

TURN THE LIGHT ON COMMUNISM

The former senator from Wisconsin speaks as one of America's most noted liberals in outlining his program for fighting a serious menace

BY ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE, JR.

TO WHAT extent has Communism developed in America? To what degree does it exercise influence? What can we do about it? Are we as a nation obligated, in the spirit of freedom, to give free license to Communists in their effort to undermine the democratic process? Can we tolerate abuse of our free institutions by those who have no loyalty toward them? I begin with questions which you are asking and I shall try to answer.

In my opinion, Communist and fellow-traveler activities in America have become a serious menace to our democracy. The problem is how to take intelligent action to combat the menace without at the same time impairing civil liberties. The major part of the problem lies in awakening all citizens who honestly believe in democracy to the all-important fact that it is fatal to consort with Communists and their fellow travelers. Association with them in "front" organizations creates a screen of respectability which conceals Communistic activities.

In my long public life I have had frequent clashes with Communists and Communistic ideologies, sometimes on trivial matters, sometimes on matters of principle with far-reaching implications. My own personal experiences with Communists in politics go back to 1924. While organization plans were being laid for my father to run as a candidate for President, it was learned that a Farmer-Labor-Progressive convention was being called to meet in St. Paul on June 17th. Many of our political friends were interested in boosting the event as an adjunct to the La Follette campaign.

However, it developed that the convention was a scheme of the Workers (Communist) Party to use the cloak of the local organizations that had naively lent their names and thus to secure a strategic position of control among the liberal elements that had been duped into joining.

The Communist International in Moscow gave specific approval by cablegram which was openly reprinted in *The Daily Worker* in New York, over the signatures of William Z. Foster and C.E. Ruthenberg, chairman and executive secretary, respectively, of the party. It was also ascertained that several avowed Communists had undertaken the organizational work for the convention and had established themselves in control of arrangements, credentials of delegates and funds of the convention.

Thereupon, I urged my father to repudiate in no uncertain terms any connections with the St. Paul meeting and any support from the Communists. I helped draft a letter which was released from Atlantic City on May

26th. It contained this warning to liberals: "To pretend that Communists can work with Progressives is to deceive the public . . . The Communists are antagonistic to the Progressive cause and their only purpose in joining such a movement is to disrupt it . . . (They) seek to divide, to confuse, and to create chaos favorable to their ultimate aims of revolution."

Events of the past two decades have proved the truth of this warning. For many years, the American people had an indifferent attitude toward the menace of Communism. Perhaps this is partially explained by our tolerant background and free institutions.

This attitude of national indifference was strengthened by extreme reactionaries who made unsupported and false charges of Communism against those who differed with them. Almost every aggressive man in public life has had the charge "Communist" hurled at him.

Like any cry of "Wolf! Wolf!" repeated too often without basis, it had the effect of disarming the people about the dangers inherent in real Communistic activities. It is a perfect screen for sinister activities. The words "Red-baiter" and "witch hunt" and "Fascist" became the terse, tart accusations in the Communist-fellow-traveler dialectic toward anyone who tried to peer behind the screen.

Public Attitude Changing

Within the past few months there has been a sudden and dramatic shift in public attitude on this problem. The indifference is gone. Newspapers, periodicals and influential private citizens from coast to coast have echoed and re-echoed the public concern.

To understand the nature of the problem, it is necessary to keep two factors in mind. First, Communists and fellow travelers have a fanatical loyalty to the Russian Communist party line and to Russia, no matter what flip-flops in reasoning or position are required. They work for anything that will pave the way for the downfall of democracy. The strategy for success in this country is based on the creation of chaos—class conflict, discontent, depression or anything else that will form a frame of reference conducive to revolution.

Second, persons who have embraced this new faith do not fight fair, or in the open. They use the same underground, unscrupulous methods employed by Hitler and Goebbels. All totalitarians, whether of right or left, believe that their own ends justify the use of any means. To obtain their objectives, they resort to the "big lie" and the "big smear." They twist the meaning of words from their common

usage in truly democratic countries.

