

## HOW TO TELL A COMMUNIST AND HOW TO BEAT HIM

I AM a professor, but I am not here to give you "book learning." I am here to set before you, The American Legion, a problem which concerns all of us who love democracy and the ideal of liberty for which it stands. The problem is "How to check Communism." When I talk about Communism I know what I am saying. I have had a lot of experience with this menace. I know where it is most likely to appear, where it is most likely to take hold, and I think I know the best way to fight it.

It was before The American Legion was formed, in fact it was in August 1918, that I met my first Bolshevik. We didn't call them Communists in those days. There had been a big rain, that day, in Vladivostok, and down across the street car tracks, on Bolshei Ulitza (Russian for big street or Broadway) were tons of gravel and sand, a foot high, washed down from the steep unpaved streets that climbed the hill. I watched the Korean porters busily packing the debris in baskets, carrying it up, and patting it back into place to await the next rain. I climbed past them, on up to the great commercial school, where I was to lecture on American education to a great crowd of teachers, patrons, parents who were all school board members. I started at five. My interpreter finished at seven. Late into the night the questions continued. These people had revolted with Kerensky. They had welcomed the Bolsheviks. But they appeared happy to have been conquered by the Czecho-Slovaks and glad at the moment to be under inter-Allied rule. I was curious about Bolshevism. What was the idea? What was it like? What did Lenin and Trotsky want? I was not long in suspense.

After the lecture, a man stopped me at

the door. "Good evening," he said, "My name is Wax. I did a year of graduate work in the States. Until last month, I was the Bolshevik Commissar, here in Vladivostok." You can imagine my surprise. I said, "Come on home with me. What is Bolshevism?" And this is the tale he told to me.

Communism is not new. There have been forms of Communism since earliest times, even in America. Note the tribes on the Indian reservations. But Communism as we know it was formulated by Marx, Engels and others less than a hundred years ago. They saw something wrong with the world. The few had too much, the many too little. As Wax said that night, "Why should the rich have all the beautiful houses, pictures, rugs?" He even said wives. Karl Marx saw every few years that there was a depression. Wars were almost constant. The doors of opportunity were shut. Oppressed peoples and races were practically slaves. The Communists thought that such conditions need not exist. There could be peace on earth, good will to men, the good things of life could be more evenly divided, if only men would apply their brains to the conduct of their lives.

This man Wax was making quite a sales talk. It sounded pretty attractive so far. "How do you plan to do this?" I asked. "Well," he said, "the trouble today is that men are divided into two classes—those who own and those who earn—capitalists and workers.

"There is an inevitable war between the two. There can be no compromise, no truce, no armistice, no peace. It will be a battle to the death. Men are fools to love the Fatherland, the Patrie. The workers of one country should be better friends with the workers of other lands than with the capitalists of their own, who are their only enemy." "Workers of the world, unite!" read the Communist Manifesto. "You have nothing to lose but your chains." "Part of

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the trouble," continued Wax, "is in the churches. Men go to church, and what do they learn?—to be humble—to be patient—forgiving, to look to the future life. All this is grand for the capitalist. So down with religion, shut the churches, banish the priests." This done, the Communists thought, and the decks would be cleared so they could build a new world.

"And how are you going to defeat capital?" I asked Wax. "How are you going to win for labor?" "Very simple," he replied. "We will use the idea of the Soviet. First we organize all the workers into unions—unions of carpenters and masons, plumbers and railroad men, stenographers, cooks, librarians, teachers, nurses, professors, doctors, clerks;—everybody in fact except capitalists. Then each local sends its delegate to a larger council, and councils to the highest council. There is no need for congress, legislatures, or elections. Everything can be accomplished by the unions. Lenin has organized a system by which the few can rule for the many. This is what we call 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' The Proletariat chooses its dictators. After that it is dictated to!" "But what about the rich? The capitalists?" I asked. "Where do they come in?" "Oh," said Wax, "that is the cleverness of the idea. They have no unions, and if they formed them we wouldn't recognize them."

