



"Democratic trade unionism and communism do not mix."—David Dubinsky (right) holds a press conference.

# A Warning Against Communists in Unions

Mr. Dubinsky says their aims and spirits are hostile to the policies of trade unionism.

By DAVID DUBINSKY

WHAT Communists do in the trade unions of any country vitally affects the welfare and security of its entire people, and not merely its organized labor movement.

No organization in American life has been immune from Communist penetration. Obedient to centralized direction, Communists have bored within church bodies, educational institutions, women's clubs, scientific groups and, believe it or not, business men's associations.

But the labor unions have been their special target. Without control of the trade unions the Communists would be lost. The unions form their economic base. Without direction of the key workers' groups, their other "transmission belts" would be useless. The workers' organizations are the largest and most vital non-governmental body in the community. They are primarily dedicated to improving working conditions, to raising living standards. They are part of a delicate mechanism of modern life, the core of "human engineering." The influence of organized labor reaches far beyond its 13,000,000 members or their families.

For this reason the significance of Communist operations in trade unions can

scarcely be exaggerated. Like termites, they bore into the "house of labor," but are not an integral part of the structure because the spirit and aims of totalitarian communism are totally distinct from and hostile to the ideals and policies of free trade unionism.



"Curtain Rod."

Seaman in Justice, ILGWU publication.

Free trade unionism may have its faults, but they can be remedied because essentially the processes of these unions are democratic, even though, at times, they may fall short of the ideal.

But communism, in unions and other organizations, is conspiratorial. It is based on the elimination of majority rule. It aims to establish the one-party state as the sole power over all groups. The unions, they are convinced,

are the stepping stones to this goal.

THE Communist technique is simple. The party agent forms the acquaintance of a member of a union which is marked for capture. They form a "cell" or "fraction" of a few like-minded members. With the help of the party agent a program is prepared. Naturally, it follows the Communist party line.

At the outset, the party representative's choice falls on a unionist who knows some

thing about parliamentary procedure. Then the stage is set. The innocent is introduced to an important party functionary or well-known party speaker; he is taken to cocktail parties and dances and no time is lost in introducing him to attractive partners.

The next scene is at the union meeting. Hardly is the gathering called to order before the Communist "fraction" starts to work. A member or, better still, a stooge or "innocent" makes a motion. The debate is on. It may and frequently does last long into the night. Slowly the members who want some sleep slip out of the room. As they do, the Communist tide rises. A vote may be taken at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. The party-liners win.

Sounds simple, does it not? It is simple. And yet that is the way the followers of Stalin have captured trade unions. The same procedure used at national conventions results in the Communist capture or control of the larger units.

The Communists cannot act single-handed. They must have help. They must be part of a crowd, of a "united front" or a "popular front," whatever the name may be. Because they know what they

want, because they are skilled in parliamentary tactics, and use any methods or weapons and because they reject no trick or device, they make headway.

But the Communist "fraction" does not always plant its own member in the union president's office. This place is often reserved for the ambitious opportunist who is ready to "play along." The "fraction" may even seek out a pliable promising non-Communist party man to bear the title of president and thus serve as a good cover for the actual party control of the union. If he stands for the party program, that is enough. Of course the real job, such as secretary-treasurer and organizational director, must go to strict party men.



"Waiting for Lefty."

Seaman in Justice, ILGWU publication

THE whole Communist apparatus is highly centralized—"democratic centralism" is the phrase. But forget the "democratic." That's camouflage. The machinery is geared for quick action, for when the party line is "handed down" it must be obeyed with blind military discipline. There is no time for debate, only for "discussion and approval."

The Communists refer to themselves as the "vanguard" of labor. Nothing could be further from the truth. They have disrupted many unions with their factional quarrels and have left in their wake many saddened and disillusioned members, destroyed businesses and blasted hopes. Far from being "progressive," as they claim, they are really "dynamic reac-

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tionaries," as someone has called them.

