

- To avoid Communism one should understand its basic principles and ideals rather than make a wholesale condemnation of entire groups who are under public suspicion.

HOW TO TELL A COMMUNIST

It is extremely difficult to answer the broad question: what is communism? Communism may refer to a political party which in this country is tiny and despised. It may refer to a set of principles, which have had a thousand different exponents from the days of the Essenes to those of the Cominform. It may refer to a general movement, which at various times has embraced very diverse sects.

In 1918-20, Russian communism was a new force in the world, and being new, untested by realities, it had a natural appeal. Since it had replaced Czarist Russia, it might be represented as a liberating force. To be sure, much was heard even then of the crimes and oppressions of the Bolsheviks. They might be excused or palliated, however, as a natural reaction against the old

autocracy or as precautionary in character.

For some years after 1918, communism naturally made a strong appeal to young idealists in particular; to youths who believed that the world could be regenerated in happier form.

A believer in Russian communism can take no shelter behind hazy idealism. He is a believer in a police state of the most ruthless character, with a system of secret arrests, dictated convictions, purges and concentration camps.

It is vital in the present situation for us to understand this. And to understand it we must have a clear perception of the great difference between the theories held by the liberal on the one side, and the Communist on the other.

True liberals of all shades of opinion, including ortho-

dox Socialist, agree to the fundamental principle that majority rule shall be loyally accepted so long as it respects the basic rights of minorities.

The Communist, however, rejects this principle. His party doctrine is Communist rule or general ruin. To him an opposition victory at the polls is simply the signal for conspiracy, sabotage, and secret subversion. As a minority, the Communists give no deference to any majority; they reject all the rules of the democratic game; they concoct plots, infiltrate at all weak points, cripple every machine they can touch, and stand ready at any moment to seize power by force.

The problem of coping with such elements is therefore simplified. We are not concerned with a movement; we are concerned with a militant minority, alien in allegiance. Unceasing vigilance is essential and in certain areas of government activity such as the armed services, State Department, and the agencies concerned with ato-

mic energy, it is necessary to insist on a security check.

But precautions regarding these limited sectors of national activity are not difficult to take; the records, associations and expressed ideas of employes or prospective employes can readily be tested.

If we are to have a careful policing of governmental agencies — and it is certain that those offices and departments which deal with national security must be policed — we should at least have the work done with a careful regard to all parts of our Bill of Rights.

If we grasp these facts, it is easier to approach the question: how can we deal with the dangerous Communists without hurting useful radicals and liberals? It is easier to answer because we can approach it without any sense of panic. One reason why our internal situation is so healthy is that radicals and liberals have been allowed free scope for expressing their opinions; another reason is that from 1929 onward many of their more

valuable ideas were adopted and applied.

Repressive activities always defeat their own end. They arouse widespread antagonism, foster the extremist doctrines at which they are aimed, and create martyrs and a martyrology — the most powerful known agencies of propagandism.

We need not worry about the Socialist; they are the fiercest opponents of Soviet ideas. We need not worry about the Utopian Communists; they can't but detest the Russian perversion of their ideals. We need not worry about liberals, who are the bulwark of our own system.

Repression is an indispensable part of the Soviet regime; it is not needed in the United States, and is hostile to every American tradition. Precautions against treason we may well take, and we can always punish individual violations of our

statutes; but beyond that no arm of the government can afford to go.

We may well recall the words of Charles E. Hughes at a time when a sweeping attempt to deny radicals their rights simply because they were radical had carried away the New York Assembly:

"I count it a most serious mistake to proceed, not against individuals charged with violation of the law, but against masses of our citizens combined for political action, by denying them the only resource of peaceful government; that is, action by the ballot box and through duly elected representatives in legislative bodies."

If we restrict the security check to its proper and very narrow areas, and elsewhere guarantee free opinion, free speech, and a free vote, we are safe. — *By Allan Nevins, condensed from the New York Times Magazine.*

In some states it is a crime for a wife to ransack her husband's pocket. In my state it is merely a waste of time. — *V. N. Fair.*