Of course you and I remember how after this time the Kolchak government failed in Siberia, how the Bolsheviks took complete control. They never made any pretense of democracy. They seized the power. My friend Arthur Bullard, who was chief of the group with whom I served in Russia in 1918, said he was talking with Lenin in Switzerland in 1905. Lenin had outlined the whole Bolshevik ideal. Bullard said, "How are the Russian people going to do this? They cannot do it for themselves, can they?" "No," replied Lenin, "they are too ignorant to know what to do, too

hungry to have the energy, too subservient to dare." "And surely the Czar won't!" said Bullard. "No," said Lenin. "Then, who will?" asked Bullard. "I will," said Lenin. The way they worked their way to the seizure of power was as follows: talk about peace, talk about social equality, especially among those most oppressed. Talk about organization of labor, and penetrate into every labor union. Talk on soap boxes. Publish pamphlets and papers. Orate and harangue. Play on envy. Arouse jealousy. Separate class from class. Try to break down the democratic processes from within. Accustom the people to picketing, strikes, mass meetings. Constantly attack the leaders in every way possible, so that the people will lose confidence. Then in time of national peril, during a war, on the occasion of a great disaster, or on a general strike, walk into the capital and seize the power. A well-organized minority can work wonders.

Now the Communist leaders have steadily insisted that Communism cannot live in just one country. Just as we fought to make "the world safe for democracy," so they are fighting to make the world safe for Communism. They are fighting this fight today, twenty years after my talk with Wax. Every country must become communistic, according to their idea. So they have sent out missionaries. They have supplied them well with funds. They have won converts. These converts have been organized into little groups called "cells," each acting as a unit under the orders of a superior. It is almost a military organization. They attack where there is unemployment. They stir up discontent among those oppressed, particularly among the Negroes and Jews. They work their way into the unions, where they form compact blocks. They publish and distribute little papers and pamphlets. At the *New York Times* they pass out one called "Better Times." At the Presbyterian Hospital it is



called "The Medical Worker." At the College of the City of New York it is called "Professor, Worker, Student." At Teachers College it is called "The Educational Vanguard." These are scurrilous sheets. In one issue I noted twenty-nine errors of fact. After a recent address of mine they passed out a dodger attacking me, with a deliberate error of fact in each paragraph. These pamphlets cost money, more than \$100 an issue. The idea is to try to entice into their web those generous and public-spirited teachers, preachers, social workers, and reformers who know distress and want to do something about it. These Communists know what they are doing. They follow their orders. Particularly they would like to dominate our newspapers, our colleges, and our schools. The campaign is much alike all over the world. I have seen the same articles, almost the same pamphlets, in France and England as in the United States.

You see, when it comes to fighting communists I am a battle-scarred veteran. But after twenty years I cannot tell one by looking at him. If only he were a tall dark man with bushy black whiskers, a bomb in his hand, a knife in his teeth, and a hand grenade in each pocket of his smock, I could recognize him. However, only the leaders proclaim their membership. The clever are silent, hidden, anonymous, boring from within. You can only tell a Communist by his ideas.

Now the Legion loves loyalty. It upholds the American Way. It seeks to perpetuate democracy. As a patriotic power, alert to alien *isms*, it justly considers Communism subversive, and has taken up the fight. What tactics should we adopt? What plan of campaign should we map? The answer, as I see it, is to note the conditions under which Communism has come to flourish in foreign lands and then do our best to see to it that these conditions never obtain here.

Now what were the conditions that gave Communism its chance in Russia? These were, I think, three. First, widespread misery, poverty and distress; second, suppression of freedom of speech and the right of meeting and assembly; third, general ignorance. These are the three conditions that give Communism a chance to flower and flourish.

When you have abject poverty widespread, when people are out of work, when houses are damp, dirty, cold and crowded, when children cry for food, there you have a soil fertile for Communism. It is no accident that there are Communists in the suburbs of Paris and London, in Harlem, or along the water front in New York and San Francisco. After a drudging day of despair, the family sick and cold, the doors of hope shut, you can't blame the unlucky for giving willing ear to the blandishments of the Communist propagandist, who says that Russia is a happy land with golden gates, flowing with milk and honey. When men are down they'll sell their birthright either for a mess of pottage or for a pot of message.

One way, then, to fight Communism is to go into the root of poverty and distress. Whatever you may think of certain aspects of the work of the present administration, you must see that in the program of resettlement, in the W. P. A., in the C. C. C. Camps, and in the National Youth Administration, President Roosevelt and his advisers have been helping the poor and distressed. Some think we can never pay for it. Some think that conditions will be worse in the long run. We must admit, however, that what they have done for the poor has been the most powerful blow against Communism. No matter what the national government does, whether you agree with this program or not, the good American who wishes to fight Communism must lend every effort to clean up the slums, to assist the unlucky, to cure the sick, to care for



the widow and the orphan.