To them ethics and morality are "bourgeois" virtues. Therefore, in the unions, as elsewhere, they will support a conservative or reactionary if he should oblige them by favoring a pro-Soviet or pro-party line.

**M**ANY cases are at hand to prove this assertion. Indeed, we can show examples of union leaders who have dipped into their organizations' treasuries and grossly mismanaged union affairs without any condemnation by the Communists. In such cases the Communists have jumped hard on anyone who has tried to unseat the financially delinquent and incompetent non-Communist "friend of the Soviet Union."

As self-constituted champions of the Negro race the Communists have never faltered in praise of their alleged attitude on race discrimination. Yet they have never criticized the head of one of the nation's important unions who is known to be largely responsible for drawing the color line in his own organization.

Why? This union official, though not a Communist, has, out of vanity, or ignorance perhaps, permitted his name to be used as a sponsor of Soviet "front" outfits.

In another important union the national president has winked at Communist domination of local activities in two important metropolitan areas. By this concession he has bought off criticism of his administration of union affairs. This officer even sits at labor conventions with men he knows are Communist leaders of his affiliates.

**I**T is evident that vanity and lack of principle by non-Communist unionists have a bearing on the reasons why pro-Communist elements make headway in the mass workers units. Opportunism is a quality that is found everywhere.

Even in our own international union any local officer, no matter how conservative or incompetent, can avoid criticism by Communists and even obtain their support by merely endorsing some resolution favoring Russian foreign policy or the party line.

To Communists the yardstick of a union leader's "progressivism" is not the soundness of his labor policies but his readiness to approve Kremlin policy. That is why I consider them totalitarian reactionaries.

The fact is that real progressive unionists are the foremost targets of these Leftists while conservative unionists are quite safe from their onslaughts. The reason is simple. The liberal unionist knows the score. He is wise to Communist machinations. He can find his way through the jungle of double talk raised by the "saviors of the working class." This will explain why

the ILGWU has been the butt of bitter Communist assaults for so many years.

**A**LTHOUGH our union is free of the Communist menace today, it was not always so. In 1926 the Communist party through its demagogic propaganda and exaggerated promises was able to attract many of our members. It thus managed to obtain control of our New York organization and succeeded in plunging the coat and suit industry into a general strike. After a futile eight-week struggle the local Communist leaders had had enough. They were ready to come to a settlement, but the Communist party, feeling that the Moscow line was about to change, ordered their agents inside the union to continue the strike—against their better judgment and against the interests of the workers.

The strike ended disastrously. This terrible fiasco unseated the Communists in our union. Since then, most of the leaders of that strike have broken with Communist totalitarianism and have returned to the union. These same leaders are now the most effective fighters against Communist influence and domination.

It took ten years for us to recover from the criminal and stupid Communist-led strike of 1926 which cost \$3,500,000 and left in its wake a chaotic industry and a crippled union.

**O**THER unions are going through the same experience we have had. Now and then the curtain is pulled aside and we see what is happening. Take the case of Joseph Curran of the CIO's National Maritime Union. He knows the story from the inside. He says that 500 Communist party members dominate his union of 80,000 members through tactics "no different than those practiced by the Nazis when they destroyed the trade union movement of Germany."

By means of its cells the Communist party, according to Mr. Curran, was able to take 107 out of 150 elective offices in this union, one of the most strategic in the nation's life. These 107 officials, says Mr. Curran, are "more interested in assuring that the National Maritime Union becomes a stooge union of the Communist party than they are in keeping it an instrument belonging to the rank and file seamen who built it."

Interference by the Communist party in union elections, finances and strike policies was but recently exposed by J. A. (Pat) Sullivan, president of the Canadian Seamen's Union, an affiliate of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress.

For years prior to his frank confession of Communist affiliation Mr. Sullivan repeatedly denied that tie. He did so, he says, in order to win two elective positions—secretary-

treasurer of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress and head of the Canadian seamen's organization, strategic posts from which he could serve the Communist party.

