

CHAPTER V

“IS COMMUNISM
A MENACE?”

SOME of my readers may get the impression that in the previous chapter I classified as Nazi agents everyone who thinks communism is a menace. That is not my intention. I know quite well that in addition to such men as Martin Dies who make a profession of red-baiting for ulterior purposes there are large numbers who sincerely believe that communism is a menace which must be combated energetically—even though, unlike the Dies' school, they are not prepared to sacrifice victory in the war for that end. There are all degrees of anti-communist thought and feeling in the United States, and those who are strongly sympathetic to communism are a relatively small minority of Americans. The great majority of Americans are simply non-communist.

The article “Is Communism a Menace to Us?” by Joseph E. Davies, in the *New York Times* of April 12, was evidently written because of a widespread fear of communism, which was interfering with the unfolding of the necessary foreign policy of the United States government; the fear of our ally, the Soviet Union, because Communists are in the leadership of that country. Mr. Davies' famous book, *Mission to Moscow*,* was also largely directed toward allaying that fear, and improving the relations of

* Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, New York, 1941.

confidence between the two great allies, a confidence so necessary to victory. This fear of communism and the Communists is what Martin Dies, and Hitler's agents generally, manipulate for their own dark ends, and cultivate by all sorts of charlatan tricks. Yet it is necessary to answer the question, independently of any consideration of Mr. Dies, as to whether communism is a menace to the United States.

Fear of the Communists is a fact. It is a fact which disturbs American public policy today. It is a fact which interferes with a victorious conduct of the war. It must therefore be dissolved in the interests of victory.

For the purpose of this book, consequently, I am not concerned with seeking converts to my political philosophy, nor with considering the merits of its ultimate program which looks toward a socialist U.S.A. For the question is, whether in the United States in 1942, a capitalist country in which the population is overwhelmingly non-communist or even anti-communist, anyone is justified in feeling a deep fear of the Communists which influences and distorts his daily thinking and acting in the midst of war?

So much of this fear of communism is an obsession founded on misinformation, that it is difficult to combat it directly. That misinformation is so all-inclusive that it has been equally difficult to find a point of approach at which minds are at all open. Such a point of approach has now been opened up, however, in the current re-evaluation of the international role of the Soviet Union.

Almost the entire population of the United States has been awakened to the fact that they had been incredibly misinformed about the Soviet Union. They had been taught over the years to consider that country an enemy of ours, to think of its way of life as in irreconcilable antagonism to our way of life, to think of it as weak and

backward if not barbarian. Suddenly, the powerful searchlight of war reveals to us that the Soviet Union, far from being an enemy, is in fact our strongest friend—in fact the only friend who has been able to hold our deadly enemy in check, while we prepare to fight. We suddenly find their way of life not uncongenial to ours—so much so that the confirmed capitalist Mr. Davies expresses doubts as to whether there is any such thing as socialism or communism in the Soviet Union. And instead of the fatal backwardness, which must have been the condition of the Soviet Union if the program of the Communists is the terrible thing Martin Dies says it is, we suddenly find it revealed as strong, modern, united, standing up under the test of unprecedented war as no other country has yet done.

If fear of the Soviet Union in this war has been proved by events to have been so fantastically opposite to reality, is it not a reasonable conclusion that the whole complex of fear that is raised by the word “communism” among otherwise sane persons is equally a fantasy?

If our universe is ruled by chaos and pure accident, or their companion, “fate,” then of course anything is equally reasonable and unreasonable, and blind prejudice rules supreme in the affairs of men without appeal to reason.

My argument therefore makes its appeal first of all to that widespread faith among Americans that this is a reasonable universe, that “accidents” or “fate” do not govern history, that everything has a cause and like causes produce like effects. If this faith is false, then I admit that I have lost my argument, I admit that Martin Dies can occupy the pedestal of Abraham Lincoln, Hitler can be the savior of the world, and the devil can rule in heaven. But the common faith of common men will join me in rejecting

all these preposterous conjectures. We do live in a universe governed by principle and law.

