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# Masters of Deceit

The Story of Communism in America  
and How to Fight It

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## Chapter 17

### The Communist Front

THE AUDITORIUM was packed. More than 1000 delegates and observers waved their arms enthusiastically, along with some 200 others who did not fill out registration forms to avoid leaving a record of their attendance. (The *Daily Worker* said they were in "... fear of intimidation.") This was the founding convention of the National Negro Labor Council, a new organization dedicated to "equality," "social progress," and the upholding of "civil rights." Speeches, resolutions, election of officers, everything ran smoothly. Two days later came adjournment. A new communist front had been born.

Delegates had come from all over the United States. They would now return to their home cities, start local chapters, enroll members, issue literature.

A master organizing hand was at work. One thousand individuals just didn't arrive by accident.

The convention call was communist-inspired. For weeks in advance, local Party members had been arranging housing, running errands, securing finances.

The Council claimed that its purpose was to aid the Negro; however, the House Committee on Un-American Activities



concluded that, "rather than helping the Negro worker, it has been a deterrent to him."

The founding of the National Negro Labor Council was typical of many Party fronts created over the past generation.

Fronts probably represent the Party's most successful tactic in capturing noncommunist support. Like mass agitation and infiltration, fronts espouse the deceptive Party line (hence the term "front") while actually advancing the real Party line. In this way the Party is able to influence thousands of non-communists, collect large sums of money, and reach the minds, pens, and tongues of many high-ranking and distinguished individuals. Moreover, fronts are excellent fields for Party recruitment.

A front is an organization which the communists openly or secretly control. The communists realize that they are not welcome in American society. Party influence, therefore, is transmitted, time after time, by a belt of concealed members, sympathizers, and dupes. Fronts become transmission belts between the Party and the noncommunist world. Earl Browder, when head of the Party, gave this definition: "Transmission belts mean having Communists work among the masses in the various organizations."

Some may be newly created, or, as often happens, they may be old-line organizations captured by infiltration, like The 123 Group mentioned in the preceding chapter. They may operate nationally, regionally, or locally. Some are permanent organizations; others exist for only a day, a week, or a month.

The Party has operated hundreds of major fronts in practically every field of Party agitation: "peace," civil rights, protection of the foreign-born, support for Smith Act "victims," abolition of H-bomb tests, exploitation of nationality and minority groups. Some are based on specific appeal, to teachers, writers, lawyers, labor, women, youth. Many have national officers, local chapters, and substantial assets.

In addition, literally hundreds of minor fronts of all shapes,

sizes, and types appear each year in everyday Party life. They serve a specific short-time purpose, then disappear. A few hand-bills, a rally, or a picket line, and a front has gone to work.

We must not think of fronts in terms of legitimate organizations. A few fronts collect dues, issue a newspaper, or sponsor organized activities, such as a sports program or cultural affairs. Most, however, exist only on paper. Their assets usually consist of a few office supplies, a secondhand Mimeograph machine, and a mailing list. The danger of a Party front rests not on its physical appearance or size but on its ability to deceive.

A few fronts may maintain separate headquarters, usually in a small room in an old building. Some operate from Party headquarters, a basement, or somebody's home. Often they are found in clusters, one office serving as the headquarters for two, three, or half-dozen fronts. The only difference is the wording of their names.

"Front schools," where Marxist and related subjects were available for noncommunist students, have been most important to the communists over the years. In one such school it is estimated that over 100,000 individuals received instruction; in another, 75,000.

Every front, in its own way, is fighting the Party's battles:

- sponsoring agitation campaigns;
- collecting money (fronts are one of the Party's chief sources of income);
- supplying speakers for noncommunist organizations (it's surprising the number of requests received by front groups, especially those sponsoring "peace" and "civil rights," for speakers. A sympathizer or dupe who has prominence in the community, such as a lawyer or professor, will often be sent);
- issuing literature;
- sponsoring mass rallies;
- lobbying for or against legislative bills;
- influencing key individuals whom the Party could not otherwise reach;
- teaching Marxist doctrines.

During the recent period when most Party headquarters were closed because of a tactical shift to underground operations, fronts performed many functions for the Party. In Chapter 20, we shall see this aspect of fronts.

A single front can generate terrific communist pressure. Take this case, for example:

Time: shortly after lunch. Agnes G, executive secretary of the DEF Committee to Fight the High Cost of Living, is reading a letter.

