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WHAT ABOUT COMMUNISM?

BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, Jr.



THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS IDEA: 1936-1950

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WHAT ABOUT COMMUNISM?

By ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, Jr.

“A SPECTER is haunting Europe,” wrote Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels just over one hundred years ago, “—the specter of Communism.” Today—a century after the first publication of the *Communist Manifesto*—that specter is haunting, not just Europe, but the world.

Our response to that specter has too often been that of children running panic-stricken from a haunted house—a response compounded of terror, hysteria and fear. Such a response is dangerous for democracies which wish to survive the Communist challenge. It is dangerous because free people should not believe in ghosts; if they do, they slip into a subtle bondage which erodes the foundations of good sense and equanimity on which their freedom rests. It is dangerous, too, because frightened people are not capable of making intelligent decisions and of adopting stern and consistent policies.

The first answer to the specter of Communism, then, is to divest it of its spectral qualities. For Communism is not an invisible ghostly power. It is a movement created by men, operated by men, and subject to the same frailties and limitations as all other man-made movements. The first answer, in other words, is to achieve in our own minds a realistic picture of the nature of the Communist challenge. Facts remain the best antidote to hysteria.

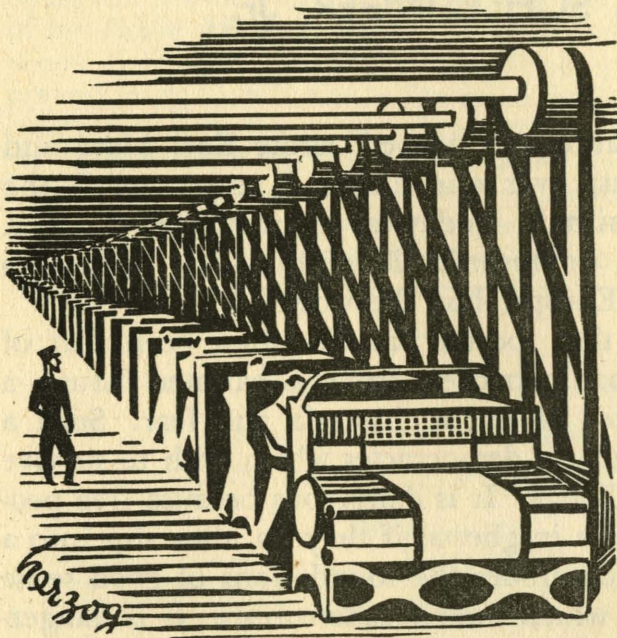
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. is Associate Professor of History at Harvard University and author of *The Age of Jackson*.

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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

THE word "communism" originally referred to systems of social organization under which goods were held in common. In this sense, some form of communism may be said to have been practiced by the early Christians; and in this sense, the



tendency toward the common ownership of property has been a recurrent feature of extremist groups, often religious in their inspirations, such as the Anabaptists in 16th century Germany and the Levellers and Diggers in 17th century Britain. Communism also has a traditional meaning

in economics: a society organized on the principle of "from each according to his ability; to each according to his creed." The communist economy in this sense exists only in theory.

But Communism, as the word is usually used today, has a generally accepted political and economic meaning. In ordinary usage it refers to a society in which the economy is owned by the state and controlled by a "dictatorship of the proletariat" as depicted in the writings of Marx and Lenin. Specifically it refers to the kind of political and economic system existing in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Outgrowth of Industrial Revolution

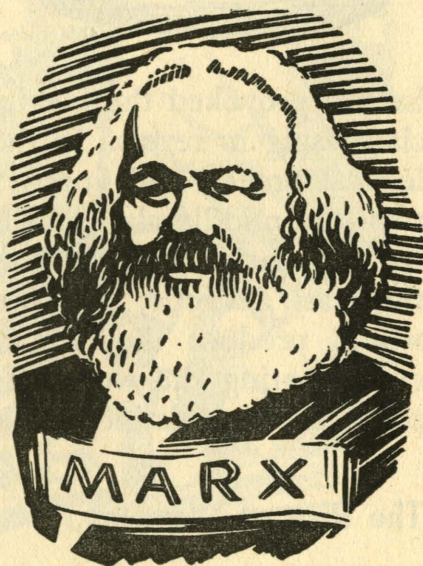
The Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries transformed the face of the western world. In place of a static system, based on agriculture, handicrafts and local trade, came a new impersonal, dynamic system, increasingly

based on mass production, mass distribution, mass labor. The industrial workingman began to lose a sense of a creative connection with his work. No longer working in his own home, no longer owning his tools, no longer having any rights to the products of his own labor, he began to feel himself almost as anonymous a factor in the process of production as the machine he tended. Huddled with his fellows in the noisome slums of the new industrial cities, divorced from any stable contact with the community, he felt homeless and alone.

The result was a deep and searing discontent, always threatening to burst out in actual violence. The result, too was a determined effort on the part of some of the discontented to analyze the causes of their difficulties and suggest a way out. The most impressive of these analysts was Karl Marx, a German thinker and writer. In 1847, when Marx was not quite thirty years old, he and his friend Friedrich Engels set down their social ideas in a clear and ordered way. On the eve of the Revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels published what they called the *Communist Manifesto*.

Marx and Hegel

Marx's thinking had been deeply influenced by the work of the German philosopher Hegel. From Hegel, Marx borrowed in particular the notion of the dialectic: that is, the theory that history is a process of eternal unfolding and change, where at each moment the existing set of conditions (thesis) produces an inevitable reaction (antithesis), where each contradiction between thesis and antithesis results in a synthesis, and where each synthesis in turn becomes itself a new thesis, recommencing the eternal process of development on a new and higher level. But, where Hegel was what is known technically as a philosophical idealist—that is, a philosopher who believed that



ideas were the ultimate reality—Marx was a philosophical materialist, believing that the primary reality was to be found in material conditions. Marx, as he said, stood Hegel on his head. Out of this exercise he derived the doctrine of *dialectical materialism*.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels applied the doctrine of dialectical materialism to history. As materialists, they argued that the prevailing ideas in any historical epoch, as well as the prevailing forms of social organization, were determined by its method of economic production and exchange. They argued that, after the dissolution of primitive tribal communism, civilization had been a history of struggles between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes.



The doctrine of the dialectic provided the clue to historical change. Each class society, as Marx and Engels saw it, constituted a thesis, whose existence provoked the inevitable antithesis in the shape of a class rising in revolt. In the long course of history, the dialectical process had finally reduced the warring societies to two—the middle class and the workers, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; the world was approaching the final stage of the class dialectic; and the triumph of the working class would produce the climactic synthesis—a classless society, emancipating the world forever from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles.

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The Rise of Marxism

Marx had great admiration for the achievements of capitalism. “The bourgeoisie,” he wrote, “during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.” But he felt that the bourgeoisie had discharged its

historic mission in liquidating the last remnants of feudalism; and that capitalism itself now promised to become almost as great a fetter upon productive forces as feudalism had been three centuries earlier.

