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Masters of Deceit

**The Story of Communism in America
and How to Fight It**

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Chapter 8

Why Do People Become Communists?

IN THE LAST CHAPTER the Five False Claims of Communism showed how, in truth, communists stand for everything that is abhorred by normal Americans.

Why, then, do Americans turn communist?

The answer involves many details and is not simple. Most communists are ordinary-looking people, like your seatmate on the bus or a clerk in one of your neighborhood stores.

Most communists in the United States are now native-born. Others are naturalized citizens; a few are aliens. Some have never gone to school and have difficulty reading and writing. Many are well educated and have college and university degrees. Often they possess special talents in one field or another.

A member may earn his living in practically any occupation or profession. Not long ago a large Communist Party section listed members in these categories, tabulated as "professional and white collar": artists, actors, doctors, dentists, educators, engineers, draftsmen, lawyers, musicians, nurses, newspaper writers, office workers, salesmen, social-service workers, pharmacists, clergymen. Or a member may be a butcher, carpenter, mechanic, truck driver, plumber, or laborer.

Members are recruited from all nationalities, races, and areas

of the country. They may live in expensive mansions or tumble-down homes. They are of all ages. Never can a communist be identified simply by his physical appearance, occupation, or clothes.

Why, you may ask, do these individuals join? And why, especially in this country, which, under democracy, has such a long and heartening record of expanding privilege and opportunity for so many?

Perhaps we can better understand why members join if we look at an actual case, which we can call the Case of Lost Faith.

Jack was born in a Midwestern city. He was tall, brown-haired, and possessed a pleasant disposition. He liked school and endeavored to please his teachers. He was intensely curious concerning the world about him, especially the physical sciences.

Then something started to happen to him, slowly but surely. His faith in God and religion seemed to be fading. As he later told FBI agents, he felt this loss already in high school. By the time of his graduation his faith in religion, which as a small child had been most sincere and tenacious, had completely disappeared. There was now inside him a spiritual vacuum.

Upon entering college Jack found himself with an exceedingly curious mind but one uncontrolled by any spiritual faith. In a class on government he made the acquaintance of the *Communist Manifesto*. Later he read sections of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, which, among other things, discusses Marxist theory in relation to science. He was impressed. Here were some ideas that seemed to offer something positive and new.

Then one day, almost by chance, he came upon a leaflet distributed on the campus by a communist club. Jack became interested and made contact with the Party. Here, for the first time, he seemed to find an "answer" to the problems that had plagued him. Here, in the Party's claim to be working for a better world, Jack believed he had found a new "faith," which would give meaning and validity to his life. Though later he was to realize his tragic error, Jack joined the Communist Party.

In many instances we know, joining the Communist Party comes from a loss of faith, so to speak, in our Judaic-Christian heritage and earnest, though perverted, seeking for a new faith. The individual is trying to find solutions to problems, real or fancied, that disturb his life. Many reasons cause individuals to join the Party, but undoubtedly most important is the Party's appeal to idealistic motivations, to a "bright new world" where justice, peace, and freedom will replace strife, injustice, and inhumanity. "I believed that in the Communist Party was the beginning of a true brotherhood of man, working with devotion for socialism, peace and democracy," wrote Howard Fast, one of the Party's best-known writers, later to become bitterly disillusioned. "... I believed, as did millions of men of good will, that the only truth about the Soviet Union was the picture presented by friends of the Soviet Union."

Communism with its deceitful double talk exploits these basic human yearnings for better social conditions, racial equality, justice, and peace, and places them in the service of tyranny. In this way, strange as it may sound, communists are able to entice free men to fight for slavery in the name of freedom.

Unfortunately, this idealistic motivation has given thousands of members, from brilliant scientists like Klaus Fuchs to ordinary laboring men, undaunted zeal and enthusiasm. Members driven on by this idealism have been willing to sacrifice their homes, families, and lives for the cause. They have become inflamed with a passionate, though twisted, courage. This is the motivation of the New York functionary who thought that five or six hours of sleep a night were sufficient for any member and regarded any request for time off as traitorous. "You can get your recreation after the revolution," she once snapped at an associate.