Dan H enters the office. "It's happened. The legislature just passed the Anticommunist Bill."

This bill must be stopped.

As a first step Agnes dictates a letter to Professor Frank Y, a "good friend" at the university. "Issue a statement right away. This bill threatens freedom of speech. It must be vetoed."

Then more letters are sent to teachers, clergymen, several lawyers. Contact is made with key Party members and sympathizers.

"The Anticommunist Bill has passed. Send telegrams to the governor, urging a veto. Start a petition circulating."

Next, a bold step: Agnes places a telephone call to the governor.

"Mr. Governor, I'm speaking for the DEF Committee to Fight the High Cost of Living. We are disturbed about the passage of the Anticommunist Bill. We feel you should veto it. Would it be possible to have our representatives meet with you?"

The governor agrees. He wants to hear all points of view. The DEF Committee sounds like one of many groups interested in this legislation.

An appointment is made.

Pressure was being built up. The front could enter where the Party never dreamed of going. Three ministers, an attorney, and a newspaperman were contacted. Would they see the governor as part of the delegation?

"I want Larry R to go along," Agnes says. "He's not too bright a guy, but he's easy and willing. I can tell him what to say. Besides, he's from a very respectable organization."

Nothing was said about the fact that this delegation was serving a communist purpose.

Every point had to be planned. "Be sure the right people do the talking." About one fellow the Party organizer had commented, "Better have him stay quiet." You never know, maybe a dupe will say something out of place.

How to talk to the governor? The delegation could act like "nice, little people," but that wouldn't be very impressive. Or it could be vaguely threatening. The latter suggestion was ruled out as too dangerous.

Not everything went according to plan. One minister refused to go. Agnes became angry. "It takes this kind of work," she fumed, "to see what ministers are made of—dishwater."

A wonderful guy, if you cooperate; if not, you're a "bum."

The delegation was dispatched, a delegation made up chiefly of noncommunists, yet fighting for communist aims, a delegation organized exclusively by a communist front. The DEF Committee was not interested in opposing the high cost of living. *It was fighting for communism.*

Fronts exist not in isolation but as part of a vast, interlaced front system. Communist pressure can be greatly increased by manipulating these organizations.

Take, for example, roof, or compound, fronts. Here a number of fronts, as in the nationality field, will form a super, over-all front such as the old American League Against War and Fascism, which at its peak claimed 7,500,000 members. Often the propaganda value is to show unity: all these organizations, representing many different nationalities, are working together for common aims.

Or consider the National Negro Labor Council, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This also was a roof, or com-

pound, front created by already existing fronts. Let's see how this works.

First, "delegates" must be "elected" to a "national founding convention." Immediately, communist fronts across the nation "elect delegates," and communist-controlled labor unions choose as their delegates those best suited for convention service.

At the convention all arrangements are made by Party leaders, including the selection of officers, the issuing of press releases, the passing of resolutions. This includes the actual running of the convention to ensure security. To illustrate, a newspaper reporter went to the convention. He had once been a Party member but had been expelled. On the first day of the convention one of the officials invited him outside and asked if he had been expelled. The reporter admitted that he had, and was ordered not to come back into the convention hall.

Hailed as representing "thousands of members," the new organization is a front created out of fronts.

Another technique of manipulation is the continuing front. Here the same front is maintained by changing the name to meet current conditions. In 1940 the American Peace Mobilization was formed, urging mobilization for peace and no aid to Britain. In 1941, after Germany's invasion of Russia, the name was changed to American People's Mobilization, and the demands to all-out aid to Britain and a second front. This was the same group with a different name.

Again, on October 16, 1943, the Young Communist League was dissolved and the very next day the American Youth for Democracy was formed. Later the group was called Labor Youth League. All were designed to recruit young people for communism.

The continuing front is well suited for "victim" agitation cases; for example, the Committee to Save John Doe. This group, so active for Doe, had lapsed into disuse. A new "victim," Richard Roe, was now at hand. Resurrect the old front!

That is exactly what happened. A communist arrived in town

and contacted leaders of the old Committee to Save the Martinsville Seven. Where had it achieved the best results while agitating for the Seven? What were the problems? How could it best be used again?

A few days later the new front was already in action; the Committee to Save Albert Jackson, the same old faces under a new name. On Sunday morning its members were handing out leaflets in front of churches. In this instance Jackson was executed and the comrades turned to other fields.