Capitalism, Marx said, contains the seeds of its own destruction. As wealth is accumulated in the hands of a few, as economic power grows increasingly concentrated, the gap widens between the ever more prosperous rich and the ever more wretched poor. As productive forces expand, society is recurrently threatened by crises of overproduction; and the capitalists can maintain their position only by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces or by the conquest of new markets. Each new economic crisis is worse than the one before; each widens the gap between the wealth of the property-holders and the poverty of the proletariat; each brings the revolution nearer; yet recurrent crisis is inherent in the system. "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces above all," wrote Marx and Engels, "are its own grave-diggers.

The *Communist Manifesto* transformed the nature of the revolutionary movement, supplying it with an impressive theoretical basis in economics and history. In his famous three volume work *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1895) Marx amplified his analysis of capitalist society. He had a powerful intelligence, comprehensive in its



grasp and remorseless in its operations if narrow in its perspective. Though time has proved many of his predictions and conclusions to be wrong, a good deal of his basic analysis is now generally accepted.

Marx was not just an armchair theoretician. In addition to his long weary hours of study in the British Museum, he was active in the politics of the revolutionary movement. As a pamphleteer, he was hard-hitting; as a politician, he was determined; and, under his fierce, hectoring leadership the revolutionary movement was reorganized in Germany, at least, and set on an international foundation. In 1864 he helped found the International Workingmen's Association or First International.

Gradualism versus Violence

In the half century between the formation of the First International and the start of the First World War, the Marxist movement engaged in a series of internal debates



which resulted in a broad division of Marxists between those who thought that the revolution could be brought about by peaceful methods and those who thought it required violence.

Marx himself had never excluded the possibility that in some situations violence would be necessary to bring about the revolu-

tion. "We do not maintain that the means of attaining this objective are everywhere the same," he observed in a speech at the Hague in 1872. "We know that we must take into consideration the institutions, the habits and the customs of different regions, and we do not deny that there are countries like America, England—and if I knew your institutions better I would perhaps add Holland—where the workers can attain their objects by peaceful means. But such is not the case in all other countries." The revolutionary uprising of the Paris Commune (1871), indeed, frightened the more moderate

followers of Marx. Along with the conflict between Marx and Bakunin, the Russian apostle of direct action, it contributed to the break-up of the First International in 1876.

In 1889 representatives of the various Socialist parties of Europe gathered in Paris to found the Second International. Though these parties retained the rhetoric of revolution, their actual temper was significantly different. They were hard-working, sober men, veterans of the patient, day-to-day struggle to enlarge the political and economic power of their comrades. The failure of the workers' revolts of 1848 and 1871 had discouraged them about the possibilities of violent revolution. At the same time, it was beginning to look to them as if some of Marx's more drastic predictions in the *Communist Manifesto* were not working out.

Capitalism, for example, appeared to be neither so unstable nor so unendurable as Marx had prophesied. The poor, instead of growing ever more poor, were becoming perceptibly better off. The working class was gaining the vote and thereby a new access to political power, while at the same time it was forging its own tools of peaceful economic change in trade unions and cooperatives. The state, instead of being merely the naked instrument of capitalist oppression, showed possibilities of becoming an instrument by which the non-business classes might control the business community and even bring about, through taxation, some redistribution of wealth. All this encouraged Socialists in countries where capitalism had matured to place increasing faith in political action.

Democratic Socialism

Developments in Great Britain gave an especially powerful impetus to gradualism. British conservatism was given an unusual freedom for maneuver by the wealth of its colonial empire; and, under the influence of the "Tory Democracy" of Disraeli, it was able through judicious economic and political concessions to remove the revolutionary edge from British labor discontent. This experience gave British socialists a conviction that they could reach their goals by democratic means. As early as 1883 a group of influential intellectuals founded the Fabian Society, dedicated to the achievement of socialism by practical and piecemeal reform. The

Fabians never regarded themselves as Marxists in a strict sense. But during the same period the Marxist parties of the Continent—the Socialist Parties of France and Italy and the Social Democratic Party of Germany, as well as the smaller socialist parties of the Low Countries and Scandinavia—became infected by a similar faith in peaceful, democratic change.

Thus one wing of Marxism was developing a tradition of democratic socialism. In Eastern Europe, however, Marxism was assuming a different form. Here the revolutionaries were confronted, not by a relatively wise and conciliatory ruling class, as in Britain, but by an oppressive and reactionary autocracy. In self defense, they themselves became equally violent and extremist. Russia in particular had a long tradition both of desperate conspiracy and of savage repression.

Lenin's Influence

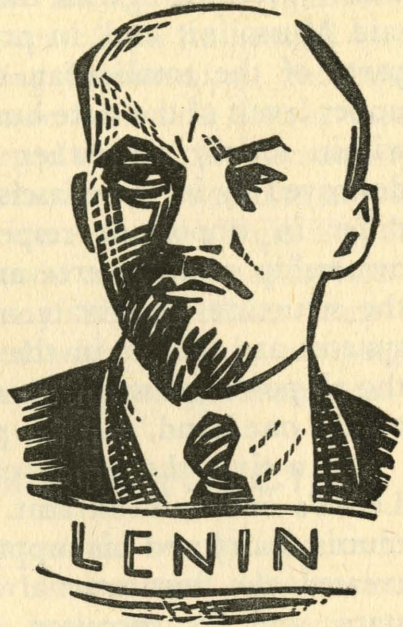
The Russian Social Democratic party was formerly organized in 1898, some years after Marx's death. Its most powerful figure was an able, highly intelligent and dedicated man named Lenin. Lenin's older brother had been executed in 1887 for plotting to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. Lenin himself had a passionate conviction that Russia could not be liberated without violence. He thereupon grafted the Russian conspiratorial tradition upon Marxism, advancing the thesis that the success of the revolution required the formation of a "revolutionary vanguard," controlling a highly disciplined party.

Although Lenin's ideas were perhaps an inevitable response to Russian conditions, they were obviously different from those of the mass-based, parliamentary parties of the western Socialists. Indeed, some of Lenin's views provoked strong opposition from other Russian Marxists. As Leon Trotsky later observed in a fleeting moment of insight, Lenin's emphasis on centralized control could only lead to a situation where "the organization of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organization; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee." But Lenin won in 1903 a temporary victory over his opponents within the Russian Social Democratic party. His group became known as the Bolsheviks.

(members of the majority), while his opponents were now called the Mensheviki (members of the minority).

The Russian Revolution

On the eve of the First World War, the main currents of Marxism had already diverged. Both the democratic Socialists and the Bolsheviks had started with Karl Marx, but they had gone off in opposite directions. The democratic Socialists were committed to gradualism; the Bolsheviks to the thesis that proletarian victory was impossible except under the leadership of a disciplined band of professional revolutionaries pledged to destroy the existing order by violence. In his pamphlet *State and Revolution* (1917) Lenin



rejected even the partial gradualism of Marx. "The replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state," he flatly said, "is impossible without a violent revolution."

