

Alternative

Vol. III, No. 1

New York, N. Y.

April - May, 1950

CIVIL LIBERTIES & COMMUNISTS

- - - defend their right to " overthrow the government "

The McCarthy spy investigations, as deluded and senseless a performance as the country has seen in a long time, are not merely a stray abnormality nor freak of political chicanery, but a symptom of deep-rooted poisons. The present administration, which has attacked McCarthy, is itself responsible for the very atmosphere in which McCarthyism is possible. It will be surprising if there are not many more such symptoms.

What McCarthy has done fits in perfectly with the atmosphere of intrigue, confusion and distrust in which American "policy" is now being carried on. The irresponsible charges, the bungled intricacies of lies and half-truths, perjury and dares-to-sue, rumors and personal spite are not only a sordid and disgraceful spectacle, but they reveal the very nature of the level at which our foreign affairs are being conducted. The lack of straightforwardness and candor of our present government is appalling. It is small wonder that the people are bewildered and unnerved.

When Secretary Acheson announced that the reason why a new approach could not be made to Russia at the time of the hydrogen bomb decision was because the American people might be "misled" by it into "false hopes", he revealed the lack of trust in the people which has characterized the cold war. The American people have never been told the truth about what their own government is up to. They were not told the truth about China; they are not told the truth about foreign bases, nor secret weapons, nor the real situation in Europe. They do not know what American planes are doing flying over the Baltic nor, in fact, why they are in Europe at all. They suspect that their government is deceiving them about flying saucers, about spy trials and most of all about its future plans.

The whipping boys in the present situation, the American Communists, are about as relevant to the American scene as the Jehovah's Witnesses (who have also been attacked and persecuted). They have exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers, not because they are Communists but because they are to some extent also radicals and revolutionaries. We need them now, not as Communists, but as critical and dissonant elements. It should not be an American trait to be afraid of dissenters even when they are totalitarians.

The basic weakness of the Communist position is betrayed by the extraordinary number of renegades they have been able to produce in a rela-

tively short time. We should in fact be grateful to them for educating so many intellectuals and radicals in the dangers of authoritarianism, violence and deceit in left-wing movements, although many have not learned the lesson. A Communism purged of these reactionary principles might have had some chance of success. With them it cannot succeed. To attempt to remodel society by using the very methods of reaction is foredoomed to failure where there is any degree of political literacy in the population.

Radicals who have done so much to expose the essential weaknesses of Communism have little to congratulate themselves about if they have not developed anything better. The net effect of prolonged revelations of Communist totalitarianism

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" - - - the strongest possible terms: " Join the party!

The suppression of Communists in the United States today can only be viewed as one of the steps in the direction of war. Those who ultimately favor recourse to war must also ultimately favor this suppression. Those who are ultimately, deeply, pacifist will oppose this suppression, — oppose it with the same vigor and with the same disrespect for law as they would conscription.

The pretext for this persecution, that American Communists plot the overthrow of the gov-

The meaning and purpose of the National Socialist state is this alone and can be only this: to put the German people in readiness for the 'coming war' by ruthless repression, elimination, extirpation of every stirring of opposition; to make of them an instrument of war, infinitely compliant, without a single critical thought, driven by a blind and fanatical ignorance. Any other meaning and purpose, any other excuse this system cannot have; all the sacrifices of freedom, justice, human happiness, including the secret and open crimes for which it has blithely been responsible, can be justified only by the end — absolute fitness for war. . . .

Thomas Mann, 1937

ernment by force and violence, is a fantastic one, and the exact opposite can in fact be demonstrated to be the case. During all the years of the government's assiduous spying on the Communists, in the whole course of the recent trial of the Communist leaders — there has not been

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Alternative

Successor to *Pacifica Views and Direct Action*

P.O. Box 827, Church St. Sta., N. Y. 8, N. Y.

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Alternative is published monthly by a non-profit association of libertarians and supported solely by voluntary contributions. Subscriptions free on request.

Letters

New York 27, N. Y.

To the editors:

In the letter headed "A Father Against MAW," Irving Ravin, goes into the problems of equality of the sexes, child education, commercial holidays and petitioning the President — all of which have no bearing on Mothers Against War and its general program.