Still another device is the satellite front, a cluster of minor fronts around a larger front. A new issue, like higher transit rates or the draining of a swamp, arises. The DEF Committee to Fight the High Cost of Living (the larger front) starts satellites, such as related committees in various sections of the city. Many of these satellites are paper organizations; however, they make a formidable showing to the uninformed.

These fronts are a vehicle for communist pressure. They are highly fissionable. From many comes one; from one come many. They can be cut, sliced, slivered, or compounded to fit any need. No wonder the Party makes so much use of them in mass agitation.

The campaign is launched, urging the veto of the Anticommunist Bill. Let's see how the Party's front system is brought into play.

Suddenly telegrams, letters, petitions pour in on the governor from all kinds of groups such as organizations protesting higher taxes; youth, women's, union, and veterans' organizations; free-speech groups; civil-rights organizations. To an uncritical eye it must seem that a wide stratum of population is interested in a veto of the anticommunist legislation. Then messages arrive from other countries (from international fronts), as if the whole world, "millions of people" as the communists like to say, is vitally interested in the bill.

Many noncommunists may oppose the legislation for a variety of reasons and express their opinions by letter, telegram, and

petition. That, very emphatically, does not make them communists. They are only exercising their democratic privileges. What we are interested in here, however, is how the Communist Party, through its front system, can stimulate a vast and often effective propaganda barrage—a barrage which, within hours, can be turned off or shifted elsewhere.

Many times fronts appear bewildering in their variety; agitating on countless issues; based on different groups and occupations; and working in many ways. But actually their technique of formation is virtually identical.

Let's look briefly inside a communist front and see how it operates. At the center is always the Party, organizing, manipulating, seeing that the right persons are in charge. Noncommunists might well ponder this comment by a Party organizer:

Experience has shown that most sponsors are unwilling to give of themselves sufficiently to stop the secretary from directing policy.

So true! The communists realize that if the secretary (or other key officer) is a communist (almost always a concealed member), the Party can dominate the organization. Let the letterhead glitter with noncommunist names: president, vice-president, members of the executive board. They serve as lightning rods, camouflaging the communist interest. To the sponsors, the prestige; to the communists, the power.

Around this communist core come layer after layer of noncommunists. As we have seen in Chapter 15, great emphasis is placed on attracting noncommunists, the more prominent the better, into communist propaganda work. These noncommunists, by allowing their names to be used as sponsors, giving testimonials, or appearing at front rallies, are aiding the Party. It cannot be emphasized too often how the communists attempt to exploit for strictly partisan purposes the legitimate interests of noncommunists in social and economic problems, world peace, civil rights, and so forth.

Most important to fronts are mailing lists containing the names

of persons to whom literature can be sent. Perhaps you have received such propaganda in the mail and wondered whence it came. Party-front mailing lists are compiled in many ways—from telephone books, directories, membership rolls of infiltrated organizations (“loaned” by concealed members). Then the daily press is followed. Front headquarters may jot down the names of officers in noncommunist organizations. You never know. Someday they might “come in handy.”

Party fronts are aggressive. To wait for the noncommunist is wrong. Seek him out. “We must get into the neighborhoods more and into the home.” Through rallies, parades, picket lines, forums, debates, circulation of literature, fronts are constantly seeking public support. They operate on the main streets of America.

Another thing: The agitation is always practical. Talk about peace, jobs, and the price of milk, not Marx's ideas of revolution. Link the struggle with “the fight for pork chops.”

Peace is an everyday issue and . . . should involve the housewife, the woman who has to wrestle with budgets in the hopeless struggle with taxes, high prices and a shrinking pay check.

In one instance, for example, a cookbook was issued by a front, a “dollar stretcher” containing low-priced menus. Here is the point. These recipes will help, somewhat. But, Mrs. Housewife, you can never hope for a stable economy (where prices are always low) until “peace” (Soviet style) is achieved.

That's mixing propaganda with eggs and butter, sugar and salt.

Many times, trick “come-ons” are used. Consider communist-sponsored forums, for instance. Here are some Party-suggested topics:

- Are American marriages a failure?
- How to find an apartment.
- Should the voting age be reduced to eighteen years?
- Future of youth, what is it?

- Can heart disease be cured?
- Can cancer be cured or prevented?
- How to become a cultured person.

What have these to do with communism? Nothing. But they bring listeners within talking distance.

