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HOW TO BEAT THE COMMUNISTS

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The President of the United Automobile Workers describes methods by which any American organization can force the Communists out of the back alleys and into Main Street—where they can be defeated by hard work and determination

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IN 1939, in the course of our United Automobile Workers' negotiations with General Motors, William F. Knudsen, then president of the corporation, pointed a big forefinger at me and said, "Now see here, Reuther, we don't want any commissars in America!"

The answer I gave then is the answer I should give today to the question, "How can we stop Communism?" It is an answer bolstered by eleven years' experience in the day-to-day struggle for C.I.O. survival and growth in America's pace-setting auto industry.

"Mr. Knudsen," I said, "we Auto Workers don't want commissars any more than you do. But what you and other powerful leaders of American industry do about helping to make democracy work in bread-and-butter terms for the average man and his family will determine—much more than anything we Auto Workers do—whether we get commissars or not."

I fear that such an answer will not comfort or please those who have been stampeded by the present anti-Red hysteria into the belief that there is some easy formula for beating the Communists. But we have beaten the Communists in the United Automobile Workers and we can speak with authority. There is no formula. There is only the never-ending task of making democracy work, keeping it alive and fighting against injustice; ex-

panding and enriching it by tangible achievement. Stopping Communism is only a negative aspect of that positive, infinitely more important work.

There are quick cures for Communism. Hitler cured it by killing the limited democracy of the Weimar Republic. Mussolini stopped it by throttling Italian freedom. We in the United States still have time to avoid these fatal extremes and to prove that democracy is a militant, up-to-date creed—with the moral strength and the practical political and economic know-how to meet the challenge of totalitarianism.

The press, reporting the results of the latest UAW-C.I.O. convention stated that Reuther had scored a decisive victory over Communist forces. But to call this Communist defeat a personal victory for me is to obscure the most significant development in the Auto Workers. Hundreds of thousands of UAW members, not only in Detroit and the other large industrial centers but in Kokomo, Oshawa, Kalamazoo; in Canada, New England and the deep South—these are the men and women who stopped Communism in the Auto Workers by standing up, having their say and being counted.

Communists cannot seize power in a nation or a union if the people are on their toes, if they know the issues and are offered democratic leadership built around a positive program of

action. The inertia and indifference of the average citizen or union member are the most valuable assets the Communists have. Working as a well-disciplined minority, they cultivate this passivity and thereby seek to immobilize the democratic majority—especially those individuals and groups capable of providing leadership and direction in the fight against both Red and black totalitarianism.

The momentum of a positive democratic program is the only final answer to both the commissar and the storm trooper.

From our experience in the UAW-C.I.O., we have learned that there are two major obstacles to be overcome before decent unionists and honest liberals are ready to fight the Communists. The first obstacle might be called the united-front psychology; the second, fear of the Communists' highly developed technique of name calling and character assassination.

We have just emerged from a period in which many non-Communist progressives made common cause with the Stalinists in the misguided belief that contemporary Communism operates from ethical and moral perceptions of a certain validity. The delusion still persists in many quarters; Henry Wallace's third-party movement was fathered by it. The liberal who succumbs to the united-front lure believes that Communists are simply demo-

crats-in-a-hurry. He points to their concern over civil liberties (when it suits the party line), their loud support for price and rent controls, their advocacy of full employment, health, Social Security, and minimum-wage legislation. And he asks, "Since the Communists are going my way, why shouldn't I travel with them?"

The answer, of course, is that Communist concern for progressive reform under parliamentary democracy is little more than a temporary expedient, designed to enlist as many allies as possible against the day when the class struggle attains its climax in revolution and the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Communist parties of the world are the self-appointed midwives of this violent historical birth. Moreover, in the course of the last generation, Communists have come to identify the interests of the world's peoples with the needs of the Soviet Union. Their subservience to the Kremlin and their shifts on trade-union issues as Moscow winds veer can become the Achilles heel of the domestic Stalinists if honest progressives in the labor movement carry the fight to them.

An amusing consequence of Communist acrobatics cropped up in the Wayne County C.I.O. Council. Shortly before the invasion of Russia, the Communist clique in a UAW local

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union had slipped a resolution condemning the "imperialist war" past a sparsely attended local membership meeting and had forwarded it to the council for endorsement, after releasing it to the press. The Nazi attack followed. The Communists maneuvered a special meeting at the same local and quickly passed another resolution reflecting the new, superpatriotic line. The imperialist blood bath had now become a holy crusade.

This resolution was also given to the press as the official position of the local and sent to the council for action. When the council met, the two conflicting resolutions from the same local were read—and a motion was made to refer both of them back to their source, with the recommendation that the local union make up its mind.