If the Soviet Union is today the front line defense of all civilization and culture, the front line defense of our own United States, that is no “accident” but the product of the deepest laws of human history.

Now, of course, I have heard it passionately argued that it is “Russia,” the “Russian people,” that stands as the solid bulwark of civilization, and not “the Communists,” not the “Socialist Soviet Union”—that “Russia” plays her magnificent and heroic role not because of the Communists but in spite of them.

That is an interesting if peculiar argument. It has its value, inasmuch as it admits that the people who have a socialist system, whose leaders are of the Communist Party, are “nevertheless” the hope of the free world today. Even this theory that it is the “Communist” part of the Soviet Union that is accidental, but the native character of the Russian people “despite” their Communist leadership that enables them to meet their great historical test of fire with high honor—even this theory, false and contrary to reason as it is, admits a major part of my argument, that the fear of communism has at least been enormously exaggerated. If Communist leadership and a socialist system, as this theory maintains, did not contribute to the world-stirring achievements of the Red Army which is holding back the hordes of the ape-man Hitler, at least it did not prevent the peoples of the Soviet Union from realizing their destined role. It admits, thereby, that no more would Communists or communism prevent the American people from realizing their destiny. And for the purposes of this chapter, which merely sets out to argue that it is foolish to be

afraid of communism or the Communists, that goes a long way to prove our point.

There is another school of theory, the "ghost theory," which starts from the famous phrase that opens the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the document which marks the beginning of scientific socialism, or modern communism: "*A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism!*" This theory insists that once a specter, always a specter! And it further insists that specters are always fearful things, and we must therefore always tremble at the mention of communism. We might call this the "Biddle school of theory." Before this imposing theory, I admit to feeling helpless. I don't know how to argue with those who believe in ghosts. Perhaps, after all, it will be more profitable to deal only with those who argue on the basis of the real world. There is no known cure for the fear of ghosts, except ridicule.

Today there is a much more tangible specter haunting not only Europe but the world. It is the specter of Nazi world conquest. It is not a disembodied ghost, it is armed with death-dealing weapons which have already enslaved most of Europe, and threatens the Americas; it is a specter which is swallowing from two to seven of our ships daily along the Atlantic Coast. With such a tangible and terrible specter to fear, it is a shame to waste any fear on the products of our imaginations.

Confining ourselves to this tangible world, what cause is there to fear the Soviet Union because it is communist? The Soviet Union has a spotless record of performance of its treaty obligations. Why fear the Soviet regime, any more than that of Great Britain whose record—we will speak mildly—is certainly not better. If we fear some diver-

gences in the future, why not guard against them by a 20-year alliance as the British have so wisely done?

Or do we agree with Herbert Hoover, who declared in his recent book, *The Problems of Lasting Peace*, that the restoration of capitalism all over the world must be made an aim of the war, as the price of national unity in the United States during the war?* Mr. Hoover declares, in effect, that it is impossible to have the peaceful coexistence and collaboration after the war between capitalist nations like the United States and socialist nations like the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

If that is true, then those who wish to retain capitalism in the United States may have a reason to fear the Communists. But if that is true, then our whole war program is also false and unsound. For that idea is contrary to the Atlantic Charter—as are most of Hoover's ideas—and therefore contrary to the declared policy of both the United States and the U.S.S.R. For the Atlantic Charter declares:

"Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

This point was further elaborated by Sumner Welles, in his famous speech of May 30:

"We will of course respect the right of all peoples to determine for themselves the type of internal economic organization which is best suited to their circumstances.

* Herbert Hoover and Hugh Gibson, *The Problems of Lasting Peace*, pp. 204-11, New York, 1942.

But I believe that here in our own country we will continue to find the best expression for our own and the general good under a system which will give the greatest incentive and opportunity for individual enterprise."