It is at this point that I wish to point out to you a misunderstanding, a mistake, that many loyal citizens commonly make. There are among us a good many people who by training, taste, inclination or vocation see much of the poor, under-privileged, and the sick. These are ministers and priests, social workers, Y. M. C. A. leaders, doctors, nurses, teachers and professors. They see the effect of the slum. They know what the sweat-shop does to body and soul. Their wrath and indignation rises at the practices of some of the worst of us. Then these men and women who know the seamy side of life, from the pulpit, in the press, from the lecture platform, in the college and university class, point out these evils and struggle to find some way of improving these conditions. Some are wise and advocate gentle and gradual improvement. Some are in a hurry and urge quick reform. You and I are likely to think that they are Communists, that their ideas are subversive. We may call them "red." But whenever we do this we had better back up and think. *They* are not the Communists. The Communists get a lot of pleasure out of our mistake. The Communists are glad to see us attack them, to quiz them, to hamper them, to persecute them. Because in a way these zealots are the worst enemies of Communism. If we could clear up the worst of the slums and give help to that part of the population which is in genuine distress, which is what these zealots want, we should in one step have removed the most likely converts from the contamination of Communism.

You have a second condition favorable to Communism when people dare not speak their minds. Let the right of assembly become abridged and sympathy follows the supposedly injured party. If an idea is so subversive that it cannot be talked about openly, how alluring it is likely to be when it is heard in a whisper. When you cannot speak on the public square, you gossip down

the alley. When you cannot meet in the open, you conspire in the cellar. Then you hear only one side. Then you think you are a martyr, and you may be willing to die for a belief which, because it has never been effectively opposed, may be half-formed and ill-considered. Ideas expressed openly are, of course, subject to the law of treason, slander, or morality. The people of the United States would not approve and adopt the Constitution until it was explicitly stated that the rights of "freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble" should not be abridged; and so far as fighting Communism is concerned, I think they are right. Nothing pleases the Communists more, nothing advertises them so much, nothing wins them more converts, than violation of these rights.

But what the Communist is most afraid of is education. I do not mean any kind of education, because you will naturally think at once of this Communist who is a college graduate, that Communist who is a Doctor of Philosophy, groups of college students who support and uphold Communism. Conversely, you can recall at once many an unschooled illiterate who holds to the American Way. There will always be impractical intellectuals who look to the speedometer, not to the brakes. But Communism cannot flourish where all, or almost all, the people know a good deal about history, political science, and sociology. Communists advance their ideas as if they were new. They try to make people think that their plans are practical and workable. They don the sheep's clothing of democracy trying to deceive the ignorant, when they have not the slightest belief in democracy at all. The person who knows history will know better. The fallacy in Communism is not in the ultimate goals which they borrow, like peace, prosperity, social justice and human brotherhood, as in their practical plans for realizing these goals. The per-



son who knows history and political science and economics knows that these plans have been tried repeatedly, and repeatedly they have failed. The same plans, and much the same tactics, failed in France in 1789. They failed again in 1848. They failed in Germany since the War, they failed in Hungary, they failed in Spain, they failed in Russia itself. They sought peace; they got war. They sought fraternity; they divided brother from brother. They sought social justice; they achieved more poverty, more misery, more distress. As one learned Frenchman said, "*Communism can destroy capitalism but cannot replace it.*"

The person who is educated in the manner I describe learns to take a long look at the world. He sees the age-old aspirations of man for prosperity and well-being, for liberty of conscience, speech, property, freedom to earn and to spend, for equality before the law, and an equal opportunity for youth. He has watched the gradual development of these ideals, now advancing, now retreating, now advancing again. He knows how the Fathers of our Country caught a new vision, how by compromise and adjustment they devised a new form of government and a new form of relationship between man and man. Of course it was not perfect. The idea was to build a little at a time in the hope that what they had done would persist. The educated person knows that social changes come very slowly. If you are in a hurry, as in Germany from 1919 to 1933, or in Spain, there is revolution and reaction. If you try dictatorship, as in Nazi Germany or Italy or Soviet Russia, of course everybody has work but then you are only a serf. Up to now those who have been socially secure in this world have been only the slaves. The educated man moves slowly. He is in no hurry. The educated man moves steadily and persistently. He will not be lulled to sleep.