A Mistake That Must Be Avoided

Progressives must expose Stalinist duplicity without qualms. To outlaw their party and drive them underground is not the answer. Such action would enable them to drape themselves in the cloak of martyrdom and would make more difficult the task of detecting their activities.

Exposure, not repression, must be our goal. We must get the Communists out of the political back alleys and walk them up Main Street in the full light of informed opinion. No sober public examination of their unadorned doctrine and purposes can fail to reveal them as frauds.

While the American Stalinists may quote democratic scripture for their purposes, they are neither good democrats nor good Americans.

Yet many genuine liberals who understand that the Communists have only a provisional interest in the democratic process are immobilized by fear of Communist character assassination and abuse—and they are disgusted by the stupid and indiscriminate Dies-Rankin-Thomas brand of Red-baiting. Such indiscriminate lumping of the Communists and the non-Communists gives to the Stalinists the protective coloration which is their most effective means of defense. The hysteria engendered by the new "Republican Dies Committee" is creating the same confusion, hitting the very witch-hunt pitch required by Communist strategists. The Communists know how to exploit this confusion, how to intensify it. Witch hunts rather than legitimate and sober exposure, moreover, lend an aura of righteousness to the Stalinists' own technique of abuse and slander.

We in the UAW took the Communists on without illusions. We were determined not to be diverted from our program by any amount of Communist invective or distortion.

We understood that the alternative to a finish fight was Communist control of our union. Such an understanding comes painfully; nobody enjoys the daily diet of vulgar insult in the Communist press which is the lot of those who challenge the party. Morris Muster, former president of the C.I.O. Furniture Workers' Union, for example, resigned under the incessant hammering of the Communists, after releasing a bitter statement exposing the extent of their infiltration in his union. But he should have considered the fact that when decent unionists lose stomach for the struggle, they surrender the field to the Communists.

Honest progressives in the UAW had ample cause for disgust as the CP machine slipped into high gear in the pre-convention struggle. The Stalinist bloc in the Auto Workers was responsible for publishing and distributing to the membership more than 2,000,000 pieces of literature.

In addition to a weekly propaganda paper, they prepared and circulated na-

tionally a 35-page magazine called *The Bosses' Boy*, replete with distortion, fabrication and forgery, which sought to prove that I was a clever servant of General Motors and the National Association of Manufacturers. Responding to a full report which I had issued to the membership, which had minced no words in describing the conflict within our ranks, the left-wing majority on the International Executive Board adopted a resolution reflecting the Communist view that I was a traitor and an agent of Wall Street.

"Fulfillment of Reuther's program," the resolution charged, "would put him in such distinguished company that the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 might well be called the 'Taft-Hartley-Reuther' Act."

This association of my name with Taft was a prelude to the more ambitious maneuver executed shortly thereafter by a press agent hired by the opposition. It soon developed that I was being boomed for Vice-President as a running mate with none other than Senator Taft. This big-lie technique was perhaps brilliant as a public-relations maneuver, but we exposed it, as a repeat performance of a campaign by the Communists during the war, when they advocated a return to piecework and speed-up in the auto plants.

To those who are just beginning to face the unpleasant necessity of combating Communists in their local unions, veteran groups and other organizations, we can offer only the simple recommendation: Names can't hurt you. We must have the courage to speak up.

Once committed to the struggle against Communists, honest liberals must guard against the temptation to join forces with or accept help from those whose only badge of fraternity is their anti-Communism. It is fatal to resist Communism by courting reaction. The chief weakness of American foreign policy is the predilection of our State Department for dealing with anybody who will promise to hate Communism. And the most dangerous error into which any domestic offensive against Stalinism can fall is that of assuming that *every foe of Communists is a friend of democracy*.

The Governor Wasn't Helpful

We did not make that mistake in the UAW. At the height of our campaign against CP infiltration in our union, Michigan's Governor Sigler descended upon Washington as an expert witness in the Red probe. Mr. Sigler's authority on the subject of Communism derived from a few easy victories won on Michigan campuses over the American Youth for Democracy, latter-day name for the Young Communist League.

The governor, however, identified as subversive several groups which were nonexistent or highly respectable, and one organization whose members included Detroit's chief of police and a score more of that city's more prominent residents. Mr. Sigler's stock as an expert on Communist-front organizations fell suddenly, but not until he had made highly damaging allusions to Communism in the Auto Workers. The anti-Communist forces in the UAW, however, did not make the fatal mistake of regarding Sigler as a potential ally in our fight.