If one thing won't work, maybe another will, such as a special celebration, in which a front sponsors an exhibit of "peace" literature or Russian photographs. Then there are round-robin letters, chain telephone calls, forums for high school science teachers. One front sold "Christmas seals." Another was planning to put out a leaflet. "Fine," commented an associate, "but be sure to add the inscription which appears on the Statue of Liberty. That'll make it sound better." Festivals and rallies, often featuring foreign "dignitaries," attract hundreds, even thousands. Don't forget to conduct polls on the street, always securing through partisan manipulation "proof" that the "people" support points advocated in the Party line.

Communist Parties around the world collaborate whenever it will advance their cause. Some years ago a women's conference was convened in Paris, France, and out of it grew the Women's International Democratic Federation.

Long before the Paris gathering the Communist Party went to work promoting delegations of American women. One hundred telegrams were sent out from Communist Party headquarters in New York City to leaders of various women's organizations, announcing that they had been chosen as delegates and inviting them to attend a meeting at the home of the chairman of the committee. A temporary Committee on Cooperation with the International Women's Conference came into being to make arrangements. An expeditor was appointed to get passports, and a special rate of 495 dollars for a round trip by plane was secured. And so the ladies went to Paris, many without the slightest idea that the affair had been promoted by the Communist Party.

Out of the Women's International Democratic Federation grew its American affiliate, the Congress of American Women. Shortly after the Congress had its first meeting, the National Committee of the Communist Party met in New York City. At this meeting one of its members discussed how important the Women's International Democratic Federation was to the Communist Party. This high Party official then stated that the Party did not then control the newly created Congress of American Women, and that the communists needed to "infiltrate it more." The Congress has since been designated as a subversive organization by the Attorney General, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Earlier in this chapter we spoke of international fronts. The following is an example:

An envelope was postmarked at Prague, Czechoslovakia, addressed to an American college. Inside was a printed letter signed by the Prorector and Secretary of Charles University, Prague, formerly renowned as a great European educational institution, now a communist propaganda front. The letter opened:

We send you the Proclamation of the Charles University against the use [by the United States] of the bacteriological warfare in Korea and urge you to express your views on the named Proclamation.

Enclosed was the "PROCLAMATION of the Academic Community of the Charles University. . . ."

As you read the message, note the propaganda techniques employed:

1. *The appeal prostitutes the reputation of a well-known university for propaganda purposes:* "We, professors, lecturers and the other scientific workers of the Charles University in Prague, one of the oldest universities of the world. . . ."



2. *The appeal allegedly is based on humanitarian and scientific grounds:* "With full responsibility to our human and scientific consciences we have considered the danger which threatens all of humanity through the crimes that are being committed by the American imperialist army."

3. *The appeal is directed to scientific teachers in universities.* The idea is that an appeal from a member of one profession or occupation to another is more effective than random appeals. This device is often used, with Russian writers, artists, musicians addressing their "counterparts" in America: "We address ourselves to you, scientific workers of universities of all countries. . . ."

4. *The weight of scholarly backing is designed to influence opinion.* (If scientists in this university say the charges are true, they must be true.) For example:

These facts prove that the armies of the American interventionists have repeatedly used bacteriological weapons.

\* \* \* \*

From the American airplanes bombs were dropped containing different kind of insects, rats etc. which were infected with plague, cholera and other epidemic diseases, and infected foodstuffs as well.

\* \* \* \*

. . . we are ashamed to think of those American members of medical science who have committed themselves to the preparation of these repulsive crimes.

5. *Action is recommended:* "We urge you to refuse to place your scientific knowledge at the service of mass extermination of mankind . . . Protest not only in your activity as teachers and in your work in the scientific press, but with your governments as well!"

The proclamation is designed to make a lie believable, to paint the United States as a murderer and the Soviet Union as a protector of peace, thanks to a dignified and "respectable" front.

Most of this communist propaganda would be laughable except for its deadly seriousness. The Party is not kidding. This is live ammunition designed to capture, maim, and kill. To regard communist fronts and their propaganda as foolishness is to risk our freedom.

Examine the communist attitude toward parades, for example. Most people think of parades as a time of interest and commemoration. Not the communists. Parades are weapons of propaganda, another form of front.

Listen to these Party instructions, for example, concerning parades, issued by the old Central Committee of the Party before it was abolished:

The marchers must be well mannered. Walk in rhythm. Don't be "a line of stragglers shuffling along like a tired and discouraged army in retreat."