The group's name does not imply that its members consider themselves more or less important than fathers or than any other categories or groups of human beings.

As for the expression in the pledge "persuade our sons and daughters," Ravin has a point when he warns against coercing children. However, at the suggestion of a number of mothers the word "persuade" has since been changed to "educate." Pacifists try to educate complete strangers to be against war, through poster walks, street meetings and leaflet distributions: why not educate their own children?

Petitioning the President is just one part of the Mothers Day demonstration. While it may not be meaningful in the sense that it will move the President to act, it does serve as a means of publicizing the fact that over 500 mothers from 38 states have pledged themselves to a militant anti-war position.

PAULA PECK

is simply to strengthen the status quo and kill off in the bargain all attempts to form a genuine mass radical movement.

The Communists now are on the front line of the civil liberties issue and those who have opposed them among liberals and radicals must face the question of rallying to their support. We should in fact with our eyes open and without apologies defend the Communists in their right to be heard, and their right to overthrow the government (a sound Jeffersonian principle). For their use of violence, suppression and deceit they have no right, but there should exist all the defenses of a healthy society against these things.

As against a policy leading inevitably to another war and corrupting our freedom the best defence would be an indigenous American radical movement — organized perhaps along anti-war syndicalist lines, which is what above all *Alternative* is working for. One of the first things this radical movement would do would be to defend the Communists and meet them in the open. Failing this our obligation is to speak out strongly to protect the rights of Communists with no shilly-shallying. It is a sad story that so far few of our enlightened liberals or radical groups have really met this issue.

—ROY FINCH

Fight without fear of false identification

I am glad for Sandy Katz's article urging that "when the Communist Party is outlawed we should (make a) public announcement that we are all applying for membership in the Party." Discussion today generally revolves around the question of how should we kick the Communists now that they are down. Sandy at last poses the proper question — how shall we stand in solidarity with them against the disgraceful persecutions to which they are subject? The fact that he raises the proper question is far more significant than the fact that (as I see it) he gives the wrong answer.

If Katz were in Czechoslovakia, where the Roman Catholic Church meets violent persecution from the government would he apply for membership in the Church and take its Communion? As police persecution spreads all over the world shall he apply for membership in each of the persecuted groups, with their varying and often contradictory philosophies? Shall he become a Jehovah's Witness, a snake-charming fundamentalist, a member of the Klan? Of course the majority of the suppressed groups are more attractive than these, but the principle stands more clearly if we apply it to extreme examples.

It is obvious that our sympathies for those who are being subjected to imprisonment and suppression should not lead us to pretend a philosophy that is not really ours. To apply for membership in a party which practices deceit and violence is clearly not an honest act for a pacifist who renounces all deceit and violence. To do so can only lead to confusion. What we must do is to establish our solidarity with the Communists not as members of the same party accepting the same philosophy and working for the same goals but rather as fellow human beings who believe for all time and for all people in the civil liberties which the Communists (like the capitalists) champion only for some.

Perhaps the first simple act of solidarity with the Communists is to be as honest as we can in both our thoughts and words about them. This is not easy. Communists are the current Bogys and in these days of guilt-by-association everyone who has ever held an independent opinion on anything is suspected of being a Communist. The inevitable result is that all sorts of persons are straining to defend their own reputations — or to gain status for themselves — by taking uncalled for free credits at the Communists. It is a shameful thing to play right along with the current hysteria, for motives of self-protection, thereby speeding up the trend toward a mass mentality and — sadly enough — driving into the arms of the Communists many who, like Katz, are so alienated by Red-baiting that they react by identifying themselves unnaturally with the accused.

It is especially important for us to remain aloof from the anti-Red hysteria because Red-baiting is being practiced today by several groups that might ordinarily be counted on to preserve some degree of sanity and fair play.

One such grouping includes large numbers of those who, like the Communists, have been critical of racial inequality, economic injustice, and other social abuses. For one reason or another none of these groups ever achieved the popularity with the working class that the Com-

munists did. The Socialist Party, as one example, attacked the same problems as the Communists, worked uneasily with the Communists from time to time, competed with them as equals at another time, but finally had to watch the Communist Party grow in numbers and influence while it wasted away in a lingering death. Years of frustration and defeated rivalry now find their outlet in frenzied — and triumphant — attacks on the Communists. Like the small boy who stands behind a cop and thumbs his nose at the bully, the organizations which lacked the daring and initiative — as well as the brutality — of the Communists, now join up with the reactionary state to help bring low their more successful opponent.