The Communist Party, in a very true sense, becomes as in the case of Jack a new but bigoted faith.

The FBI has interviewed many hundreds of Party members. A few case histories will illustrate why many joined. By under-

standing these influences we can do much to defeat the Party's present recruitment drive.

Let's take the case of Eric. He is typical of the many who joined the Party during the economic depression. He remembered his youth as days of "deprivation." He worked at odd jobs, such as helping the milkman and caring for chickens. But everywhere he went he met bitter frustrations. He became more and more dissatisfied with existing economic conditions.

Then one day at a secondhand bookstore he came upon some documents that alleged very unsatisfactory conditions in American economic life. Eric bought and read these documents. "The effect upon me was profound; I don't believe that anything I have ever read has had the same impact upon me since." In his own words, he felt a "terrific compulsion . . . to do something to help better the conditions brought out in the report." He was swept up by a desire to wipe out prejudice, to "help bring the underdog of our civilization up to a place of dignity."

Eric had never talked to a Party member. He had no personal knowledge of communism. Yet somewhere he had formed a false impression of the Communist Party, based on communist propaganda. "I knew that it . . . somehow had come to believe that it considered all men equal, that it was fighting for the underdog, that it had no prejudices against color of skin or religion."

Motivated by these errors, Eric on his own initiative went to a corner drugstore, looked up the Party's address in the telephone directory, and called headquarters. He told how Party officials seemed "surprised" when he stated his desire to join.

With determination in his heart, Eric went to Party headquarters, climbed the brownstone steps to the front door, and rang the bell. A young lady answered. He asked if this was Party headquarters. She said no but pointed to a basement entrance. There, in the presence of an eighteen-year-old girl and a dark-haired, stooped man, Eric signed an application

card for Party membership. His tragic decision had been made with gusto and enthusiasm.

Karl as a young man, like Eric, was deeply affected by the depression. He told how he had seen people eating out of garbage cans. He felt that something had to be done to remedy conditions. Moreover, in his opinion, the incumbent government was not adequate to cope with the problems.

Soon he began to read communist literature and in 1934 joined the Young Communist League. But this was to be only the beginning.

In 1936 came the Spanish Civil War. Karl, because of communist agitation, became deeply interested. He detested Hitler and fascism. Mussolini and his Black Shirts were even more detestable. The more he thought about international developments, the more he had the urge to take a personal hand in the situation. His hatred of fascism was intensified when some of his relatives had to flee from Europe because of Mussolini's persecution.

Full of youthful vigor, Karl went to Spain as a volunteer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Here on the front lines he was wounded and to this day bears the effects of the injury. This impetuous decision, taken against the advice of his family, represented a contribution of the Communist Party of the United States to international communism. Karl's idealistic fervor against fascism and injustice was translated into shot and powder for the furtherance of communist aims.

Many thousands of Americans joined the communist movement during these early days of the fight against fascism. The hardships of depression days contributed to the deceptive appeals of communism. These men and women, seeking solutions, thought incorrectly that the panacea lay in communism. They labored under the illusion that the Party and Soviet Russia represented a better democracy. As one disillusioned member was later to complain, "At this time the Communist apologists

stressed idealistic goals, and bragged of a growing democracy in Russia."

Many individuals have joined the Party in the vain hope of improving social conditions, gaining better housing, or achieving better relations between the races.

Ralph was typical of many. He was a Negro, proud of his race and eager to help better its status in America. While in school he prepared a thesis on this subject. Wanting to secure various opinions, he asked several friends to read his manuscript. One of these, a fellow student, remarked after reading the paper that Ralph's approach had been very naïve and that further study should be undertaken. Thereupon he furnished Ralph with information about Karl Marx and the communist viewpoint.

The communist position appealed to Ralph. Here was an organization that claimed that it was working zealously for the betterment of the Negro. The propaganda appeals seemed to point the direction that Ralph should take. He succumbed and joined the Communist Party. He was to learn that the Party has no sincere concern for the Negro but was and is using deceptive propaganda appeals to advance the communist cause.