**T**HE Communists are desperately working day and night to get control of progressive unions. With these as a base they can then launch their attacks on more conservative union citadels. Once in control of a few key progressive unions, they have a toehold in the inner circles and policy-making body of the whole labor movement. This is no small achievement. It means representation on committees and bodies of all sorts, visiting the President, for example, having an entree to important Government departments and gaining access to what might otherwise be secret information and, naturally, passing it on to the party commissars.

One Communist-dominated union "suddenly" conceived the idea of organizing workers in the Panama Canal Zone. Overnight the organizer flew to that strategic area. In a comparatively short time the union boasted 13,000 members there. Was this display of activity solely an interest in trade unionism?

I will not deny that Communists, at times, fight to improve the lot of the wage-earners but only when such a policy coincides with the interests of the Soviet rulers. If it is to their advantage to forego demands on their employers, to neglect grievances, to engage in the maximum of "class collaboration," they will do so.

**T**AKE their attitude toward President Roosevelt. When the New Deal was sponsoring important social legislation, Earl Browder saw in it "the clearest example of the tendencies toward fascism." Roosevelt's labor policies, according to Mr. Browder, constituted "the American brother to Mussolini's corporate state with state-controlled labor unions closely tied up and under the direction of the employers."

Subsequently, when the party line changed, no praise of Roosevelt was too great for Mr. Browder. However, during the Hitler-Stalin pact this ersatz Fuehrer thundered in Madison Square Garden, "The Rooseveltism of the New Deal has capitulated to reactionaries."

Yet the moment Russia was forced into the war by Hitler everything changed again. The Communists buried their class struggle theory temporarily and they stopped strikes abruptly because they were no longer interested in embarrassing our defense preparations or sabotaging aid to Britain. In fact, they glorified F. D. R. in terms second only to those held in reserve for Stalin. In this and in their temporarily servile submission to American employers they

had but one motive: to serve Russian interests, not those of the American people.

**T**HE unions under Communist domination reflected this sudden change faithfully because they are completely wired for Communist sound. Read their organs and you will learn that as soon as Russia entered the war they abandoned their campaign against lend-lease and frowned on any interruption of production. In this period one of the largest of these Communist-dominated unions even espoused an elaborate "incentive" production plan of the type denounced by labor for many years as "speed-up." It is hardly necessary to emphasize the reason.

For purely Communist purposes, the needs of Russian foreign policy, the Communists have brought discredit to the time-honored weapon of trade union picketing. They threw a picket line around a hotel to interfere with a dinner officially tendered to Winston Churchill by the City of New York. In another instance Philip Murray had to intervene to prevent the Communist-dominated New York City CIO-Industrial Council from proclaiming a two-hour city-wide political strike. The strike was called ostensibly to support another CIO union—also in the Communist orbit.

Harry Bridges, who runs the West Coast Longshoremen's Unions, is familiar with all the curves in the Communist party line. When American cooperation with the Soviet Union was the order of the day during the war he boldly proclaimed the idea of extending the no-strike pledge beyond the war period. But he dropped this line when the war ended and the party line changed. Behind this changed expression is his belief, shared by other Communist party line followers, that the political strike is more important than the economic strike. Keep that in mind. It is important. The reason is obvious. The political strike is a revolutionary weapon. The economic strike is not.

**W**HAT would happen if the Communists should gain control of the American trade union movement?

Let Tomsky, prominent Russian trade union leader, a suicide in one of the party purges, give the answer:

"If for a moment we could imagine that tomorrow all the trade unions of Germany would march hand in hand with the German Communist party, we would have no doubt that a Soviet Government would be established there within five minutes after that combination of forces took place \* \* \* If we could imagine for a moment a combination of the trade unions with the Communist party of England, then a Soviet Government would rapidly spring up also in England."

Obviously, the extent to

which Communists succeed in capturing posts and securing domination over unions vitally concerns the entire nation and not merely the particular labor body affected.