So to hit Communism at its weakest point you must have education. You cannot fight an idea by banishing it. You cannot fight an idea by shooting it. *Purges, "red scares," teachers' oaths, discharging professors, never stopped Communism.* The only way you can fight an idea is by meeting it with another idea; and the only way you can meet it with another idea is by proper education.

It is most fortunate for us that most of our children have a chance to go to school. It is fortunate for us that most of them can finish the high school course. Let us make very sure that these boys and girls have a chance for a good education for modern times, especially in the controversial and difficult fields of government and social life. It does not make much difference to me as an American what sort of Latin or Spelling or Algebra they study, but I do hope that they will learn what democracy is and why we have it; what life was like when our ancestors lived under tyranny, and what life must be like today in Russia and Germany, in Spain, Japan and Italy; what these liberties are that we prize; what these rights are that we must maintain; and what our corresponding duties must be. Let these boys and girls hear of the theories of social improvement. Let them know what Communism and Fascism think they are. Let them go right down to the bottom. Knowledge is power.

DeWitt Clinton, who built this school system, had it right when he said that these schools were the "*Palladium of our freedom...the bulwark of our liberties.*" Since his time these schools have grown in power and confidence. Every child has his chance. We have a strong and competent State Department of Education. We have the best system of school financing in the Union. Our school board members are able and competent. We have a grand force of teachers. Hold up their hands. Give them encouragement. Protect them from the



narrow-minded zealot who would hamper them. That's the way to cut down the Communist.

There is, however, one additional consideration. Communism, I am convinced, can flourish only when the soul of a people is dead. The wisest men from the time of the Greeks have sensed that we really live in two worlds, the world of sticks and stones, and the world of the intellect, the world of the spirit. When I was a boy I used to walk down the halls of Teachers College, and there on the wall was an old engraving of the New Jerusalem. There were high walls, closed gates, and up the steep sides, out of the mud and muck crawled and climbed the poor mortals in search of heavenly bliss. When I see that picture it makes me think of what education should do. There is one world, a dog's world, a world of bones and kennels and chains and muzzles, and hunts and fights; and there is a man's world, a world of ideas, of beauty, of thought. The one is base, the other good. In one, men are slaves, in the other they are free. In one, there are oppressed and oppressors; in the other, all are equal. There is a land of the slave and there is a land of the free, and the passport to this happy land is a liberal education and a belief in power beyond one's self.

I hope for a world with bigger bones and better kennels, but I despair if that is all men want. Our people will perish unless we re-incorporate in our life the statement made one hundred and fifty years ago in our Northwest Ordinance, "*religion, knowledge and morality, being necessary to the welfare of mankind, schools and the means of education should forever be encouraged.*" This accomplished, in this spirit, by the schools and by all other means of education—colleges, churches, clubs, organizations, museums, libraries, theatre and the press,—we shall have a happy people. We shall never be Communists.

You of the Legion recognize the enemy. How shall we beat him? Relieve poverty and distress. Stand up for the rights of Meeting and Assembly and Freedom of Speech, particularly when you do not agree. Support the schools and foster in every way the study of history, government, and social life. Above all, support a liberal education, an education for men, not dogs, that we may enter and live in a world of ideas, of beauty, of thought. This should be the American program. It will cause the most of discomfort to our enemies; it will do the most to perpetuate and preserve the form of government and the kind of life which the Fathers of our Country willed to us and to which they were confident we would give our last full measure of devotion.

WILLIAM F. RUSSELL

#### ENGLISH TEACHERS WILL HOLD NATIONAL CONVENTION

THE twenty-eighth annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, to be held at the Hotel Statler, St. Louis, November 24-26, will devote considerable time to appraisals of English curricula. "Evaluating the Program in English" is the general theme chosen by Marquis E. Shattuck of Detroit, president of the Council, for the convention.

Among those who will discuss recent important surveys and experiments and their implications for teachers of English are Dr. Wilfred Eberhardt of Ohio State University, English consultant in the evaluation study undertaken by the Progressive Education Association; Dr. Dora V. Smith of the University of Minnesota, specialist in English in the New York State Regents' Inquiry; and Dr. Harold Spears, Director of Research and Curriculum, Evansville, Indiana.

All youngsters know some things their fathers are too busy to learn.—FRED B. BARTON.