A second important group which has joined in the Red-baiting is small numerically but important as an educational influence. It consists of American writers and intellectuals who are very much influenced by the deep and moving experiences of European Refugees. Many Refugees, in the intensity of their struggle against both the Fascists and the Communists, achieved a "reality" of experience denied to most Americans — particularly most American intellectuals who have tended to play a dilettante's role. The result is that the Refugees are able to sway many of the intellectuals into an unbalanced fear and hatred of the Communists, which plays right in with the government's war plans.

A third group whose Red-baiting is somewhat inconsistent with its past is organized labor. Here the inconsistency is more superficial than actual. By now organized labor is pretty thoroughly under the control of highly privileged and dictatorial machines to whom it is natural to ride the present wave of anti-Red hysteria.

Men like Joe Curran and Mike Quill followed the Communist line so closely for years that many party members undoubtedly thought they were communists — and they may have been so. Their thugs worked shoulder to shoulder and brass knuckle to brass knuckle with the Communists, when this was the road to power. For years Phillip Murray knew who the Communists were in the C.I.O., and resisted all attempts by democratic unionists to defeat them. But as soon as the Communists became a political liability he suddenly "discovered" that Communists were immoral, anti-labor, disruptionist, etc.

Clearly these union officials, of whom there are many, are men without principle who are merely applying in this area the same tactics of crass opportunism and class collaboration that dominate their whole dictatorial control of their unions. But, like the Hearsts and the Peglers, whose anti-labor records are also clear — they control powerful opinion-making machinery by means of which they help foment an anti-Red emotionalism amongst many honest unionists.

It's hard to realize it today, but most Communists, far from being intentionally malicious, are driven by a burning idealism of an admirable sort. As with all persons, their motives are mixed. But most of them are deeply wounded, for instance, by the sufferings of negroes, by the insecurity and frustrations of the working man's life, by the shoddiness of our Hollywood culture. If America were not beset by such evils, there would be few if any Communists. Of course the Communist opposition to the status quo develops into a twisted, violent, sectarian thing, but in this respect they are no worse than their persecutors who are violating every law of dec-

ency, and making a mockery of the courts. If we go along with the present attacks we are siding not with the lesser of two evils but rather with the one whose power and influence press more heavily upon us. In that case, I venture to say that if we lived in Russia we would also go along with the most pressing power. We would be aroused over the treachery of F.B.I. agents and Catholics and would be cheering the Russian trials of spies and saboteurs.

Remaining aloof from the widespread hatred and hysteria is but a beginning. We should be on hand picketing jails where Communists are imprisoned, developing ways of showing our contempt for the courts where the kangaroo trials are taking place. We should make it a principle never to take a loyalty oath, never to take the various compulsory oaths by which people are supposed to state that they are not Communists.

In New York City, eight teachers were suspended May 3rd for refusing to answer the question whether they were or ever had been members of the Communist Party. Where were the pacifist, socialist, and liberal teachers who might have stood shoulder to shoulder with the Communists (if some of the eight were such) in opposing this twentieth century Inquisition? Of course a teacher can be suspended if his teaching is inferior, but all of the eight had taught for at least 11 years (most of them for 20 years or more), without such an accusation. It was only because they refused to put a pinch of incense on the altar of the monolithic American State that they were suspended. And so it goes throughout the whole infamous list of discriminatory laws against the Communists — and their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts' boy friends.

Our lives should show our differences from the Communists. But if our lives do not make clear out attitude toward deceit, violence, inquisitions, and monolithic parties, let us not rush to prove ourselves by cooperating with the anti-Communist hysteria. Better to be mistakenly identified with the persecuted than to identify ourselves with the persecutors.

—DAVID DELLINGER,



As long as Capitalism continues - - -

According to the principles of democracy freedom should be allowed to everyone up to the point where one interferes with the freedom of someone else. Oliver W. Holmes in his doctrine of "clear and present danger" gave the criterion by which the government claims to determine what is and what is not civil liberty. This doctrine holds that an individual or group must cease what it is doing if there is both a clear and a present danger that its action interferes with the freedom or liberties of another individual or group.