That is a policy upon which it is possible to have continued collaboration between the capitalist and socialist countries after the war, and should enable even the most devoted adherents of capitalism to shed their unreasoning fear of communism in so far as that is related to the Soviet Union at least.

Note carefully that Mr. Hoover's theory does not contend that the Soviet Union insists upon establishing socialism in other countries as essential to peace. On the contrary, it implicitly recognizes the fact, now well-known in the world, that the Soviet Union has been, and will be for a long time after the war, much too preoccupied with its own problems of building its socialist economy and culture in its vast territories to divert much energies abroad in any form except that of peaceful exchange of goods. This fact is established, quite independently of any judgment of the subjective good intentions of the Soviet leaders. When to this is added the record of the Soviet Union's most energetic support of every effort to maintain world peace, the case is conclusive that from the Soviet side peaceful co-existence and collaboration is desirable and possible.

Then why does Mr. Hoover argue that, on the side of the United States, this is impossible because our country must insist and fight for the re-establishment of capitalism in every country? Why is he, like Dies, occupied in preparing sentiment for our country to make war against the Soviet Union? A prolonged study of his views can lead to only one answer to this question: Mr. Hoover thinks the

capitalist system is such a delicate organism, that if it has any competition with a socialist system anywhere in the world it will simply curl up and die of the bellyache, and, therefore, to save capitalism, we must kill off socialism by war wherever it might appear.

Mr. Hoover's judgment upon capitalism is worse than anything which I, as a spokesman for the Communists, have ever uttered against it. For I firmly believe that Mr. Hoover's theory is a slander against capitalism. I believe that it is possible for capitalism to continue in the United States, even if there is socialism in the Soviet Union.

Joseph E. Davies, the former United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union, deserves the respect and admiration of all honest men for his work in establishing relations of mutual confidence between our two countries. In this work he has done much to dissolve the fear of communism as this fear had obstructed the formation of the United Nations until the eleventh hour. Especially in his book *Mission to Moscow* has Mr. Davies given the American public an intimate view of truths long withheld, which has cleared up much of the misunderstanding created around the Soviet Union's purge of Hitler's Fifth Column in that country, and about the Soviet attitude toward the United States. He has convinced the Soviet leaders that this country has some honest capitalists and public men—something they sorely needed to learn from their own experience, not from theory. Thus in both countries, and in many ways, Mr. Davies has done outstanding service in establishing that confidence which is the cement of the United Nations and the Anglo-Soviet-American alliance.

I regret, therefore, to find it necessary to point out what I consider an error in Mr. Davies' argumentation at one

point. He has argued that the Soviet Union is no danger to the United States because the Soviet Union is evolving toward capitalism, because there is no socialism or communism in the Soviet Union. I think Mr. Davies is mistaken in this, and I think it is dangerous to build confidence in the Soviet Union on such a mistaken idea. It will only bring disappointment among those who now believe it, and later find out it is not true.

The grain of truth in Mr. Davies' thought on this point is that what he has been taught to think about communism and socialism has little relation to what exists in the Soviet Union. But that is because he has been misinformed and miseducated on this very controversial subject, obtaining his ideas from those who misrepresented the subject in order to discredit it. That is not his fault; he took his education from an environment in which misrepresentation of the Soviet Union and the program of the Communists had long been a special art and profession. He thus puts a new prejudice that is for the moment less harmful in place of the old prejudice that has proved so disastrous to the world. A prejudice, however, does not become true merely because it is less harmful than another; and only the full truth fully serves the cause of victory and a peaceful post-war world.