The war itself completed the separation between the two schools of Marxists. Lenin's overthrow of the middle-of-the-road Kerensky regime in November 1917 brought the Bolsheviks to power. And the assumption of power—the establishment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—accelerated the transformation of Bolshevism. At the beginning, political and trade-union groups were allowed some freedom of action in Communist Russia. But, under the spur both of foreign intervention and of internal necessity, Lenin felt that repressive measures were necessary. In 1921, when the sailors of Kronstadt revolted, demanding freedom of political action for all left-wing parties, freedom of assembly for trade unions, and the secret ballot for workers and peasants, Lenin sent Trotsky and the Red Army to crush them by force. Soon afterwards the last traces of open political opposition disappeared.

Growth of State Power

A totalitarian state may be defined as a society in which the state recognizes no limitations in its power over the individual. "Nothing against the state, nothing outside the state," said Mussolini; and, in practice, this means that the single party of the totalitarian state becomes identical with the upper levels of the state bureaucracy, and that all institutions within society are either absorbed into the state-party or destroyed by it. The fascist and Communist state structures differ in important respects. Communism involves state ownership of commerce and industry while fascism retains the structure of private ownership. But the two political systems are similar in the relationship they create between the all-powerful state, the secret police and the single party, on the one hand, and the powerless individual on the other.

For a time the power of the Soviet state was limited by Lenin's own self-restraint. But his exaltation of the Communist Party and his suppression of all organized opposition created the institutional foundations for an all-powerful state; and his successor, the stolid, nerveless, implacable Stalin, had none of Lenin's compunctions. Stalin moved to destroy all possible rivals. Of Lenin's original politburo, only Lenin died naturally and only Stalin survives: of the others, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Sokolnikov were executed; Bubnov mysteriously disappeared; Trotsky was assassinated in exile.

Under Stalin's leadership, the Soviet regime has achieved great successes in the economic transformation of the country. But the formidable economic achievements were accompanied by systematic efforts to stamp out not only overt political opposition, but also all suspicions of political disagreement, all intellectual doubts, all hints of reservation. Nor did Stalin stop with political and economic ideas. Science, art, music, poetry, every field of intellectual endeavor had to conform to the party line. As thorough-going as Nazi Germany, Communist Russia has been equally successful in the destruction of cultural freedom.

The Soviet experience completed the transformation of Bolshevik Marxism into an all-pervasive religion. In spite of the positive achievements of the Soviet Union, the Communist commitment to an all-powerful state increased the

mistrust and hostility of the democratic socialists. And, for their part, the Communists looked with contempt upon the Socialists as milk-and-water characters, more interested in averting than in hastening the revolution. Though tactical considerations from time to time led Lenin to collaborate with moderate groups, he never ceased (as he boasted quite openly in his pamphlet *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*) in his efforts to undermine and destroy them. It was in this spirit that Lenin urged the British Communists to back the Laborite Arthur Henderson: "I wanted to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports the hanged." So bitter, indeed, was the Communist hatred of the Socialists that in Germany, before Hitler came to power, Communists even worked with Nazis in campaigns against Socialists collaborating in bourgeois governments.

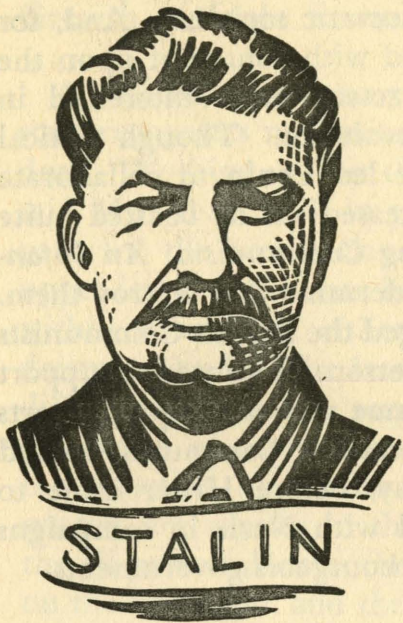
STAGES IN COMMUNIST POLICY

FOR Lenin, Communism meant world revolution; and in 1919 he founded the Third or Communist International (called for short the Comintern) as the general headquarters for international Communism.

Through the Comintern, and the famous "21 points" laid down as conditions for affiliation with the Comintern, Russian Communists were able to control the policies of the subsidiary Communist parties. As the Comintern has proposed, the local Communist leadership has disposed; and, when Communist leaders ignored or defied Comintern directives, they did not last long as Communist leaders. Students of the Comintern have distinguished several distinct stages of Soviet foreign policy, each of which has been faithfully reproduced by the local Communist parties.

1. *Immediate world revolution* (1917-23). In the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm, the Soviet leaders looked for a chain reaction of revolutions through the world.

2. *Rapprochement and agitation* (1923-28). But the defeat of Communist uprisings in Bavaria, in Hungary, in Poland showed that Communism was not ready to take power by force. Nor could the Soviet Union itself, struggling hard to stay above water, afford to mobilize all capitalism against it. So the Soviet Union established formally good



relations with foreign countries. In some cases, as in China, it even abandoned the more militant elements of the Communist party. Anti-capitalist agitation, however, continued.

3. *Renewal of extremism* (1928-34). In 1927 and 1928 Stalin began to emerge triumphant from the struggle for succession which followed the death of Lenin. In order to unite the people behind the Stalin regime and the five year plan the Comintern began to emphasize again the immediate dangers of capitalist aggression. The Com-

munist parties in Europe turned against the democratic socialists, who were called "social fascists" and regarded as agents of capitalism. In some instances, Communists even collaborated briefly with fascists on the theory that fascism could not last and that it would only prepare the way for Communism.

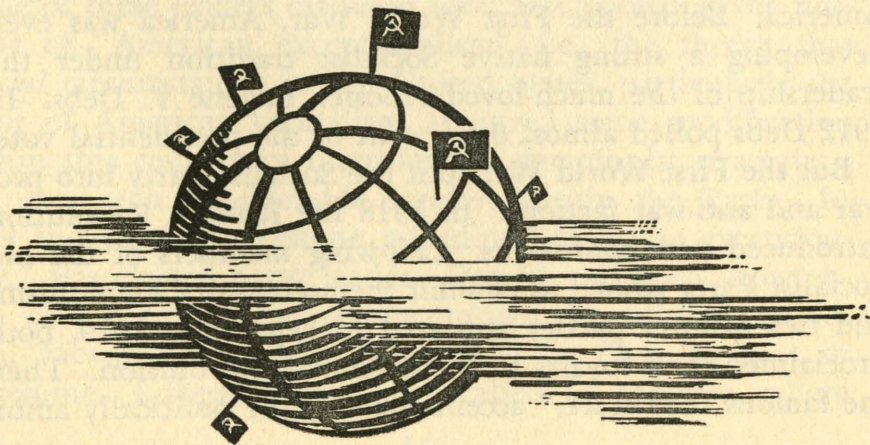
4. *Popular front* (1934-39): The power and durability of the Hitler regime soon revealed the error of this assumption. The Comintern swiftly reversed itself and ordered the Communist parties to join with all other anti-fascist forces in a popular front.

