a global thermonuclear war. Kirkland whipped up their anti-communism by pointing to the war as a fight among “our communist enemies.” He and his cothinkers gave assurances that a Sino-Soviet war — if one should develop — would be in U.S. policy interests. Warnings about a Soviet thermonuclear strike against China were “exaggerated out of proportion.”

In the end, it came down to whether the AFL-CIO leaders were prepared to act upon the evidence of a global war threat and the U.S.-Peking alliance for a thermonuclear showdown with the Soviet Union or whether they were cowed by Kirkland and his “State Department” briefings. They listened to Kirkland.

The “official” excuses for this posture were almost laughable. “It’s too hard to tell what is going on in Indochina,” AFL-CIO public relations director Alan Zack told a reporter. “Rather than say something stupid, the AFL-CIO is going to say nothing.”