Anti-Communism is not sufficient. Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Perón, Rankin, Bilbo and Gerald L. K. Smith—all could pass that test. The fight against Communism can be transformed from a self-defeating clash by night into an honest engagement in which decent people can participate without embarrassment only by a passionate belief in democratic values and the will to give those values practical currency in the lives of the people.

The next step in any democratic move to combat Communism must be an

awareness of how the Stalinist parties and their adherents function. Communist tactics in relation to the labor movement have shifted many times since 1917, but the central design has never altered. In 1921, the Third World Congress of the Communist International, legislating on the "duties of Communist activity," laid down the following imperatives:

"Communist nuclei must be formed for the daily work in the different branches of the party activities. . . .

"These Communist units are the nuclei for the daily Communist work in military units, trade unions, etc. . . . If there are a greater number of party members in the same factory or in the same union, etc., then the nucleus is enlarged into a faction, and its work is directed by the nucleus."

The same Comintern directive contained clear instructions for Communist action in the unions: "In those capitalist countries where a large majority of the proletariat has not yet reached revolutionary consciousness, the Communist agitators must be constantly on the lookout for new forms of propaganda."

"The factions must carefully prepare the participation of the Communists in conferences and meetings of the trade-union organizations. For instance, they must elaborate proposals, select lectures and counsel and put up as candidates for election capable, experienced and energetic comrades."

The *Daily Worker* stated on July 16, 1928: "Communism is a revolutionary tendency in the labor movement and the only representative of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism; as such it is opposed to all other tendencies within the labor movement."

This fanatical preoccupation with conquest of organized labor, this elaborate apparatus of propaganda and disruption, the Stalinists, over the past several years, have brought to bear on the United Automobile Workers, which they regard as the strategic union of the C.I.O.

We have beaten them. The story of how we did it reads almost like the report of an experiment in creative democracy, and provides a demonstration of techniques which can be applied in the larger struggle to save democracy in the world.

Communists have never had much success in converting workers in any industry to their dogmas. But where the Stalinists had not been able to convert, they succeeded in exerting an influence far out of proportion to their numerical strength by exploiting the innocence and ambition of men and women in positions of leadership.

The Communists have a complete political valet service which they offer to those in public life and in the unions who, for whatever reason, accept their current policies and fail to challenge their motives. Henry Wallace is the most familiar contemporary example of a man who has accepted this service. This CP service provides its customers with ready-made thoughts on all subjects, ghost-writes speeches, arranges meetings, engineers applause, and inflates egos as required.

Recipients of the service ultimately discover, however, that they have become boxed in, thoroughly dependent, and pliable instruments of the party linemen.

Few Reach High Union Posts

During the twelve years the UAW-C.I.O. has existed as an international union, the Communists have placed only one party member in the top leadership and only two of the faithful on our International Executive Board. Yet they have prospered in our midst until recently, because they so skillfully cultivated persons who could be made, in some degree, to serve their purposes. It was through clever manipulation of such people that the Stalinists acquired an influence in the

UAW vastly disproportionate to the numbers of their convinced adherents.

Working through such strategically placed victims, the Communists captured the leadership of a number of local unions and could count on assistance from certain members on the regional and international union staffs. Machine-made resolutions promoting the Communist line would pop up at union meetings, and Communist adeptness at parliamentary maneuver would get them by an unaltered membership.

The Communists are highly skillful in using the forms of democracy to subvert democracy. But in local after local union, non-Communist members, gradually and after many painful experiences, awoke to the party's contempt for the rank and file, to its methods of discouraging attendance at meetings, to its whole strategy of spreading conflict and sowing confusion.

The Stalinists suffered their first crucial pre-convention defeat when their proposal to merge the Communist-dominated Farm Equipment Workers with the UAW was rejected by UAW local unions.

In the summer of 1947, a committee of UAW opposition board members had been meeting secretly with officials of the FE-C.I.O. Without prior notice, they presented to a UAW Executive Board meeting a plan for merging the two organizations, both of which have jurisdiction in the agricultural implement industry. What followed might be regarded as a controlled experiment in the technique of fighting Communists without succumbing to the Communists' own vicious habit of generalized abuse.

The FE merger proposal was a complete fraud. Its sponsors had only one objective: to bring 500 additional left-wing votes to bear in the UAW convention, then less than 5 months away. It did not provide for a true merger at all, but rather for the temporary establishment of a union within a union. Grant Oakes, FE president, admitted to a *Daily Worker* correspondent that the plan, if carried out, would set up a "powerful and autonomous FE Division of the UAW-C.I.O., throughout the U.S. and Canada."