5. *Imperialist war* (1939-41). After the capitulation of Britain and France at Munich in 1938, the Soviet Union, fearing that Hitler might now turn to the East, began secret negotiations with Nazi Germany. These negotiations culminated in the Russo-German pact of August 1939. Even veteran Communists found trouble in making this adjustment. "To stand aside from this conflict, to contribute only revolutionary-sounding phrases while the fascists beasts ride roughshod over Europe," wrote the British Communist leader Harry Pollitt, "would be betrayal of everything our forebears have fought to achieve." For expressing such sentiments, Pollitt was removed from the party leadership until he was ready to recant and join in obstructing the anti-Nazi

war effort. For two years, the Communist Party in Britain conducted an anti-war agitation which included, in the words of Harold J. Laski, "an insistence that the responsibility for the war lay on the shoulders of Great Britain which was guilty of aggression against Hitlerite Germany, the encouragement of sabotage in the armament factories, and the use of the manifold disasters suffered by Great Britain after the fall of France to insist that the prolongation of the war would destroy the working class." Walther Ullbricht, a German Communist leader, ordered German Communists to betray anti-Nazis to the Gestapo. American Communists bitterly denounced Franklin D. Roosevelt and his policy of aiding the enemies of Hitler.

6. *Anti-Fascist War* (1941-45). Hitler's attack on Russia suddenly revived the popular front. The USSR fought magnificently during the war; and the Communist parties in the West collaborated loyally in the war efforts of their homeland. In 1943 the Comintern was officially dissolved.

7. *Soviet Expansionism* (1945-). In 1945, shortly after Yalta, the Soviet Union abandoned its wartime policy of cooperation with the West, and began to tighten its political and economic controls in Eastern Europe. This involved a revival of policies of revolutionary extremism. Socialists once again became an enemy of the Communists; and Walther Ullbricht, still a German Communist leader, invited former Nazis to join him in the battle against the west. For a time the Soviet Union sought to hide its objectives under the pretence that it was assisting the "national revolutions" allegedly demanded by the masses of such coun-



tries as Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia. But the formation in 1947 of the Cominform reasserted direct Soviet control over the national parties; and the subsequent break with Tito in Yugoslavia showed that the Soviet Union was indifferent or hostile to "national revolutions" except when accompanied by governments aligned with Soviet foreign policy.

The one consistent factor in all the twists and turns of the international Communist line has remained, of course, the interests of the Soviet Union. Whatever the idealism of individual Communists, the practical effect of the world Communist movement is that of a tool—and, next to the Red Army, the most powerful tool—of the Soviet foreign policy. But the non-Communist world must remember that it can, by its own policies and actions, increase or reduce the potency of this mighty Soviet weapon. For wherever injustice, poverty and racial discrimination exist in capitalist or socialist countries, there exists fertile ground for the divisive and disruptive activities of international Communism.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES

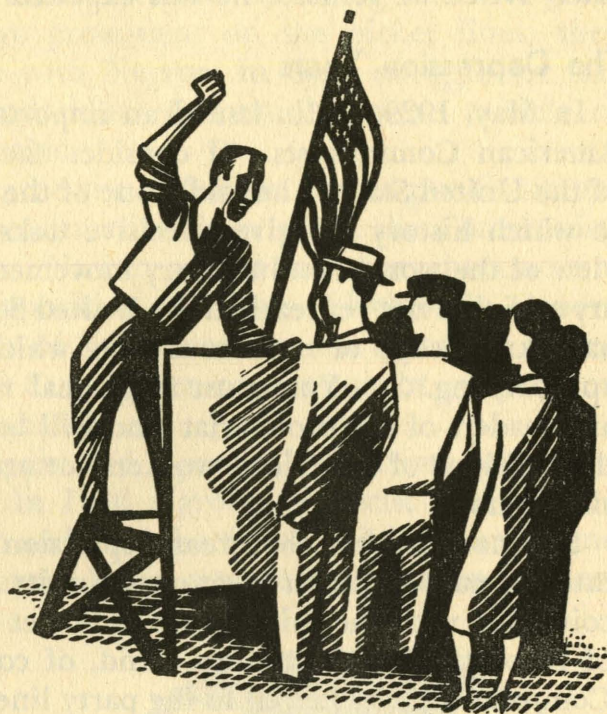
Beginnings of American Communism

THE United States has a strong and wholesome tradition of native radicalism. A nation born in revolution, its great heroes—Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln—have stood for the liberation of man from oppression. Extreme radical movements, though always hated by the conservatives of their time, have made invaluable contributions to the building of America. Before the First World War, America was even developing a strong native Socialist tradition under the leadership of the much-loved Hoosier Eugene V. Debs. In 1912 Debs polled almost 6 per cent of the presidential vote.

But the First World War split the Socialist Party into pro-war and anti-war factions. In 1918 the Russian Revolution introduced new confusions. Left-wing members of the old Socialist Party rushed to commit themselves to Communism; and two splinter parties appeared in September 1919, both proclaimed their loyalty to the Bolshevik Revolution. Then the famous "red scare," accentuated by the politically ambi-

tious Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, drove most Communist activity underground. Eventually the rival factions got together and established the American Communist Party as an open political group under the name of the Workers Party.

The American Communist Party made little headway during the twenties. In 1924 it tried to invade the Progressive movement of Senator Robert M. La-Follette. But La-Follette, a stalwart representative of native American



radicalism, angrily rebuffed the Communists, announcing his belief that "all Progressives should refuse to participate in any movement which makes common cause with any Communist organization."

The Communists were further weakened in the twenties by the activities of party members who demanded a certain independence from Moscow, or who allied themselves with anti-government leaders (especially Bukharin) in Moscow. Some of these leaders espoused what was known as the doctrine of "American exceptionalism"—i.e., the theory that special circumstances in the United States, particularly the vigor of American capitalism, required some modification within this country of international communist strategies—and they won considerable support within the Party. In 1929, indeed, Jay Lovestone, a leading "American exceptionalist," was elected party leader. Despite the open intervention of the Comintern representatives, brandishing cables from Moscow, the majority persisted in their support of Lovestone. Lovestone was later called to Moscow, where

he appealed from the Comintern's decision. The appeal was rejected and Lovestone was asked to endorse the new party line. When he refused, he was expelled from the party.

The Depression Years

In May, 1929, Stalin issued an important directive to the American Communists. "I consider the Communist Party of the United States," he said, "one of the Communist parties to which history has given decisive tasks from the point of view of the world revolutionary movement. The revolutionary crisis has not yet reached the United States, but we already have knowledge of numerous facts which suggest that it is approaching. . . . You must forge real revolutionary cadres and leaders of the proletariat who will be capable of leading the millions of American workers toward the revolutionary class wars."