**P**RESENT-DAY France affords a striking and tragic confirmation of this truth. The Communists in France now dominate the General Confederation of Labor. No doubt the Communist party in France owes much of its electoral strength to the stranglehold it has over the great trade unions in the metal trades, coal fields, transportation and other key labor organizations. Through its airtight control of the trade unions, the Communist party has, whenever it so desired, exercised veto power over the French Government's economic policies. Because of this Communist control of the General Confederation of Labor, the numerically largest political party in France is one whose policies are controlled by a foreign power and not by its membership.

We must never forget that the Communists took to resistance in France not when their own country was attacked but only after Russia was invaded. What a menace this development is to the stability and security of France is clear to all.

In many important respects, the situation now prevailing in Italy is similar.

**W**ERE the Communists ever to exercise such domination over the American trade union movement and thereby secure such a decisive political position, our own country would find itself just as unstable and insecure—its national independence vitally sapped—at the mercy and whim of a ruthless foreign totalitarian dictatorship.

Liberals render a distinct disservice to the nation when they allow themselves to be used as fig leaves, front men or transmission belts by the Communists. Some liberals deliberately allow themselves to be thus used; others may do so unwittingly. But in both cases such liberals lend most vital prestige indispensable to Communist success.

Non-Communist trade union leaders who join with the Communists in united front movements render an equally distinct disservice to the people as a whole and to organized labor in particular.

The present trend in the country against communism has so far resulted only in an increasing number of union members getting on to the Communist game. Some leaders of trade unions have left their posts in disgust because of their belated realization as to what the Communists have been doing right under their noses. But though more and more rank and file workers in Communist-dominated unions

are waking up to the fact that they have been used as pupes by the Communist party, the Communists have not yet been dislodged from the control of any unions which they have been holding in their grip. In recent months the Communist party has been put on the defensive and has lost some ground. But it continues to maintain its stranglehold on a number of unions.

**H**OW much strength do the Communists have in the unions? It is impossible to give an exact figure of their trade union membership.

Today the Communist party claims 70,000 members. Let us assume that 35,000 of these are in the unions. That would give the party a maximum numerical strength of .0027 per cent of the 13,000,000 trade union members. But despite their insignificant numbers, the Communists and their fellow-travelers and party-liners dominate twelve to fifteen out of forty national CIO unions. They have a strong bloc on the CIO executive board.

None of the 110 national unions of the AFL is dominated by Communists, but they do control locals of an undetermined number, though not many.

It is safe to say that no important labor union in the United States has more than 2 per cent Communist membership. Because of their devious methods of operation, however, the Communists and their followers wield an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. It is truly a case of the Communist tail in some cases wagging the trade

union dog.

The real danger from the Communists in trade unions is that they control strategically placed workers in key industries such as communications, transportation, shipping and maritime and electrical manufacturing.

**H**ERE and there influential labor leaders have felt they could use the Communists to their advantage. Uniformly, this policy has been a failure, sometimes a disaster. The history of the CIO is abundant proof of my statement. Free, democratic trade unionism and communism do not mix. One cancels out the other. To be free, the unions must keep the Communists out of leadership which they would use to advance their party interests.

How can this be done? We start from the assumption, which is a fact, that up to now the totalitarian success in trade unions has been scored largely by default. The Communists have broken through open doors.

Today the constructive trade union leader who is fighting the infiltration of Communists into his organization is faced with other grave obstacles. Curiously enough, these hindrances come from those anti-union legislators, on the national and State levels, who presumably are opposed to communism but who at the same time are doing all they can to break down the trade unions and thereby help to strengthen the Communist position.

**E**VERY anti-union law passed by Congress becomes a

trump card in the hands of the Communists. Weaken the trade unions and you open wide the dikes for Communist propaganda to rush through. Near-sighted "regulators" of trade unionism in our legislative halls are the best pals the Communists could wish for in this country.

It is sheer nonsense for anyone to believe the Communists have a monopoly of organizational skill. They can be beaten by the conscious combined will of the progressive and democratic forces within the unions. Over and over again our experience in the ILGWU has supported this contention.