At the present time our government is suppressing many individuals and groups that can hardly be said to be constituting a clear and present danger to others. The most publicized of these groups is the Communists. Few of us doubt that the Communist Party is planning to overthrow our country by force and violence. But at the same time it is quite obvious that the hand-

ful of CP members in this country does not constitute a clear and present danger. The persecution of the CP together with loyalty oaths, subversive lists and proposals to outlaw the CP can be explained only as a part of the hysteria, fear and hatred engendered by the cold war. Persecution of Commies, Trotskyists, members of the IWW and others caught in the international power struggle must be protested and fought in every way possible.

In addition to the curtailment of the liberties of the CP another, larger group should be mentioned — the American Indian. There are almost half a million native born American citizens of the red race. These people, who are the only real Americans, have throughout our history been considered subversive and un-American. The plight of the Indian often makes the status of the Negro appear heavenly in comparison. Up to today treaty after treaty with the Indians has been broken and the most elementary liberties such as the right to vote have been denied them. The Indians, being deprived of educational opportunities, have produced few people who can speak for them. Unlike other minority groups the Indians (except for a few who are only partly of Indian blood) have no representatives in politics, business, labor or any other field. The Indians are surely no longer a clear or present danger to anyone, but their lack of civil rights is still notorious.

It is quite clear that the civil liberties of the Commies are being jeopardized as a result of the cold war. If the international situation calms down, the liberties of the CP and other groups would be in less jeopardy. Settling our economic situation would be even a bigger step toward safe-guarding civil liberties. The need for finding a scape-goat, which is the prime cause of prejudice and discrimination, is also the cause of attacks on civil rights. Whenever there is a depression or war people must find some scape-goat or whipping boy to be given the blame for one's insecurity. At the present time it happens that the Commies are the main group receiving the blame.

As long as the competitive system of capitalism continues we can expect to have attacks on civil rights. Capitalism breeds depression, insecurity, tension and war. A need for scape-goats arises and minority groups are persecuted. Under a cooperative system of socialism it will be possible to have a world of peace and plenty and a fair degree of economic and political tranquility. There will then be no need for finding scapegoats and civil liberties will be enjoyed by all.

—ROBERT AUERBACH

....JOIN

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disclosed one single instance of this preparation. No "C". Day blueprints or charts, no military cadres, no drillings, no caches of munition, no guns or revolvers, no manuals of arms, no airplane pilot courses; the average American Communist could not put together the homemade grenades that was common craftsmanship among Spanish Loyalists. (It is an added irony that the government, which is so ostensibly upset about Communists seizing power by force and violence, affords no opportunities for Communists to campaign peacefully and constitutionally. Communist candidates are barred from the ballot in most states; their appearance barred from university campuses, radio networks, etc.; their speakers frequently arrested.)

But if the Communists are not plotting the overthrow of the government, it is demonstrably true that the government is in fact overthrowing the Communists by force and violence — by imprisoning and deporting their leaders, by depriving them of their livelihoods, by condoning hoodlum assaults against them, by hounding and intimidating them. There is also no deceit or vilification that the Communists would use that the government would not also use in suppressing them — even to the infamous extent, as a public record shows, of recording the speech of a Communist in sexual intercourse in her bedroom and threatening to play the recording in an open courtroom.

Our war-plotting government is of course not just after Communists but is also against all those who maintain a firm anti-war position. All these people will be called Communists. All people who defend the rights of Communists will be called Communists. (This article will be called Communist.) All those who *do not join in the suppression* of Communists will be called Communists.

In the face of this it becomes futile and a costly divagation to continually protest that we are not Communists, a name that must increasingly become honored.

What positive course do I urge? The one we honor more in pronouncement than in performance — a daring, "impractical" course of revolutionary pacifist direct action. When the Communist Party is outlawed we should oppose that in the strongest possible terms. The strongest possible term is *the public announcement that we are all applying for membership in the Party*. Loyalty oaths we refuse. Or we admit "truthfully" that we are Communists — the badge of shame . . . and honor. We can do that much.

—SANDY KATZ

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