Six months later the great depression began. The Communists now had their great opportunity. But the depression coincided with the third phase of Soviet strategy—the period of revolutionary extremism. And, of course, the American Communist Party hewed to the party line. In *Toward Soviet America* (1932) William Z. Foster called for the proletarian revolution. "Under the dictatorship of the proletariat," he wrote, "all the capitalist parties—Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, Socialists, etc.—will be liquidated, the Communist Party alone functioning as the Party of the toiling masses." When Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the New Deal in 1933, the Communists denounced him as the leader of a "social fascist" regime.

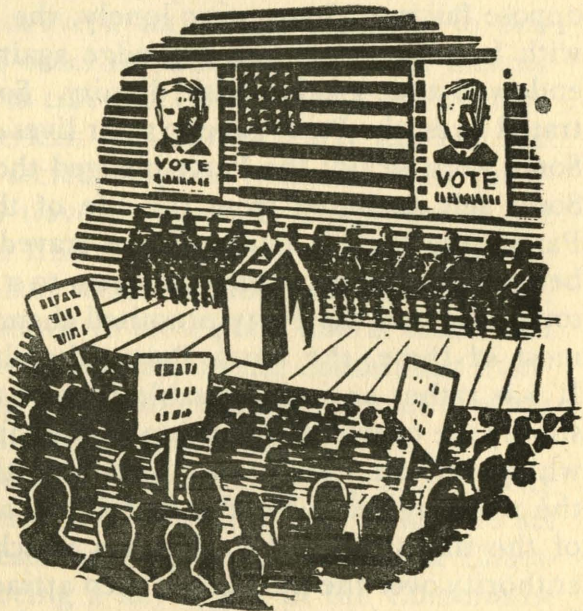
But the Americans wanted the New Deal; they did not want revolutionary extremism. Consequently the American Communists in 1935 turned with relief to the new "united front" line. This strategy now permitted Communists to "collaborate" with the liberal movement. The process of "collaboration" in the "united front" gave the Communists their most extensive influence in the United States.

It is important to remember the mood of the middle thirties. We were still near the bottom of the greatest depression in our history. Franklin D. Roosevelt had only begun the long process of restoring to a despairing America a faith in its own future. The trade unions were at the very

beginning of their bitter fight to organize the mass industries. In many parts of the country racial tensions were acute. Communists threw themselves into the firing line with great courage. They were prominent on the picket lines; they fought side by side with Negroes in their struggle for fair treatment; many individual Communists were models of selflessness and devotion.

At the same time, the rise of fascism abroad put Communism in an even more attractive light. Once the Communists were convinced that Nazism would last, they became unswerving in their opposition to Hitler. Litvinov in Geneva called on the League of Nations to stop the spread of aggression. The national Communist parties sought cooperation with all anti-fascist groups.

The tragedy of Spain had a particularly strong impact on American liberals. In 1936 a group of fascist generals, led by Francisco Franco and very shortly backed by German and Italian planes and arms, began a revolution against the constitutional government of Spain. Far-sighted men, including such conservatives as Henry L. Stimson in the United States and Winston Churchill in Britain, soon came to see that Hitler and Mussolini regarded Spain as a testing-ground for a new world war. But Britain and France (and the United States) refused to help the



Loyalist government in its fight against Fascism. Only the Soviet Union appeared to recognize the extreme gravity of the situation. The Spanish Civil War finally convinced many young men of the virtue of the Communist cause, despite many questionable actions by the Russians toward

non-Communist, anti-Fascist groups. Many Americans, acting out of honorable and generous motives, worked with the Communists during this period. Some even joined the Party.

Never had the American Communists advocated policies which seemed so to correspond with the interests of the United States as in their pre-pact opposition to the Nazis and their plea for support of the Spanish Republic from 1936 to 1939. In this period, too, the anti-Communist campaign was carried on in a crude and reckless manner. The (Dies) Committee on Un-American Activities, appeared to be much more interested in slandering and smearing liberals than they did in exposing real Communists. "Red-baiting," indeed, seemed to many people to be just another device by which reactionaries sought to resist necessary social reform.

Life in the Communist Party

What kind of men and women were the American Communists? People joined the Communist Party for many reasons. Some were idealists, anxious to speed social reform to oppose fascism. Some were lonely; the Party provided them with friends. Some had a grudge against society; the Party endowed that grudge with dignity. Some lived drab, frustrated lives; the Party gave to their lives color and excitement. Some were afraid; the Party pledged them the aid of history. Some felt excluded from the life of their community; the Party gave them a home. Some craved a faith in which to believe; the Party consecrated them to a living religion. Some sought power; the Party promised them the future. And for most of these, the harsh Party discipline was no obstacle. It was rather an indispensable part of the attraction—it was simply the outward expression of the inner unity and solidity which had an irresistible appeal for the overidealistic, for the weak in heart, for the ambitious, and for the casualties of the industrial order. Systems which exercise dictatorial authority over the intellect of men attract fanatical followers: It is not surprising that Communism sheltered fugitives from the intellectual insecurity of modern times.

Thus a variety of motives brought people into the Party. Every attempt at strike-breaking, every race riot, every lynching was likely to increase Party membership. But the signifi-

cant thing was the tremendous overturn within the American Communist Party. Few Americans could endure for very long the tense and unreal life of the Party member. After they had a taste of the centralization, the fanaticism, the overriding loyalty to the interests of a foreign power, they got out. That is why one-time membership in the Communist Party, especially if it happened before 1939, should not be regarded as a life-time disqualification. It was rather those who survived every new direction of the Party line, who obeyed every new caprice of Party discipline, who accepted the Party's claim to rule every aspect of their lives, to dictate their religion, their science and their art as well as their politics—it was this hard core of fanatics which made up the serious part of the Communist movement in America.

For the American Communists were far shrewder and more determined than the high-minded liberals who worked with them. Lenin had long since instructed his followers that no holds were barred in the class war. "If need be," he declared, "Communists must be prepared to resort to all sorts of stratagems, maneuvers, and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuges in order to penetrate the trade unions, to remain in them and to carry on Communist work in them at all costs." The American Communist Party did not suspend for a moment its secret efforts to entrench Party members and reliable fellow travelers in strategic positions in the trade unions and in the liberal movement. It was a favorite Communist tactic to plant secret members on the staff, say, of an organization dedicated to some good liberal cause, and then to manipulate the organization in the Communist interest, often with the help of the disciplined work of a secret Communist caucus among the membership.

In the same way attempts were made to slip secret Party members into the government. Underground cells were set up in Washington for espionage purposes. Whittaker Chambers has confessed to being a key figure in the Communist spy apparatus; and he had systematic contact with at least one impressionable young man in the government who turned over official documents to him for transmission to Moscow. Underneath the facade of the "united front," the Communist Party pursued its own special objectives.

