

# AMERICAN OPINION

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## FORCE



by TAYLOR CALDWELL

IN CHRISTIAN MERCY I contribute to funds to aid ex-Communists who are ill and poverty-stricken. There are times when I am moved to compassion by their books, pleading for understanding. Sometimes I enjoy their warning articles in various magazines.

But never can I forget that if it were not for these men — and women — our country would not be so besieged as it is now. They were the Betrayers, even more so than the dedicated and still-rampant Communists in America. For they were the shock-troops of our deadly enemy. It is hard to forgive them. It is hard not to hate them with profound bitterness. I find it too hard to forgive, too hard not to hate them. This may be un-Christian. It probably is. But I cannot bear to look on their faces, and to listen, now, to their warnings against a monstrous conspiracy which they once served with passionate enthusiasm, and with which, in the name of that conspiracy, they persecuted those who never betrayed their country. Who can forget, or forgive, their wild and brutal attacks on Congressman Martin Dies, and their invocation of the Internal Revenue Service to punish him for daring to expose them? (The late Professor Richard Weaver, in his great book, *Ideas Have Consequences*, wrote that it was quite customary for “liberals” in the government to use that Service to destroy those individuals and groups who disagreed with Communism and “liberalism.” And this still goes on. I am a witness to it, myself.) Who can forgive the “liberals” fiendish attacks on Senator McCarthy because he dared to be an American and expose them? The roster of those they destroyed and defamed and hounded to death, and probably



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FROM UP AND down the scale by the measure of Whittaker Chambers, they have one whimpering wail: “I became a Communist (or a ‘liberal’) because I was a humanitarian, and was outraged by (or suffered through) the Great Depression. Who, possessing any heart in those days, could have resisted the Communist line? Who, with any imagination, could not have been stirred to pity for the oppressed and the hungry and the unemployed in those days, and could have been repelled by the promises of the eloquent Communists?”

Weak, maudlin, liars and betrayers! There were millions of us in those days who never once felt that we should betray our country in the name of the “oppressed and the hungry and the unemployed.” Never once, hungry and desperate though we were, were we moved to treason and the destruction of America.

I was about twenty-seven, a wife and the mother of a nine-year-old girl, when the Great Depression struck America. I had a whole family to support on a tiny salary — and prices were just about as high as they are now for food and clothing and shelter. My salary was \$1440 a year, minus deductions. Half of that money went to a convent boarding school for my daughter. Half of the remainder went for rent, and for clothing for my family. I worked seven days a week, but still I could afford only one meal a day, and that consisted of two doughnuts and one cup of coffee. When my shoes wore out, I replaced the soles with cardboard. I had but two dresses to my name. And I went to night college five nights a week, after my day’s work. Year after year after year. Never could I afford a doctor or a dentist, or a warm coat, nor the fifty cents to see a movie. I was a tall girl and suffered dreadfully from malnutrition. I trudged through heavy snow in the winters, because I could not afford carfare. I froze half of my right hand once, because I had no gloves. Sometimes, because I was always so frightfully hungry, I washed the windows of bakeries for a loaf of stale bread. And I worked seven days a week, and walked at least fifteen miles



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no matter the weather. (Fifty-mile hike, indeed!)

I saw people all around me in as desperate a plight. But I knew that depressions have a way of coming and going in all eras. This was a time to be lived through, to be prayed through, to be worked through, and a time to hope. (I have spoken of all these things to the ex-Communists and the “liberals” and they thought my patience, and all my work and suffering, were simply hilarious! Even to this day they slap their knees with sly mirth and jeer at me in magazine articles, when they mention my misery.)



YES, I ENCOUNTERED the wicked, slavering “liberals” in those days. Quite often they halted me with their Party-line pamphlets and their exhortations — on the streets and in public buildings. They wept for me, they assured me with tears in their ugly eyes. On a number of occasions they tried to induce me to accept Welfare: “You have a RIGHT to it, for the sake of your child!” Open or crypto-Communists, they had one unwavering theme: Communism was a System with a Heart. Communism was the new Christianity. Communism was the savior of the working-people. America *must* become Communistic, if it was to pull out of the Great Depression. The Light of the World was not in my church. It was in Moscow.

“Are you a Communist?” I would always ask them. A few admitted they were Communists. But the great majority violently denied it. They just Suffered for people like me. They were



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“liberals.” They blamed President Hoover for the misery of the millions. They blamed those they called “the rich.” They blamed our government, our system, the bankers, the employers — in fact, they blamed everything and everyone but the real criminal, which was World War I. They forgot to mention that due to that war Europe, too, was in the agonies of a depression. They had just loved that war. It had “saved” the world from the Kaiser and the naughty German people. The war had not caused the depression, they cried at me when I tried patiently to explain that the war had indeed caused it. When I remained obdurate they called me a “reactionary.” It was the first time I had ever heard that word applied to anyone before, but it was not the last.

Standing in blizzards I debated with these wretches, when they met me at school doors or near the street-cars and in a dozen other places. They baffled me at first. They seemed so sincere. In fact, they always proclaimed their sincerity. Then I saw the wild gleam in their eyes and I knew it was not love that was inspiring them. It was hatred for America, and all that America meant. I fled from them like one fleeing a deathly contagion. To this day I cannot see them or hear them without loathing, disgust, and dread; and a desire to do to them what they’d simply love to do to me!



I often think of Shakespeare’s play about a British King whose General betrayed him and who later returned and asked for forgiveness. The King replied, “Hang yourself, brave Crillon! *We* fought at Arques, and *you* were not there!”