The result is that the value of the demonstration as a means of impressing and winning over or neutralizing hostile people along the line of march is lost.

Here are a few things that should be remembered:

Every two or three hundred marchers should be led by a band, a bugle or fife and drum corps. We need scores of bands, with plenty of brass instruments.

Banners and placards! Do not be "stingy with the length of sticks." Cut out the fancy lettering. It is difficult to read.

Use good English. "Some slogans are so bad grammatically, that people are amused at seeing them." The fewer the words the better. Don't just "slap" slogans on cardboard. Make sure they are "politically correct."

More advice: carry placards "on a slight angle, with wording facing the sidewalks." Scatter them through the parade; avoid bunching. Streamers: too much pulling causes ripping; not enough causes folding.

A favorite field for communist fronts is the election campaign for public office. Running communist candidates for city council,

mayor, governor, even for the presidency of the United States, is an old Party habit. Never has the Party, running under its own name, been able to secure many votes. In instances where Party candidates have run under their own colors, their defeats have almost invariably been disastrous. Party candidates have run five times (1924 through 1940) for the presidency of the United States and in 1932 achieved their highest percentage of the total vote cast—a mere 0.3 per cent, or 102,991 out of almost 40,000,000 votes cast. Three times the percentage was 0.1, and once, 0.2. In instances, however, where the Party has maneuvered political alliances, it has achieved more success, as shown by the election of Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., and Peter Cacchione, both well-known communists, to the City Council of New York City in the 1940's. Yet these campaigns give training in agitation and enable the Party to smear rivals, scream its propaganda, and cause unrest.

Party candidates also frequently run in concealed capacities. Board-of-education campaigns are well suited to communist exploitation. Usually running as independents, Party candidates can conceal their true affiliations. Moreover, national and international issues that would betray their basic sentiments, such as the Russian intervention in Hungary, are not likely to arise. In such campaigns Party-sponsored candidates are invited to parent-teacher meetings, community centers, public forums, to participate in radio debates (when the time is donated), and speak in the homes of private citizens. "The Citizens (or Independent) Committee for———" takes the candidate where, as a communist, he could never dream of going. The Party, behind the scenes, works overtime stuffing propaganda into envelopes, passing out cards, drumming up enthusiasm.

The results are often amazing. William Z. Foster in one of his books boasts that in Cleveland, Ohio, "A. Krchmarek, Communist candidate for the school board, received 64,213 votes," while in California, "the well-known Communist, Bernadette Doyle, polled the big total of 613,670 votes on a non-partisan

ticket as candidate for Superintendent of Public Schools." Krchmarek and Doyle both ran on independent, nonpartisan tickets and were not identified on the ballot as communists. In another instance a Party member, also running in a concealed capacity, failed by only a few votes to be elected a city official. He was supported by two anticommunist newspapers that had no way of knowing his Party background.

This is the communist-front movement. Its strength rests on deceit and its ability to attract the support of noncommunists.

Fronts, however, can be detected. You, as an alert citizen, can do much to weaken their influence. Here are a few tests:

1. Does the organization espouse the cause of Soviet Russia? Does it shift when the Party line shifts?
2. Does the organization feature as speakers at its meetings known communists or sympathizers?
3. Does the organization sponsor causes, campaigns, literature, petitions, or other activities sponsored by the Party or other front organizations?
4. Is the organization used as a sounding board by, or is it endorsed by, communist-controlled labor unions?
5. Does its literature follow the communist line or is it printed by the communist press?
6. Does the organization receive consistent favorable mention in communist publications?
7. Does the organization represent itself to be nonpartisan, yet engage in political activities and consistently advocate causes favored by the communists? Does it denounce both fascists and communists?
8. Does the organization denounce American foreign policy while always lauding Soviet policy?
9. Does the organization utilize communist double talk by referring to Soviet-dominated countries as democracies, complaining that the United States is imperialistic, and constantly denouncing monopoly-capital?

10. Have outstanding leaders in public life openly renounced affiliation with the organization?

11. Does the organization, if espousing liberal, progressive causes, attract well-known, honest, patriotic liberals, or does it denounce well-known liberals?

12. Does the organization consistently consider matters not directly related to its avowed purposes and objectives?

These are some ways, direct and indirect, of the above-ground Communist Party, which is working against all of us. But this is only one arm of a gigantic pincer. The other is underground.