

William F. Buckley Jr.

Fulbright Rides Again

I NOTE THAT Senator William Fulbright is greatly aroused because the television viewers of New York might get to see a short film called "Czechoslovakia, 1968." At the thought of any such peccadillo, Senator Fulbright showed more concern than he did over a period of 20 years for the systematic violation of the constitutional rights of his black constituents in Arkansas.

Indeed, it's true that there is a general law to the effect that materials produced by the U.S.I.A. are for foreign consumption only, but the primary and the obvious purpose of that law was to keep U.S.I.A. from becoming a propaganda machine for the White House incumbent.

WHAT HAPPENED is that the film in question is sensationally good—a brilliant documentary stroke which won an Oscar in 1969, creating a most unusual situation, namely that the American public was not allowed to see a short documentary which was judged by the critics to be the best produced during 1968.

Senator James Buckley, the sainted junior senator from New York, thought to interview Mr. Bruce Herschensohn on the monthly television program the senator does on a New York City channel. The senator, thinking it would be lively to show Mr. Herschensohn's famous film after interviewing him, asked U.S.I.A. for a print, and was told that under the law it could not be furnished.

However, the U.S.I.A. referred the senator to the National Audio Visual Center in the National Archives. The chief counsel for U.S.I.A. gave it as his opinion that the law would not stand in the way of Sen. Buckley's exhibiting the film provided he was doing so for educational rather than propaganda purposes.

Accordingly the senator got hold of a copy and sat down with Mr. Herschensohn to record the program. All of a sudden, Mr. Herschensohn found himself saying that

Sen. Fulbright's views on propaganda are "very simplistic, very naive and stupid." Obviously that was what triggered Sen. Fulbright's uncharacteristic concern for the letter of the law. (Mr. Herschensohn has now resigned and made a few more pertinent remarks about Fulbright.)

It isn't clear whether Sen. Fulbright believes that Mr. Herschensohn only has the right to call Fulbright stupid abroad. And one supposes it is a dilemma, e.g., for the Voice of America, which is pledged to report truly and faithfully what is happening in the United States, including flood, famine, and pestilence.

Will it broadcast the news today: "An employe of the United States Information Service, Oscar-winning Bruce Herschensohn, today charged that Sen. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, was 'very simplistic, very naive, and stupid' in his understanding of propaganda"?

Surely there would be ample justification for sending that story out? It would show that freedom in America extends even to the criticism, by a civil servant, of a powerful senator?

ALAS, MR. HERSCHENSOHN, for whose actual words U.S.I.A. Director Frank Shakespeare chivalrously apologized, is very nearly right. Sen. Fulbright has his strengths, but even chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee can have weaknesses.

The same newspaper that carries an account of Sen. Fulbright's prim war to guard American innocence from a 15-minute documentary of the re-conquest of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union, carries on its front page a report from Bolivia, where the new government has booted out of the country 119 Soviet diplomats. What on earth would 119 Soviet diplomats be doing in Bolivia! You guessed it.