A local of the ILGWU with a membership of 25,000 held an election recently. It has less than 500 avowed or known Communists. Yet, because of their energy, discipline, unscrupulousness in creating false issues and propagandistic activity, they polled 5,000 votes. Suppose only 9,000 members had gone to the polls. Less than 500 Communists would have taken control of a local with such a huge membership. Only because the progressive forces were alert, were well led and were able to bring 80 per cent of the members out to vote did they succeed in defeating the Communist-led forces, 3 to 1.

**T**HEREFORE, to meet the situation, trade union progressives must:

(1) Put at least as much energy in organizing the majority as the Communists do in organizing the minority.

(2) Enlightened trade unionists do not have to ban Communist propaganda to stop

party infiltration. Outlawing the Communist party from the political arena or Communists from trade union membership is not an effective way of combating them. We must rely on education and discussions of daily problems confronting labor, on the systematic enlightenment of our members about the grave issues facing us.

(3) We must do everything we can to bring home to the rank and file the importance of attending their local meetings and sharing in the responsibilities of union membership. They must lead in handling grievances in the shops and factories. They must serve on committees that administer the policies of the union, no matter how dull this work seems to be—remembering that if progressive unionists fail in these tasks the Communists will undertake them for their party purposes.

(4) Local unions should make it obligatory for members to attend meetings and participate in elections in order to insure that all decisions reflect the will of the majority. This would serve as the most effective barrier to Communist minority control of unions.

Local unions must work out practical administrative methods of stimulating all members to take part in every phase of union life, to take time and patience to interest members in such a program. Efforts must continue despite discouragement.

(5) As trade union leaders we must be tireless in our efforts to solve the daily problems of the wage-earners in improving their working con-

ditions, living standards and safeguarding their political rights and interests.

(6) Constructive unionists must refrain from competing with Communists or others in making extravagant "pie-in-the-sky" promises that cannot be fulfilled.