The truth is that a socialist country, led by Communists and the working class, must coexist and collaborate with a capitalist country, led by lawyers, business men, industrialists, and financiers, on the basis of mutual respect and toleration of their differing systems, finding thereby a common road to the post-war reconstruction of the world. The ideological difficulties on both sides must be faced frankly if they are to be overcome. And I am afraid that Mr. Davies has not fully faced them. It is just as dangerous for

him to assume that the Soviet Union is going over to our American brand of capitalism as it would be for the Soviet leaders to assume that the United States is sliding over to socialism as the Communists understand it. That way lies misunderstanding and bad relations, for in each case disappointment would follow.

It is, of course, very encouraging to find American capitalists who see much in the Soviet Union to praise and even emulate. While this is not to be explained, as they think, by a supposed evolution toward capitalism in that country, but rather by the fact that socialism is neither the utopianism nor the anarchism they were taught to believe, it does reveal that the bitterness of hatred and fear that has been built up in this country around the words "communism" and "the Communists" is to a large degree artificial and unnecessary, and therefore avoidable.

The argument which I have briefly developed above was set forth from an opposite approach, that is, from the approach of an adherent of capitalism, in a most interesting and valuable way in the *New York Times* of July 12. In a lengthy letter, published on the editorial page, Dr. Ralph Barton Perry, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, makes a most serious and laudable contribution toward a basis of understanding between the United States and the U.S.S.R. that is broader and deeper than the immediate necessities of war. Dr. Perry's letter is a sign of the times, a symptom of a national trend of thought under the stimulus of the experiences of war, a trend not yet fully crystallized, but full of promise of a great contribution to the winning of the war, and to the establishment of a real peace at its conclusion.

As to the American Communists, whether they are a menace or not, it seems that most of the fear of the Com-

munists arises from the assumption that they are agents of a foreign power, similar to Hitler's Fifth Column. Since one part of this fairy tale has been discredited and proved false, perhaps it will not be so difficult to dissolve the other part of it. But since this is already getting deep into some domestic problems which must be more fully developed in later chapters, let us bring this one to a close with a brief exposition of what the American Communists are prepared to contribute to national unity for victory and post-war reconstruction. I quote from my July 2 speech at Madison Square Garden, New York:

"As spokesman for the Communist Party, I declare that we subordinate every issue to this one imperative necessity of national unity under the nation's Commander-in-Chief to win the war at the earliest possible moment, which means at minimum cost....

"From the moment this global war and our participation in it became inevitable, the Communist Party declared for the unconditional subordination of all issues to that one issue of winning the war. We meant, among other things, that our proposals for socialism in our country will not be brought forward in any way that could disrupt national unity for the war effort....

"The Pacts announced on June 11, establishing the Anglo-Soviet-American Alliance, not only decided on the immediate problems of crushing the Axis. They also, and equally important for winning the war, outlined a post-war collaboration for the common tasks of world reconstruction. In the Anglo-Soviet Pact this is embodied in a formal Twenty-Year Alliance. This is of enormous significance, opening up a new era in international relationships, with consequences we now can only begin to understand. It is

the complete refutation of all pessimists and prophets of evil, who would weaken our will to victory now by picturing disasters to come after the war.

"The freedom-loving nations, whether capitalist like the U.S.A. or socialist like the Soviet Union, or some intermediate forms that may appear, are pledging themselves to peaceful co-existence and collaboration in the post-war world. All men who deeply desire the full extirpation of Nazism in all its varieties from the world will not only greet this announced program as an ideal but will shape their every word and deed to help bring about its full realization in life."*

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL UNITY

IN ORDER to be victorious in this war, the people of our nation must be united for that purpose. The nation's will to victory is just as strong, and no stronger, than the unity of its people to exert that will. Without national unity, all the other elements of national strength are cancelled out.

Our country cannot achieve the spurious unity of a Nazi Germany, which is imposed by force and terror from above, by a military dictatorship based on the most vicious monopoly interests, and using medieval torture combined with the most modern scientific technique—destroying the will of the people to substitute for it the will of the Nazi gang

*Earl Browder, *Victory Must Be Won*, pp. 7-15, New York, 1942.