The War

The Moscow trials of 1936 and 1937, on top of the growing mistrust of Communist methods in America, troubled many liberals. Then came the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and in its wake many left the Party. The functionaries, of course, execute the turnabout with neat efficiency. Earl Browder, the party leader, who a few weeks before had been ridiculing the notion of such a pact, now became a bitter opponent of aid to the anti-fascist forces in Europe. In 1940 the Communists savagely denounced Roosevelt as a war-monger. Browder was crying, "The new Roosevelt course is essentially for America the same direction which Hitler gave for Germany in 1933."

With June 22, 1941, and the attack on Russia, came a new turnabout. The Communists suddenly became great champions of war production and supporters of "no strike" pledges. From obstructing the military effort, the Communists suddenly staged a violent campaign for the immediate opening of a second front in Europe. Earl Browder became a particularly strong advocate of cooperation with all groups. Following the dissolution of the Comintern, the American Communist Party was dissolved in 1944, and replaced by the Communist Political Association.

Events demonstrated that Browder was just one more victim of "American exceptionalism." When the military crisis in Europe receded in February 1945, the Soviet Union saw no reason to continue the wartime policy of collaboration with all anti-fascist groups. In the April 1945 issue of *Cahiers du Communisme*, an organ of the French Communist Party, the French Communist Jacques Duclos announced the end of collaboration and the beginning of the post-war party line. Duclos made it abundantly clear that Browder had mistaken a temporary war-time tactic for a permanent strategy.

After the War

Browder's many enemies in the Communist movement took advantage of the Duclos article first to drive him from the leadership and then to expel him from the party. One after another Communist leaders who had supported Browder rose in party meeting to confess their sins and recant their

errors. Under a new leadership, with the aging William Z. Foster as nominal head and Eugene Dennis as the executive secretary, the Communist Party was reconstituted.

The Communist post-war strategy with its renewal of revolutionary extremism, meant once again the isolation of Communists from the main streams of American life. Browder's war-time policy had won many recruits for the party. Many more people, inexplicably forgetting the Communist record from 1939 to 1941, thought they could work with Communists in a relationship of mutual confidence. But the new party line required an ever sharper commitment of Communists to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

Eugene Dennis, as early as July 1945, told the Communist National Committee, that it would be "necessary from now on to create the conditions and base for organizing a major third party nationally." In February 1946 he said that the party should be established in time for the 1948 elections, and that first steps toward its formation should be taken early in 1947. The Communist pressure for a third party was reinforced by other pressures. The Progressive Party was formed late in 1947 and later nominated Henry Wallace as its candidate for President. Though the candidates and many of the leaders of the Progressive Party were by no means Communists, the Communists were a dominant faction in the party and had their way on controversial points.

Present Role of the Communist Party

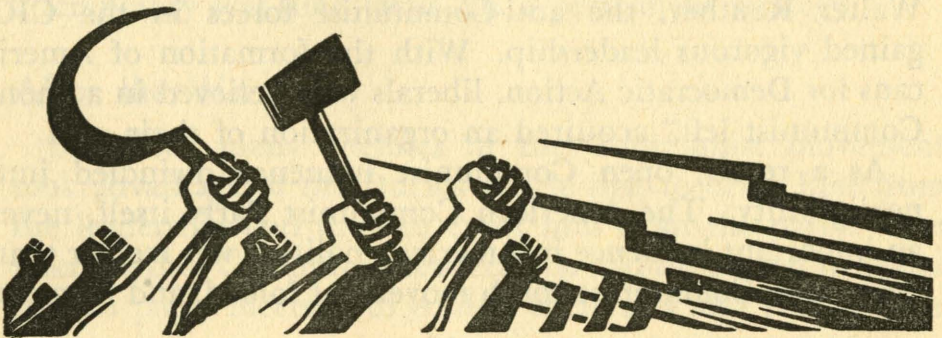
Since the war, the Communists, as a result of their sponsorship of the Progressive Party, their opposition to the Marshall Plan, and their unquestioning endorsement of Soviet foreign policy, have backed themselves into an exposed and vulnerable position. With the rise to power of Philip Murray and Walter Reuther, the anti-Communist forces in the CIO gained vigorous leadership. With the formation of Americans for Democratic Action, liberals who believed in a "non-Communist left" acquired an organization of their own.

As a result, open Communist influence dwindled into negligibility. The American Communist Party itself, never an important influence in American politics, was feebler than ever. The Communist youth movement folded, and its mem-

bers were ordered to work with the Young Progressives of America. Genuine "front" organizations—that is, organizations controlled for Party purposes and identifiable by the presence in key positions of leading Communists and by their failure to deviate from the Party line—lost support.

Nor were the Communists any more successful in their attempts to seize power in non-Communist organizations. The Communist faction was badly beaten in the American Veterans Committee. The Communist power in the CIO was steadily whittled away. The National Maritime Union and the Transport Workers, both of whom had followed the party line for years, broke away. Following its annual convention in Cleveland in 1949, the CIO set in motion procedures which culminated in the expulsion of most of the alleged Communist-controlled unions.

Thus open Communist activity, whether under the party banner or through "front" organizations or through the attempt to capture non-Communist organizations, seemed by 1950 to be declining. But not all Communist activity was in the open. And it is the central and habitual dishonesty—the belief that the end justifies the means—which have in great part created the Communist problem. As the late Harold Laski said, "The passion for conspiracy, the need for deception, the ruthlessness, the centralized and autocratic commands, the contempt for fair play, the willingness to use lying and treachery to discredit an opponent or to secure some desired end, complete dishonesty in the presentation of facts, the habit of regarding temporary success as justifying any measure, the hysterical invective by which they wrought to destroy the character of anyone who disagreed with them; these, in the context of an idolization of leaders who might,



the day after, be mercilessly attacked as the incarnation of evil, have been the normal behaviour of Communists all over the world."

"For years, in this country," Eleanor Roosevelt has written about the Communists, "they taught the philosophy of the lie. They taught that allegiance to the Party and acceptance of orders from Party heads, whose interests were not just those of the United States, were paramount . . . Because I have experienced the deception of the American Communists, I will not trust them."

COMMUNISM AND FREE SOCIETY

The existence of a group like the American Communists poses difficult questions to a free society. The American people have been debating these questions for years, in many cases without reaching settled conclusions. Such complex problems cannot be solved here. But, in order to aid the reader in formulating his own answers, a number of considerations are set forth in the following pages, which should be borne in mind in any discussion of the problems of Communism and free society.

How Do You Tell a Communist

The word "Communist" has a specific meaning. It means a member of the Communist party. The word "fellow traveler" also has a specific meaning. It means a man who, without being an actual party member, follows the party line faithfully, especially on questions of foreign policy. In responsible discussion these words should be used in these senses, and no other. But the problem is rendered more difficult by the fact that many conservatives are less interested in identifying genuine Communists than in smearing liberals as Communists, and by the additional fact, that many Communists and fellow travelers do their best to conceal their political affiliations. The question then arises: is there any way in which Communists and fellow travelers who pose as ordinary liberals can be fairly reliably detected?