#### OBJECTIVE

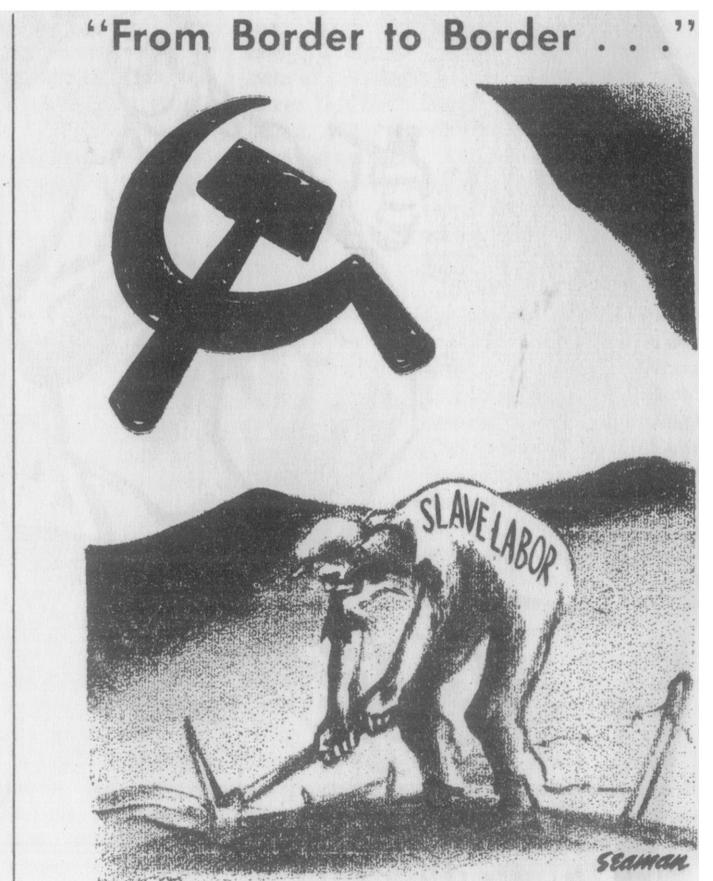
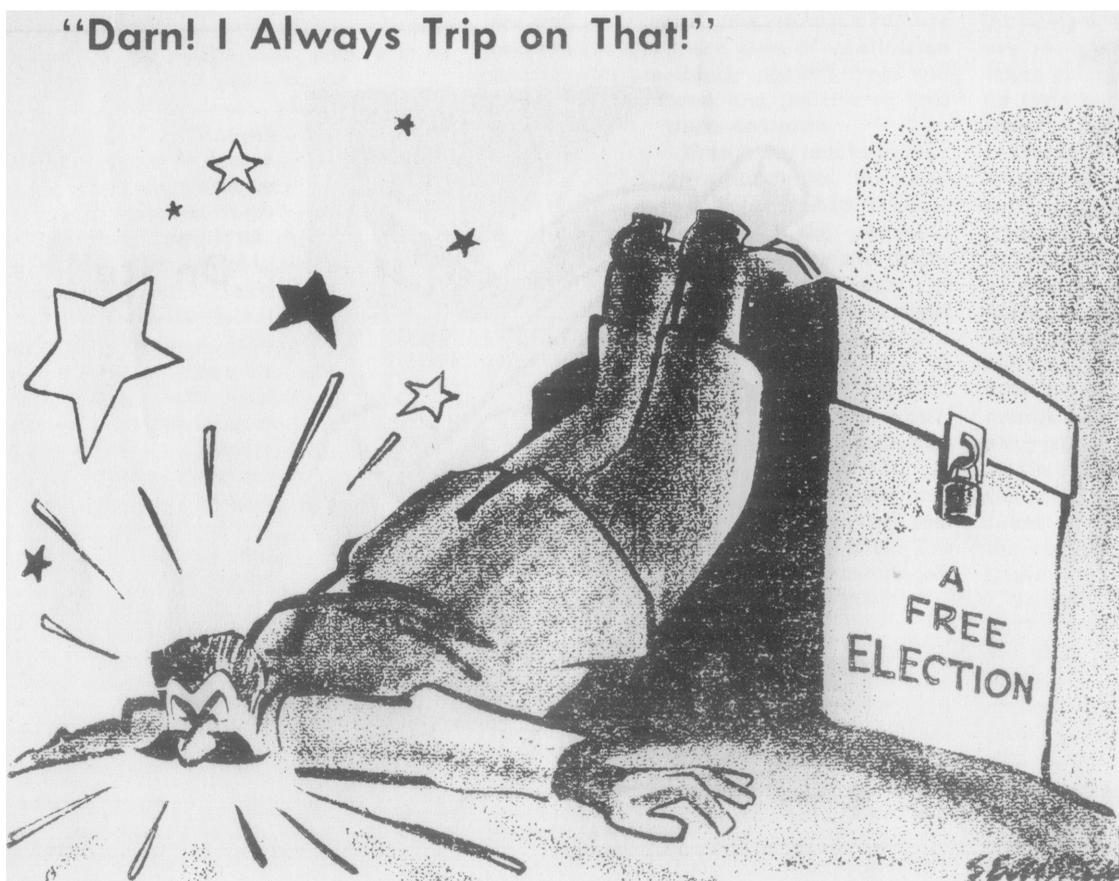
"Infiltration of organized labor has been a major objective for Communists for several good reasons. First of all, unions are large in membership. If captured they represent substantial economic and political power. Secondly, communism has an appeal to persons who are dissatisfied with their existing status. Communism makes glowing promises \* \* \*. Yet, to the credit of labor, it must be said that many honest and forward-looking labor unions are themselves endeavoring to expose and destroy this cancerous growth."

—Robert M. La Follette Jr.

**I**F we follow these rules we can easily overcome the Communist nuclei in the trade unions in every test of strength. These strepto-Communist cells, like those of other diseases, thrive in darkness and ignorance. They do not multiply in unions where leaders and members are alert, honest and competent.