Therefore, those who believe in democracy and human rights must be on the alert as never before. The fight against Communism cannot be made by totalitarian methods, because to embrace the doctrine that the end justifies the means inevitably corrupts and undermines those who use it.

The techniques of democracy must and can be used to defeat this menace. The most important is constant vigilance on the part of the voters and the members of every type of organization that's in our society. The spotlight of an aroused public opinion must be focused on their devious activities at all times. There must be no witch hunting but constant exposure. There must be no curtailment of the Bill of Rights nor any effort to curtail free speech, free press and free assembly. Let the American people know where and how the Communist-fellow-traveler activities are being carried on and they will deal with the problem by democratic means.

Communists are watching and waiting—even hoping—for a severe economic depression in the United States. They believe a serious slump will advance their objective to discredit and overthrow capitalism and democracy. Pravda, the official organ of the Communist Party in Moscow, has predicted a "devastating" capitalistic collapse in America by 1948.

But Communists have not been idle while waiting for economic developments. They have always been noted for aggressive organizational methods. Political campaigns are the starting point for some of the organizers. I know of one small-time party liner who had a part in Congressional campaigns in several states and offered his services as manager for no less than three political candidates. He had no qualms about supporting "reactionary" candidates if that gave him his opportunity to get a foothold.

The C.I.O. Political Action Committee prospered in its early years because it was founded on a sound objective: to inform the voters on public issues and the records of candidates. The C.I.O.-PAC failed in the last election wherever it allowed its policies to be influenced by Communists and fellow travelers, with the result that in many communities it became the purveyor of the Communist line.

The C.I.O.-PAC has done damage to American politics on at least two counts. It has sponsored the theory that a member of Congress who does not give 100 per cent approval to their program should be liquidated and is a fair subject for any sort of a smear campaign. The apparent reasoning behind the theory is that even if this course of action finally results

in the election of a candidate who is opposed to everything they purport to stand for, it is better than electing one who exercises independent judgment.

Despite the general failure of the PAC, the effectiveness of aggressive organization methods should not be underestimated. In the Fourth Congressional District in Milwaukee, for example, fellow travelers obtained the Democratic nomination for one of their friends, Edmund V. Bobrowicz, who was barely defeated in the general election, despite a repudiation of his nomination by prominent Democratic leaders.

When They Came Out Openly

In some states, where the election laws permitted it, the Communists placed their organizations behind candidates who ran frankly under the label of the Communist Party. As might be expected, these candidates without camouflage did not fare well. In fact, in several cases there were unexpected results.

In Bridgeport, Connecticut, Miss Josephine Willard ran for state representative on the Communist ticket in the state elections on November 5th. Miss Willard was editor of the union paper and the publicity director for Local 203 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. In the subsequent uprising against Communists in Local 203, the paper was discontinued and Miss Willard lost her job.

I know from firsthand experience that Communist sympathizers have infiltrated into committee staffs on Capitol Hill in Washington. Frequently they have been associated with desirable legislation and worthy objectives, but always ready to further their own cause at the expense of the legislation they were advocating. A few years ago, when I was chairman of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, I was forced to take measures in an effort to stamp out influences within my own committee staff.

During the late Congress, the staff of a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor was infiltrated by fellow travelers. The staff of the Pepper Subcommittee on Wartime Health and Education was diligent in its efforts to take matters into its own hands, and probably did great harm to the cause of improved health in this country by its reckless activities. I was appointed a member of this subcommittee, but I resigned from it later—partially because of the pressure of other duties (the Congressional Reorganization bill was taking much of my time) and partially because I did not want to be associated

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BY ARTHUR MILLER

An ironic story of human greed

SOME people are laughing in our neighborhood these nights, but most of us are just waiting, like the Sheltons. It is simply unbelievable, it came out so right.

Here is this man, Mr. Shelton, a middle-aged man with what they call a nice family and a nice home. Ordinary kind of businessman, tired every night, sits around on Sundays, pinochle and so on. The point is, he's been doing all right the past few years. Automobiles. His used cars were shipped to California, Florida—wherever the war plants were springing up. Did fine. Then the war ended. The new cars started coming through and then the strikes made them scarce. But people wanted them very badly. Very, very badly. He did fine. Very, very fine.