Some people say that all radicals or dissenters are actual or potential Communists or fellow travelers. If a person

denounces the capitalist system or race discrimination or the repression of civil liberties, these people argue, he is "practically" a Communist.

Others argue, however, that to use Communism so loosely is to make the word meaningless. Many radicals, they point out, are as profoundly anti-Communist as are conservatives. Socialists, for example, oppose the capitalist system, and political repression; yet they believe in democracy, civil freedom and constitutional processes; and they are deeply hostile to the Communists. In Europe today the Socialists are a fundamental part of the anti-Communist coalition. It is in the countries where the Socialists are strongest—Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Austria—that the Communists are weakest.

How, then, to identify the Communist? The point to remember, this second group argues, is that Communists are not to be defined primarily by their attitude toward capitalism; since many people criticize capitalism who detest Communism. Orthodox Communists are to be defined primarily by their *attitude toward capitalism plus their attitude toward the U.S.S.R.*—by the consistent shifts of their political line in obedience to the policy of the Soviet Union. Fellow travelers are similarly to be defined by their acceptance of the thesis of Soviet infallibility in foreign affairs.

If you find a man who believed strongly in collective security until August 1939, who then became an isolationist until June 1941, who then demanded a second front, and who now opposes the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Pact, inveighs against Tito and supports the Progressive Party—if he meets not just one but all of these tests—then it is fairly safe to assume that you have found at least a reliable fellow traveler.

Is the Communist Party a Political Party?

The Communists claim to be a political party like any other. They feel therefore that they ought to be treated just as the Republicans, Democrats and Socialists are treated.

Others feel that the Communist party is only in its inessential part a political party and is in its essential part a clandestine conspiracy. Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson of the U. S. Supreme Court recently argued that there were

“decisive differences” between the Communist party and, say, the Republican or Democratic or Socialist parties, or “every other party of any importance in the long experience of the United States.” These differences, he said, were (1) control of the party by a foreign government, (2) belief in the seizure of power by and for a minority rather than through free electoral processes, (3) commitment to violent and undemocratic methods. Action taken against the Communist party, Jackson contends, would thereby provide no precedent for action against parties which do not meet these three points.

Do the Communist Leaders Advocate the Overthrow of the Government by Force?

In the recent court trial the leaders of the Communist Party contended that it was a peaceful and constitutional party, dedicated to non-violent change. The government contended that the leaders of the party taught and advocated the methods of violent revolution. The jury decided in favor of the government. The case has been appealed and will not be settled finally until the Supreme Court passes upon the constitutionality of the Smith Act under which the Communist leaders were indicted.

Other commentators have taken a position midway between that of the Communists and of the Department of Justice. They argue that the attitude of the Communist leaders toward violence has been entirely opportunistic. The American Communists have advocated violent revolution, they claim, when the Soviet Union was ordering a policy of revolutionary extremism, and they have stopped advocating violent revolution when the Soviet Union called for a united front policy. While the Communists certainly have no objection in principle to the overthrow of governments by force, this does not necessarily mean that revolution is their specific policy at any given moment.

These commentators make one other point: there is a profound difference from the viewpoint of law between an abstract belief in the inevitability, or even the desirability, of revolution, on the one hand, and concrete conspiratorial preparations for a revolutionary coup on the other. Thus Thomas Jefferson could speak of the usefulness of periodic revolution. Abraham Lincoln wrote, “This country with its

institutions belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it." John Dulles declared in 1949, "I don't believe that we need to have a violent revolution certainly not today. The people still have it in their power peacefully to check this thing, (statism) but if we don't do it and do it soon we will have to fight our way back, as Thomas Jefferson said, through revolution."

Such statements as these, whether uttered by conservatives or by Communists, are quite different from the storing of arms, the secret drills, the clandestine preparations for military action. "The wide difference between advocacy and incitement, between preparation and attempt, between assembling and conspiracy, must be borne in mind," Justice Brandeis has written. In general, American law has sought to stop, not *unpopular thoughts*, but *illegal acts*.

Are the Communists Agents of a Foreign Government?

In order to avoid registration as foreign agents under the Voorhis Act, the American Communist Party disaffiliated itself in 1940 from the Comintern. The Communists claim today that they are serving the best interests of the American working class; and that the best way of serving working class interest anywhere is to protect and advance the cause of the Soviet Union. The American Communists are no more bound to the decisions of Moscow, they contend, than American Roman Catholics are to the decisions of Rome.

Others, assert, however, that the Communist leaders in this country have acted effectively as agents of the Soviet Union from the day the first Comintern representative disembarked in New York, and that the relationship of blind obedience to every new phase of Soviet policy was not altered in the slightest by the formal act of disaffiliation from the Comintern in 1940, nor by the dissolution of the Comintern itself in 1943. On this basis, some people argue that the leaders of the party, at least, should be required to register under the Voorhis Act. The case of the Communists and Moscow is distinguished from that of the Catholics and Rome by pointing out that Catholic discipline is much less taut and all-embracing than Communist discipline. A Catholic, as a

citizen, must make decisions of living based on conscience and free will. Only under very grave circumstances is he excommunicated. Thus Catholics could write to Cardinal Spellman criticizing his attacks on Mrs. Roosevelt without fear of penalty, whereas Communists who had dissented from the party leadership in such a manner would be expelled.

It is not clear, however, that all ordinary Communists are to be considered as agents of foreign governments. "When we speak of the Communist party as a conspiracy directed by Moscow," ex-Communist Louis Bunde recently said, "we cannot realistically accuse every individual rank-and-file Communist of being consciously in that conspiracy." Many were attracted by Communist cries against social injustice, only to discover that they were involved in defending even greater injustices. "This belated realization," says Bunde, is the reason why there are thousands of ex-Communists in America today, and why the turnover in Red membership is so high."

Is "Red-Baiting" a Danger to Civil Liberties?

The Communist themselves, and some non-Communist Americans, are bitterly critical of "red-baiting"—that is, attacks on Communists and the identification and exposure of Communist or pro-Communist activity. To attack Communism in any way, it is said, is to weaken the cause of liberalism and to play into the hands of the fascists.

Other Americans, however, inquire with skepticism why the Communists should be granted an immunity from criticism which the Communists would concede to no other group in society. Republican-baiting, Democratic-baiting, Catholic-baiting and so on seem to be fine from the Communist viewpoint; so why should an exception be made for Communist-baiting? The attempt to forestall anti-Communist activity, then, is held to be a strategy of defense rather than the application of any general principle. Moreover, agreement to this strategy, it is pointed out, means agreement to the general proposition that America is doomed to the choice between Communism and fascism, and that therefore to hurt one is to help the other. America is not condemned to so bleak a choice, these people argue; the proper American liberal position is to offer rigorous opposition to both Communism and fascism.