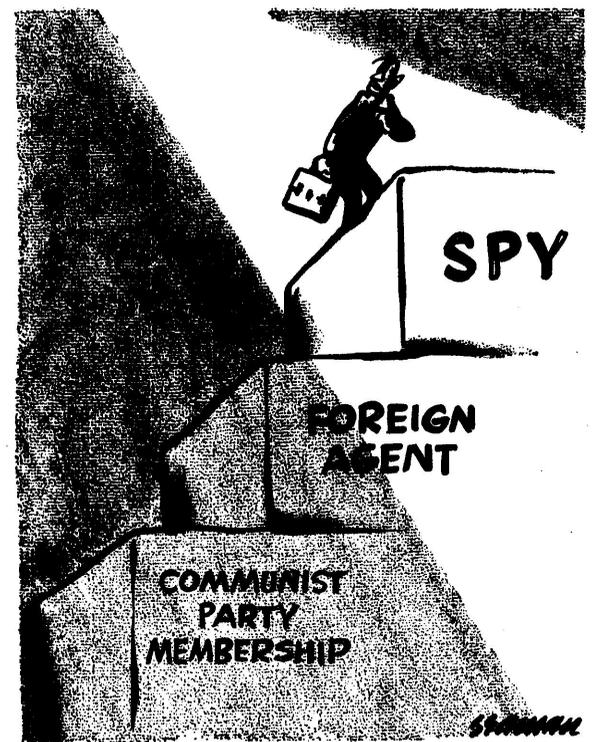
What the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union has been able to do since it routed the Communists twenty years ago every progressive American labor union can do today.

The cartoons below and on the last page by BERNARD SEAMAN are reproduced from JUSTICE, official organ of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

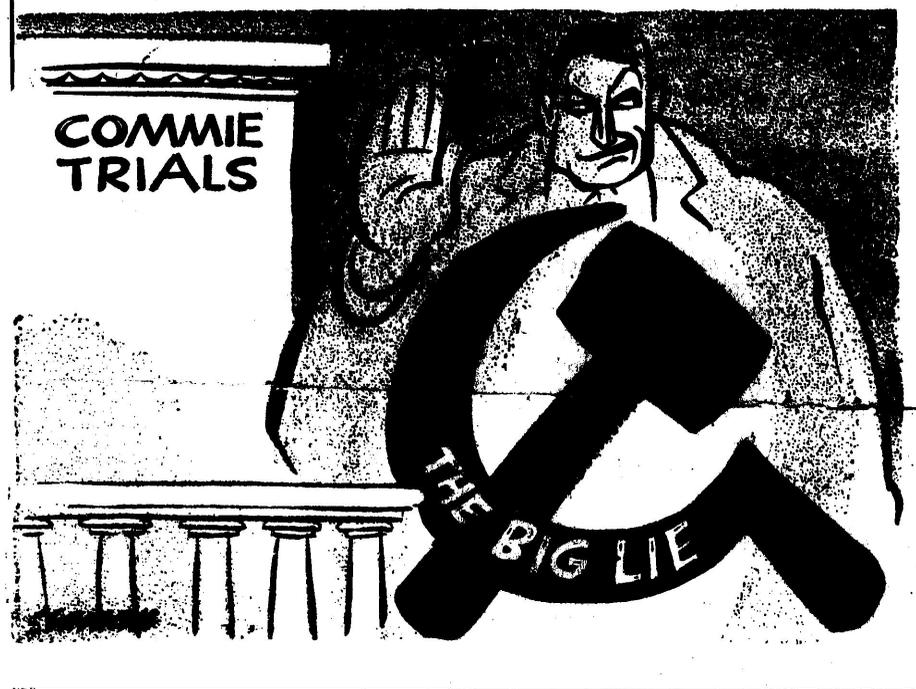




"Who—Me?"



"I Do Hereby Swear . . ."



"What Sign, Tovarich?"



"On Ice"