The very same communist tactic applies in the field of labor unions. Edward was an active member of his union. In the early 1940's he was recruited into the Communist Party and assigned to a club in the industrial section of the Party. Why had he joined? "When I joined the Communist Party I believed that I was joining a political party that would benefit the workingman." Three years later he dropped out of the Party; it was *not* for the workingman. Rather it aimed at killing individual rights, making unions subservient to Party orders, and using union strength, influence, and finances to further communist goals.

The Party today is still busily at work trying to infiltrate unions. Historically, communists, including Lenin, have taught that communists must infiltrate unions. Every union member must realize that the communist interest in labor organizations is insincere. Past communist appeals have been recognized as

false by patriotic union leaders themselves. Today's communist appeal is no less false or dangerous than those of previous years. Our knowledge of how the Party operated in the past is one of our best weapons in defeating its techniques today.

The list of specific reasons for joining the Party, growing out of a desire to improve our nation, would be long. One woman was interested in social problems, such as slum clearance and better housing. Communists claimed to favor the same things as she. She believed and joined. Another individual, as a young minister, saw many injustices in a Northern state. Still another, arriving home from overseas, felt that the war had not accomplished any semblance of peace; he was displeased with American policy. He walked into Party headquarters on his own initiative and signed up.

Over the years thousands of Americans have entered the doors of communism. The turnover of Party membership has been great. Besides those motivated from idealistic reasons, there have been curiosity- and adventure-seekers, opportunists, disgruntled misfits, and power-hungry personalities. Some of these have consciously sought out the Party; others have just drifted into it. Many were youngsters, wanting to dance and sing. Some wanted social companionship. In others, sexual appeal played a role.

The Party, falsely representing itself as the final answer to *all* of society's problems, economic, social, political, and religious, makes ready use of the various hopes, fears, and aspirations of recruits. This dynamic deceit of communist action provides an immediate channel for energy and enthusiasm. Within hours a recruit will be handing out leaflets or running errands. He gets the feeling of being in action *now* and not having to wait to participate in the fight for what he conceives to be a better world. Many recruits to the Party, when asked later why they didn't offer their talents to legitimate organizations concerned with reform, said such groups were "too slow." In the Party they found that "immediacy" which so satisfied them.

357 Then, in working in the Party, the recruit is promised a "belongingness," a feeling of comradeship that can be won only in day-to-day battles for the greatest of causes. The member is told that he is part of a world-wide movement based on the most "enlightened," "advanced," and "scientific" principles. Unfortunately the Party has been able to generate great enthusiasm through this teaching. One member told the FBI that the slogan, "vanguard of the working class," had appealed to him. He felt that not only was he contributing his own talents to the cause but he was "leading," "educating," and "guiding" others. "I think this activity was satisfying something in me," another stated. Such an approach often deceives recruits, especially those of an egotistical nature, who appreciate the prospect of achieving personal "power" inside the Party structure where the chief qualification for advancement is not ability, education, or talent but loyalty to the Party. One high Party leader whose authority over Party disciplinary matters extended across half a continent was in ordinary life a day laborer. The flattering of his ego from his Party position can well be imagined.

In particular the communists have made an appeal to the so-called intellectual. The seduction of many intellectuals over the years by the Party stands as a disgrace. Thinking men and women, trained to analyze critically, all too often have been duped.

Our experience has shown that members joining the Party for idealistic reasons are more likely to stay in the movement than those not so motivated. Of course, this is not always true. Though joining the Party in a sincere attempt to better society, a member may quickly become disillusioned. However, time after time members who join for curiosity, for social reasons, or for sexual pleasure soon drift out. They are usually not the material from which hard-core communists are made. Here is an example:

Gladys was a college girl, rather gay, not too serious, with a great deal of leisure. She attended some Marxist study groups.

