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6317 - Cuban Situation

Guests: Rep. Thomas Abernathy (D-MS) and Dr. Medford Evans

Morphew: Introduction...Evans is a former high official with the Atomic Energy Commission and now a consultant to the CCA...to Abernathy...we've done a series of programs on the Cuban situation and I'd like to find out from you, what do you believe the American people want done about the Cuban situation?

Abernathy: Well, I don't think there's any question, Dick, but what the American people want some genuine action in Cuba. At this time the action is in quite a lull, nothing is taking place. There's just a hopeful expression being made that Castro will wither on the vine and that doesn't satisfy the people. It doesn't satisfy me and I'm sure it doesn't satisfy the country. I'm firmly convinced that the people of the United States and of the free world, particularly of the United States, would like to see first, I should say, a blockade of Cuba. I think they would prefer that our government firmly demand that Russia withdraw its troops from down there. If Russia fails to withdraw then I think that we should blockade the island and if blockading of the island does not bring about the elimination of Castro, although this may be a rather strong measure, I firmly believe that we ought to invade Cuba and I think the people of the country have that feeling.

Morphew: To Evans...as a one-time high official of the Atomic Energy Commission and as a college professor, you've had quite an interest in foreign policy and in the growth of Communism and what this country has or has not done to fight it, does the action we've taken so far seem to follow any pattern? Is there any consistency?

Evans: Yes, Dick, I think it does follow a pattern. We might, without being too glib about it just make a few points about that pattern. In the first place, it is bipartisan. I think we should recall that it was under the Eisenhower administration that Castro was installed in power in Cuba, and he could not have been installed without the cooperation of the

administration in Washington. Of course, former ambassador, Earl Smith, has told us in his recent book, *The Fourth Floor*, how about two weeks before January 1, '59, he called Batista in and said, you must leave Cuba, and Batista said, if I do then Castro will seize power and he's pro-Communist and Smith, who personally didn't approve, said, well, I know that but that's the way it has to be. Now, as the Eisenhower administration, then, is responsible for Castro's being in power in the first place, the Kennedy administration has kept him there and is in the position today of virtually protecting Castro. I think that one thing that's come out of this whole thing that is to the good is that the American people, whose attitude Congressman Abernethy has, in my opinion, so well described, are beginning to realize that the administrations that they have put in power in Washington do not do what they the American people would like to have done in the area of foreign policy. And this awakening of the American people may be quite a compensation for some of the things we're losing.

Morphew: To Abernethy...is there any way that the American people can demand and secure action from the administration in power?

Abernethy: Well, I think that's rather simple, Dick. The American people are excellent letter writers. As a member of Congress I can testify to that. I receive a tremendous amount of mail in my office and I don't inspire it either. It just comes natural with my people to write. They have strong opinions, they like to express them, and I'm very happy to receive them. And I have a feeling that if the people of this country would express themselves directly to the president and to the people in the Department of State as they do to their senators and congressmen, I think it would have quite an effect upon the opinions and the direction of the administration. I don't want to say that the people don't communicate with their president. I know they do. But they do not do so as regularly and as effectively as they do with their congressmen. You know, there's an old saying that when an American gets disgruntled about something in Washington, he says, I'm going to write my congressman and he usually does. And when they say congressman, they think of the representatives and not the senators. And we get the mail. We do the responding to it. We formulate our opinions from the views of our constituents and our actions are governed accordingly. And I think that would be a fine way for the American people to let the president and the Department of State know just how they feel about the Cuban situation.

Morphew: To Abernethy...your viewpoints about this are not confined to just one section of the country...

Abernethy: Not at all. I get mail from all over the country. I imagine most every member of the House and Senate does. Now, I don't say that I get as much as some who are from larger areas or larger cities or larger districts, but I do get mail from every state of the Union. I had a letter today from a man in Los Angeles. I never saw him or heard of him before, and he was quite vexed with some things going on in Washington. Why he took a notion to write me, I don't know, but people around the country do communicate with their congressmen and senators, but as I say, I think probably they would be more

effective, it would be an additional effectiveness, if they would Communicate their same views to the office of the chief executive.

Evans: Dick, I would like to endorse two things Congressman Abernethy has said there. One, through the years of my own observation, it's certainly been true that the House of Representatives has been closer to the people than either the Senate or the White House. I think there's no question about that. I think it's also very interesting that you got a letter from California, and I think the reason you did...

Abernethy: Well, he was good and mad, too.

Evans: ...the Congressman from Mississippi. The two big stories of the year were Cuba and Mississippi.

Abernethy: Yes.

Evans: And many people feel that the Communists hold Cuba with the aid of the Kennedy administration, whereas the antiCommunists hold Mississippi in spite of the Kennedy administration. Really, the diversion of U.S. military force to be used against the people of Mississippi while the forces would not be used in the case of Cuba, this, these two things coming together, I think, has been a tremendous shock, and probably a healthy shock, to the American people. And I think we need to recall that the worldwide program of colonialism or so-called anti-colonialism that Cuba represents is tied in with the campaign of forced integration in the United States. And we need to recall, too, that the destruction of states rights is preliminary to the destruction of sovereign national rights and the subordination of both the state and the nation to international U.N peace force of some sort.

Morphew: To Abernethy...recently there has been talk of a new crisis in Laos...I'm wondering if part of this could have been somewhat manufactured to take our minds off of Cuba because whatever happens in Laos, the fact remains that Russian troops and material are still on the island of Cuba, just 90 miles from our shore.

Abernethy: Well, Dick, I think anyone's answer on that, that is a person within my knowledge of the situation, his response would be more or less conjectural, but it is a known Communist policy that when they wish to detract from the activity in a particular section of the world, they'll spring up or fester in another section of the world. Cuba is Russia's prized satellite. Russia will not, in my judgment, exchange its position in Cuba with that in any other of the Communist bloc because it is from Cuba that they hope to Communize the western world. Naturally, they would like to detract the attention of the American people from the activities in Cuba, and so it's not at all impossible and very probable, I might say, that the problems we have in Laos and in that part of the world right now, may have been inspired by Russia and even by some in this country whom I don't trust, I might say, for the purpose of taking the attention of the people of this nation off of the problems that we have in Cuba.

Morphew: To Evans, first and then to Abernethy...those who seem to favor taking direct action in Cuba have been branded as warmongers and reactionaries and all sorts of vilification by various people high in our administration...reaction?

Evans: Yes. Well first let's take those two terms. I don't think the word 'reactionary' really means anything. It's just sort of a cuss word on the other side. The term 'warmonger' is of course much more specific, and I'd have two comments on that. One is that in the first place a great nation has to be willing to risk war in order to remain an independent country. The other thing is that one area where I think the false propaganda has influenced a great many very good people is with the fear of the so-called nuclear holocaust, the fact that a war begun now might be the last of the human race on the earth. This is a false concept, in my opinion, and it is based on a false estimate of the Soviet Union. The strongest conviction I have is that the American people have been seriously misled as to the fundamental power of the Soviet Union. We have far and away a greater military establishment and an infinitely greater scientific and industrial establishment than they have if we would only use it in the national interest. I think that's the main thing I would have to say on that.

Abernethy: Well, I'd like to agree with the doctor. I don't think there's any question but that our military strength is far superior to that of the Russians, and I think a simple threatened use of it has a terrific impact upon the Russian people. That was proven here last fall when the forces were built up in the southeastern part of this country and Russia, at least they made some act to withdrawing from Cuba, I won't say they got it all out of there, but they made an effort to get out.

Evans: We didn't keep the pressure on.

Abernethy: We didn't keep the pressure on.