One night not long ago he and his wife decided to take in a night club, and she put on her two diamond rings, the bracelet, and some of her other frozen cash, and they locked up the house—the children are all married and don't live home any more—and they were off for the city.

Nobody knows what they did in the city, but they stayed out till three in the morning. Late enough for Shelton to get a headful. The drive home was slow and careful because the car was one of his brand-new ones and he couldn't see too well in his condition. Nevertheless, when he put the key in the front-door lock he was able to notice that the door swung open at a touch, whereas it usually took some jiggling of the latch. They went in and turned on the living-room lights, and then they saw it.

The drawer of the desk was lying on the floor, and the rug was littered with check stubs and stationery. The Sheltons rushed into the dining room and saw at once that the sterling-silver service was gone from the massive serving table. Shelton clutched at his heart as though he were going to suffocate, and Mrs. Shelton thrust her fingers into her hair and screamed. At this stage, of course, there was only the sensation that an alien presence had passed through their home. Perhaps they even imagined that the thief was still there. In wild fright they ran to the stairs and up to their bedroom, and Shelton tripped and fell over a bureau drawer that the thief had left on the threshold. Mrs. Shelton helped him up and made him lie down on the colonial bed and she massaged his heart while they both looked anxiously toward the closet door, which stood open.

When he had caught his breath, he pushed her aside and went into the closet and turned on the light. She crowded in beside him as soon as she saw the terrible expression on his face. The safe. The little steel safe that had always stood in the corner of the closet covered with dress boxes and old clothes, the safe was looking up at them from the corner with its door open. Shelton simply stood there panting. It was Mrs. Shelton who got to her knees and felt inside.

Nothing. Nothing was left. The safe was empty. Mrs. Shelton, on her knees in the closet, screamed again. Perhaps they felt once more the presence, the terrifying presence of the thief, for they rushed one behind the other down the stairs, and Shelton picked up the telephone.

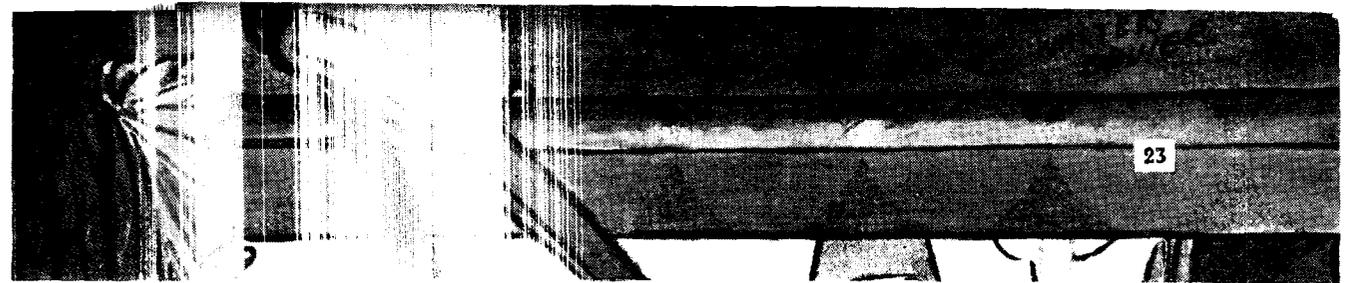
The instrument shook in his hand as he bent over close to the dial and spun it around. Mrs. Shelton moved up and down beside him, clasping and unclasping her hands and weeping. "Oh, my God!"

"Police!" Shelton roared into the telephone as soon as he heard the operator's calm voice. "My house has been robbed. We just got home and—"

His voice caught Mrs. Shelton just as she was about to dig her fingers into her hair again. For an instant she stood perfectly still, then she turned suddenly and swung her

The Sheltons looked anxiously toward the closet door. The little steel safe that had always stood in the corner covered with old clothes, was open

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER DOWER



IT TAKES A THIEF