For Left-Wing Control of UAW

The FE was to enter the UAW with its staff intact; FE members, together with UAW members in the farm implement industry, were to be given special membership cards in an "FE Division" of the UAW; the whole plan was in violation of the UAW constitution and organizationally unsound. It would have meant a retreat from industrial unionism to craftlike autonomy at a time when the industrial form of organization was under attack from Congress. But the Communists didn't care. They were making a bid for control of the nation's biggest union. This was the showdown.

The plan was approved by the left-wing majority of the UAW Executive Board. UAW locals were given less than a month to debate the issues and set up a poll in which no alternative set of proposals would be available. Those of us in the leadership and ranks who favored real merger but opposed the provisions of the left-wing plan were placed in the uncomfortable position of blocking "unity."

We went into the local unions with copies of the merger plan. Every time advocates of the measure waxed eloquent and general, we dragged them down out of the stratosphere by talking about the plan itself.

They railed at the Taft-Hartley Act. We insisted that all generalities be brought down to earth and measured against the specific provisions of the merger proposal. We were not against merger. We favored merger. But we objected to merger on the basis proposed. We knew that the FE merger maneuver was Communist-inspired. But to base our opposition to it on that ground would

have confused the membership by involving them in a vague debate on the merits of Communism.

The Communists would have cried, "Red-baiting," and they would have succeeded in pushing the plan through on the basis of their general appeal to unity. When left-wing rhetoric had subsided and we had placed the facts before the membership, the proposal was rejected by a vote of better than 2 to 1.

A spokesman for the left-wing group, interviewed by a reporter for the Detroit Free Press (July 20, 1947) after the vote, had this to say: "We give Reuther credit. His workers covered the country from coast to coast and down to the Gulf."

His credit should have gone to the workers he mentioned rather than to me, but the point is clear: We had beaten the Stalinists on the merits of the issue—but the issues were rescued from the fog of double-talk and presented to the membership by hard work. That is the way to beat the Communists.

Since the UAW Convention, we have offered the FE a sound unity proposal which their leadership has rejected. They have lost their zeal for unity.

An equally significant Communist defeat occurred at the last C.I.O. convention. Here again, during debate on the foreign policy resolution, the progressive forces won an important victory for democratic unionism which has implications wider than the C.I.O.—and we won it by hitting hard at the issue.

The resolution on foreign policy was among the most important adopted by the C.I.O. convention, for it contained a clearly implied endorsement of the Marshall Plan. To the Communists, it was all-important, since they are always most sensitive in those areas where the interests of the Soviet Union are directly affected.

They recognized that the resolution itself was not so important as the interpretation it would be given by delegates and by the press. We, too, were fully aware of the importance of the setting. Secretary of State Marshall had been invited to address the convention.

What Marshall said before the C.I.O. National Convention was important, but more significant was the fact that he had been invited to address the C.I.O. For in its work of dispensing confusion to the hungry and troubled peoples of Europe, the Cominform would find it difficult to explain how the chief "agent of American imperialism and Wall Street capitalism" could be invited to address the delegates of millions of industrial workers.

The Stalinists attempted to maneuver convention action on the foreign policy resolution in advance of Secretary Marshall's speech. We blocked such a move.

Marshall spoke first and debate followed. The democratic bloc was ready. Van Bittner of the Steel Workers took the floor. Anticipating the tenor of left-wing remarks, he gave the lie to Communist charges that Marshall was a "war-monger." Other similar speeches followed, attacking Communist hypocrisy.

Kehoe of the American Communications Association was the first speaker to echo the CP line. He had just finished attacking American policy in Korea and was in the middle of a free-speech peroration when Philip Murray interrupted him to inquire, "I assume that you also believe the heroes of Stalingrad are entitled to take the rostrum and the public platform in Russia to expound their views?" Kehoe replied lamely that he believed in free speech everywhere, even in Russia. The Communists were in full retreat.

Victory for Democratic Unionism

The "secret battalion" had been licked before an international audience. Hundreds of thousands of decent unionists, watching from local union offices throughout the land, had won new heart. They knew now that it could be done; they had just seen it done. And democratic trade unionists throughout Europe, who suffered the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, knew they had friends and allies in the ranks of American labor in their struggle against the new totalitarianism of the left.

As delegate elections preceding our 1947 convention were held and the campaign got under way, the results soon proved the effectiveness and soundness of our policy of fighting the Communists on the basis of principles and program. We entered the delegate elections with a militant union program. It was printed on every piece of our campaign literature.

