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Communists Are Dopes

by THE MAN
IN THE IRON MASK

IT IS extremely uncomfortable and unpleasant to be a Communist these days. Need I prove this point? Large, sturdy, well-fed policemen take socks at him with a hardwood

club when they are not spraying him with tear gas. On the slightest pretext or without any pretext at all, he is summarily tossed into badly ventilated, overcrowded, ill-smelling hoosegows to eat food that no self-respecting pig would touch, and to convert his carcass into a playground for vermin. His homes, assembly halls, outdoor meetings, are continually being smashed up. His mail is opened and confiscated. If he should have sufficient charm or energy left to indulge in any amatory adventures, he is tailed, broken in upon under the most embarrassing circumstances and booked on the toughest moral charge possible to be concocted. If he can afford to travel, chances are that he will be deported as soon as his identity and political affiliations become known to the authorities of whatever country in which he may be temporarily sojourning. These are just a few of the most obvious inconveniences to which Communists are being continually subjected in this and practically all other capitalistic countries.

I don't think it necessary to expatiate further on the general theme that the life of a Communist—poor or affluent—is a chronic pain in the neck.

All right, assuming that the above hypothesis is granted, why do persons—and occasional intelligent persons—become Communists? What are they after? What boon can membership in the Communist party confer upon them in exchange for the martyrdom they almost inevitably suffer? Is it that man, an essentially gregarious animal, must belong to something that will assure him of some minimal solidarity with his fellow-men? He cannot conscientiously remain a Democrat, a Republican, a Laborite or a Socialist—so that he must become a Communist? Perhaps. But is any membership card ever printed worth having one's skull fractured for? I seriously doubt it. Believe anything you can or nothing at all, but why identify yourself with an organization of which the very name



sends the timorous, conservative, politically child-like majority into convulsions of fear and hatred. If the Communists were not such impractical, hairbrained, idealistic, theoretical, pathetic dopes, they would call themselves by any other name; smell just as sweet (or sour) and be spared a good eighty per cent of their martyrdom in all capitalistic countries.

If you have to believe in the philosophy of Karl Marx, call yourself a Monist, a Trappist, a Dialectical Materialist, a Mezzo Soprano, a Single Taxer, a Black Republican, a Green Farm Laborite, a Hardshell Baptist—in brief, the first vague noun culled from the first dictionary you open. Then, instead of shattering his nightstick on your cranium, the normal cop will dismiss you as just another “nut” and go placidly about his business.

Let us for a moment examine exactly what it is the Communists are after; what precious boon and benefits they want to receive from the philosopho-political system they advocate; what final results they hope to achieve so fervently that they are willing to sacrifice their temporary place on the relief rolls (if they are poor) or their jobs and peace of mind if they are solvent. If they are Marxian classicists, and most of them are, they hope, by means of a social revolution, to bring about:

A. Public or Government ownership of the means of production and its concomitant abolition of the private ownership of the means of production.

B. Abolition of the principal of private profit as the sole incentive and reward of all production.

Production, not for private profit, but for use.

I believe these above two principles, or variations of the same principle, constitute the very heart and essence of the Marxian dialectic.

We are now sufficiently advanced to examine what is going on in the United States of America, the most completely and stubbornly capitalistic nation on the face of the earth. And the following brief sketch in no way concerns itself with Communist activities but with the activities of the benign capitalistic gen-

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tlemen in control of our great industrial enterprises and of our Government.

Private industry, finding itself sluggish from the cruel beating it has been taking since the halcyon days of 1929, screamed, is screaming and, in the future, will scream more vociferously for government or public aid. Let us take a typical case history: The Joliet and San Quentin Railroad has the misfortune to be on the wrong end of a forty million dollar loan. The six per cent interest on them thar bonds, reposing snugly in the vault of the Colossal Life Insurance Co., is due. The Joliet and San Quentin owes Colossal Life the tidy sum of two hundred and forty thousand bucks. (If you'd care to make this more realistic, just add a half-dozen zeros to the tail of all these figures.) Now the Joliet and San Quentin is in such financial shape that it couldn't buy an extra set of brass buttons for its oldest conductor, much less pay its bond interest. This is a grievous state of affairs, especially since the Colossal Life Insurance Co. happens to be the financial guardian of many widows and orphans who trust it implicitly to provide them with beans and a roof. If Colossal does not collect that bond interest, its assets, integrity, reputation, financial stability, etc., will be seriously impaired. Good old Colossal has been collecting every cent of bond interest owed it and disbursing the same to widows and orphans since right after the War of 1812. So what happens? Very simple. The big boys of the Joliet and San Quentin join forces with the big boys of Colossal. The proper missionary work is done in Washington and, presto, the railroad gets a loan sufficient to enable it to pay the insurance company every cent of interest. And who makes the loan, little kiddies? Nobody but that reliable old man with the whiskers, Uncle Sam, the Government, the Public.

From this point on, an odd state of affairs has arisen. Uncle Sam has a very serious interest in the Joliet and San Quentin Railroad for the simple and obvious reason that he has loaned (or given) it a nice piece of change. He is going to watch that particular railroad like a hawk; insist on being consulted in the framing and execution of all important matters of operating policy. The officials in charge of the railroad had better not make any decisions without consulting that reliable old man with the whiskers. Because the moment they get fresh he'll either demand that they repay the loan (which is quite impossible) or turn a deaf ear the next time the bond inter-

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est falls due. Realistically speaking, the officials of that railroad are a set of stooges. Uncle Sam, the government, the Public, is in charge.

I contend that this constitutes Government or Public ownership of this particular railroad (or means of production) just as fully as if the property had been seized during a bloody revolution and turned over to the people. I further contend that the phenomenon of industry running to the Federal Government for financial aid and getting it is one that will develop and become more common with every periodic industrial crisis. And I don't believe that any careful student of economics will deny the inevitability of more crises during the next fifty years. This tendency can have only one outcome: Uncle Sam, the Government, the Public, will have loaned substantial sums of money to practically all the important national industries—thus becoming the dominant partner in these same industries. If this is not public ownership of the means of production, what is it?

We will now say a few well-chosen words about the Marxian desire to abolish the incentive of private profit. Ask any intelligent business man, banker or capitalist what is happening to the rate of profit. After he recovers from his apoplectic stroke, he will inform you that the rate of profit is falling with magnificent mathematical precision; that six per cent with complete safety is now three per cent and going down! He will weep pathetic, sentimental tears over the good old days when the smart entrepreneur made twenty per cent a year on his capital, and take another headache tablet.

To sum up: Those idiotic, muddle-headed, impractical, simple-minded Communists are martyring themselves to accomplish something that the stubbornly capitalistic industrial leaders of this country are more deftly accomplishing in the natural course of events. You subscribe to the *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses*. I'll subscribe to the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. You be a Communist and rot in the hoosegow. I'll be a Democrat and buy five tickets to the Annual Policemen's Ball.

Rob Wagner's
Script

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