The problem is very different, however, when non-Communist liberals are denounced as Communists by individuals opposed to all non-conformist or unpopular views. A democracy deals with Communism by responsible debate and factual exposure. The method of the witch-hunt, with its reckless denunciations and unsubstantiated accusations, is generally adopted by those less interested in preserving a free society against Communism than in silencing all persons who disagree with them at whatever cost to freedom. These methods, especially when employed from the ambush of congressional immunity, are sometimes almost as dangerous to democracy as the methods of the Communists themselves.

Should We Outlaw the Communist Party?

Some people argue that the Communists have forfeited all claim to democratic treatment in this country, and that the interests of national security and of the preservation of freedom require that the Communist Party be outlawed.

Other equally patriotic Americans, including President Truman, Governor Thomas E. Dewey and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, have opposed this proposal. They have opposed it in part because such action, short of a situation of genuine national emergency, would be contrary to the American tradition of civil freedom. They have opposed it in part also on practical grounds. When the Communist Party of Canada was outlawed, its leaders, after a due interval, set up a new party, called it the "Labor Progressive Party" and set it to doing business at the same old stand. The opponents of the illegalization of the Communist Party argue that such action has little effect unless accompanied by an arrest of the party's leaders and active members. Otherwise all that is outlawed is a name; and, at the same time, the Communists are provided with an issue tailor made to win them the sympathy of many Americans who see no national emergency justifying so sharp a contraction of political freedom.

Should Communists be Permitted Full Freedom of Expression and of Political Action?

Some argue that it is foolish to grant the Communists full freedom of action, when their only object is to use freedom in order to destroy it. Wherever they have achieved power,

it is pointed out, they have swiftly crushed out the right of political opposition. Why should we guarantee them the rights which they concede to no one else? Why should we give them the slightest opportunity to gain power in the U. S. and destroy freedoms for the rest of us? Thus many who do not advocate the open illegalization of the Communist Party feel, as does Senator Mundt of South Dakota, that Communist activity should be weighted down by various legal disabilities so as to preserve the general freedom of society.

The opponents of such proposals reply that our whole traditional conception of free society is based on a belief in the free competition of ideas. This does not mean, it is argued, just competition among the ideas we happen to like. Such a procedure would give the "we" group—i.e., whatever group happens to have power at a given moment—altogether too much control over the mind of the country. Hence basic to the conception of free society is what might be called the right to hold loathsome ideas. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "We should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death, unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country."

The question to be faced, this group argues, is: in view of the Korean crisis is the present danger to our country from the Communist Party great enough to outweigh the dangers involved in the departure from our traditional principles of civil freedom? Do its ideas "so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country?"

This test, as established by the Supreme Court, is known as the "clear and present danger" test. This phrase means that fresh speech can properly be suppressed only when it creates a clear and present danger, not just of changing some one's mind, but of bringing about "substantive evils" which the government may constitutionally seek to prevent. "It is only the present danger of immediate evil of an intent to bring it about," wrote Justice Holmes, "that warrants Congress in setting a limit to the expression of opinion." "If

there be time to expose through discussion the falsehoods and fallacies," added Justice Brandeis, "to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence. Only an emergency can justify repression."

Does this mean that we are helpless before a conspiracy? Of course not, this group argues. Those who commit acts in violation of law must be swiftly punished. But having an ugly idea is not an act in violation of law. And trying to suppress that idea is really a vote of no-confidence in the strength of one's own democratic ideas. Does the present emergency, they ask, justify embarking on a national program of repression?

Should Communists be Allowed to Work for the Government?

Some people argue that, so long as membership in the Communist Party is legal, Communists should be allowed to work for the government like any other citizens. Even if it



might not always be wise to employ Communists, they add, the policy of ferreting them out through investigation does far more harm than the presence of a few Communists would do. Loyalty investigations, they say, turn quickly into witch hunts which drive able men out of government

and place a premium on timidity and mediocrity.

But others contend that on the contrary, the right to work for the government is not one of the necessary rights of citizenship. "The petitioner may have a constitutional right to talk politics," observed Justice Holmes in deciding the

case of a policeman who had lost his job for political reasons, "but he has no constitutional right to be a policeman." And clearly, the first condition of government employment is loyalty. As Roger Baldwin, former head of the American Civil Liberties Union, has put it, "A superior loyalty to a foreign government disqualifies a citizen for service to ours."

It is conceded that difficult problems arise with the application of this principle. Determinations of disloyalty are hard to make. Most people would agree that the witch-hunt approach to questions of loyalty in the government service can only result in injury to innocent people, confusion and demoralization. Most of these evils could be avoided if loyalty investigations were limited to jobs genuinely related to the national security, and if the individual against whom the charges are made were granted the full and customary protections of Anglo-Saxon justice. In this way the essential goals of civil freedom and national security could both be safeguarded.

Should Communists be Allowed to Teach in Our Schools?

Those who would exclude Communists as teachers in institutions of higher learning argue that a university is a community of scholars dedicated to free and disinterested inquiry; that intellectual integrity is incompatible with undeclared or unknown loyalties; and that Communists by definition are thus disqualified from membership in an intellectual community. They argue further that it has always been a prime Communist objective to gain influence over the youth of the country.

Those who oppose the policy of exclusion argue that the benefits which a university might derive from expelling Communists would be less than the disadvantages entailed by setting in motion the whole appalling machinery of investigation, detection and trial. They point out that it is possible for teachers to be Communists without indoctrinating their students with Communism. Where the "clear and present danger" test might justify loyalty checks in government, these persons say, it does not justify them in the colleges. The small number of pro-Communist teachers in the colleges, it is said, have had no kind of impact sufficient to provoke such drastic counter-measures; nor do they present any specific danger to national security.

Some people draw a distinction between colleges and pre-college education. In college the student is relatively mature; he is exposed to several different teachers; he can benefit by the cross-currents of opinion. In lower schools, however, the student is less mature and often is exposed to only a single teacher. In such circumstances, some people feel, measures should be taken particularly in the public schools, to insure that the immature student not be influenced by anti-Catholic, anti-semitic or pro-Communist teachers. Others continue to feel, however, that even in the lower schools the disadvantages of the machinery of detection outweigh the advantages gained in ridding the schools of a few harmful individuals.

Repression or Reform?

Some feel that Communism can only be met in the last resort by police measure directed to the detention of Communist leaders, the break-up of the party and the suppression of their means of propaganda and political action.

Others feel that this approach treats symptoms, not causes. The symptoms must certainly be treated, particularly if they threaten to infect all of society; but this is not enough. The basic appeal of Communism, they feel, comes from the existence of poverty and injustice and from the frustration, drabness and insecurity of life for many people in our society. In the long run, they argue, we can defeat Communism in our midst only by removing the internal sources of its appeal. This means constructing a society of our own in which people will feel free, secure and strong—a society capable, moreover, of protecting itself against the external threat of aggression. Only by giving all those who dwell in our society a vigorous sense of belonging to it—of vital membership in it—can we finally destroy the roots of Communist power.



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The Annals, September, 1950

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