We made specific recommendations for strengthening the internal structure of our union. We emphasized a broad program for union members acting not as producers alone but as consumers and politically conscious citizens. We developed a concept of unionism as an integral part of the community, alert to all aspects of the community's life and sensitive to the relationship of its own function and the general good. We pulled no punches on the issues of Communism and Fascism, for we had no ulterior motives to hide. Whenever we could, we talked program, not personalities, in contrast to a left-wing campaign limited to personal slander and abuse.

It was our concern with program that provided our margin of victory in the UAW. Around our program we mobilized the energies of our people, the demo-

cratic unionist bloc. In every area where we clashed, militant democracy won out over Stalinist maneuvers.

In the Motor Building of the vast Ford Rouge plant, the leadership of the unit opposed our program. They fixed delegate elections for Sunday between 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M., thinking that the inconvenient hour would discourage rank-and-file attendance and enable a disciplined minority to capture the delegates. It was a technique which had succeeded many times; this time it failed. We worked harder than the opposition.

We filled the hall and we elected 9 out of 10 delegates. The election was thrown out on a technicality by the leadership, and another election was scheduled. We went to work again. The results this time were perfect; we mobilized an even heavier vote and we carried 10 out of 10 delegates by better than 3 to 1. Hard hitting on the issues; hard work on the double. There is no easier or surer way for democracy to win.

The Communists made a particularly ambitious play for the allegiance of our Negro members. They had in the past had undeniable success in exploiting the legitimate grievances of Negroes, both as citizens and as unionists. But here, as in other areas, the Communists have been more interested in playing upon misery and exploiting legitimate grievances for their own purposes than in making a principled and consistent attack on the evils of prejudice and discrimination. The cleverness of the Stalinist appeal to race emotions cost the UAW democratic bloc the Buffalo convention in 1943, when we opposed election of a Negro board member-at-large on the basis of race alone.

We persisted, however, in efforts to obtain equality of treatment and opportunity for Negro members. Our stand was not so spectacular as the Communist approach. We appealed to Negroes, not as racial nationalists but as unionists and fellow Americans. We could, moreover, afford to be steadfast in our actions. Throughout the war period, for example, we continued to press for fair play in the plants and local unions, at a time when the CP members preferred to look the other way, regarding a prosecution of Negro grievances (or any legitimate unionist grievance) as an offense against their newly acquired superpatriotic line.

At the latest convention of the UAW, the vast majority of Negro delegates joined the democratic bloc. Not only had we been more consistent; we had not waited for Communist-front organizations to champion the cause of civil rights.

The lesson is clear; it can be applied elsewhere. An honest but inactive liberal is no match for a devious but aggressive

totalitarian in any engagement where democratic values are at stake. Democracy needs more get-up-and-go.

The lessons we learned in the UAW can fortify free men everywhere who stand at the crossroads today. We mobilized a third force, resisting the interference and blandishments of democracy's enemies on the right and the left. We talked program, and acted to implement program. The challenge to make democracy work is particularly acute in America, where our great productive potential gives us the prime responsibility to provide leadership and sustenance to a world in crisis.

Double Standard Must Go

Communism is in perpetual war with what democracy preaches, for it cannot abide the sanctity of the individual or the interplay of honest differences. But Communism breeds on what democracy too often practices; it exploits the lapses of the democratic conscience and thrives on the shortcomings of democratic action. It is the task of democrats to bridge the gap between preachment and practice; we must wipe out the double standard in America, and in the world, which divides the masses of people from the minority that controls the preponderance of economic power. It is this double standard which embitters our society.

Democracy's heart is in the right place. It is grounded on the firm base of confidence in the intrinsic soundness and rightness of the ordinary person. Democracy affirms that the individual is more than a hired hand, more than a clock-card number, more than a servant of the authoritarian state. It rejects the Fascist and Stalinist notion that men must be herded and bullied through history's dialectic by vanguards and elites.

But you can't beat Communism by throwing embarrassing questions at witnesses in a Congressional hearing. You can't slug it to death with a club or a slogan. You can't burn it at the stake. You have to show it up in the market place of ideas, expose it by honest dealing. Communism breeds on hunger, poverty, human insecurity. The Catholic peasants of Italy have never read Marx or Lenin. But in desperation they will vote Communist for land and bread if Italian democrats fail them. Desperation knows and needs no ideology.

Whether in some small local union in some small American town or in the vast power vacuums of Europe and Asia, democracy needs program and the will to get up early and stay late in the running fight with totalitarianism of every stamp. Democracy needs less noise from the Thomas Committee and more quiet labor in the vineyards Franklin Roosevelt had only begun to cultivate when he died.

THE END

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