Here Russia and communism were painted in rosy colors. After several meetings she was invited to join the Party. She accepted, 80 per cent, she said, out of curiosity and partly because she felt that if the communists could achieve a "peaceful" world about which they talked, it would be a "nice thing." Other reasons Gladys gave for joining: to have something to do and to alleviate "boredom." She described Party literature as more amusing than educational. Needless to say, she did not stay in the movement. Even Party officials, in her opinion, never seemed to trust her.

A sad group of recruits are simply the twisted, mixed-up neurotics. Perhaps as sons and daughters of well-to-do parents they harbor a "guilt complex" about the very privileges that America has given them. Or, because of some setback in life, they are angry at society and turn to communism as a way to "get even."

Let's look at Larry, a communist in a Midwestern state. Ever since youth, he had felt a "persecution complex." Everywhere he looked he seemed to see despair and strife. The whole of society, he concluded, was strictly a dog-eat-dog affair, with life being divided between the have's and the have-not's. Such an attitude was intensified by an "artistic" and "sensitive" temperament. Seeing these "injustices," he felt compelled to help the "persecuted." At first he became just a "reformer"; then, after reading Marxist literature, he joined the Party. Twisted, distorted, and maladjusted, he is today even more confused. He found that the Party only exploited his neurotic condition to make use of his services.

The techniques of actual recruitment vary. In most instances indoctrination comes slowly. A fellow union member, worker, or associate who is a Party member will "work" on the prospect. First come conversations about mutual interests such as union activities. Deftly the communist slant will be emphasized. Perhaps then will come communist literature or an invitation to a "study group." Step by step the recruit becomes enmeshed in the Party's efficient recruitment apparatus.

358 A former member told how she first became acquainted with communism, which she was later to reject. She was living a lonely life in a boardinghouse. She noticed that some of her neighbors had many friends who laughed and chattered gaily. Apparently they had common interests that drew them together. One night she heard the muffled overtones of what sounded like a meeting next door: "Overcome by my growing curiosity about them, I snooped as no lady should. I sat on the bed and pressed my ear against the plaster wall. As their subdued voices rose and fell, I caught words and snatches. I don't know now what I heard, or what could have convinced me in my great ignorance of that time. But before the meeting adjourned, I believed my jolly neighbors were Communists, and that I was listening to a secret meeting of a Communist cell of Government workers! They did not look as Communists were pictured, and they were not plotting bomb-throwing or assassination, but some much duller discussion with long words." In her loneliness this woman joined the Communist Party but found neither "happiness" nor a "sense of direction"—only bitter disappointments.

Party fronts offer excellent means of recruitment. Be assured that every noncommunist who actively participates in a front is under the Party's close scrutiny. Sometimes, of course, as we have seen, an individual is more useful to the Party by remaining a nonmember, a sympathizer, or a fellow traveler. At other times, if the prospect seems to offer a fertile field of recruitment, pressure is applied. Thousands of Party members were recruited through the many fronts operating in the 1930's and 1940's.

Of special interest to the Party are young people. The Party's youth organizations, such as the Young Communist League and its successors, are largely recruiters of young people for communism. Many Party-sponsored activities—dances, parties, and picnics—are aimed to win the allegiance of boys and girls. Time after time members join as teen-agers—the age at which the Party would like to capture minds.

Many Party members have been recruited from communist

homes, the children of Party members. In America today many hundreds of children, growing up in communist homes, are captives of this alien ideology. These youngsters are taught from the earliest years that God does not exist. One communist mother in a Northern state taught her children that God was not real. She said that it was fun to watch Superman on TV but that a person must recognize that he doesn't actually exist. It's the same way, she said, with God. In another city a communist father noticed a religious program on the family television set. He uttered a derogatory remark and turned off the program with the exclamation, "I'm a Marxist."

Party parents provide special Marxist instruction for their children. One father would sit down with his youngsters and discuss items appearing in the *Daily Worker*; another gave regular quizzes on Marxist literature; still another lectured on Marxist economics every morning at the breakfast table. When the child grows up, he is given Party tasks: distributing literature, taking up collections at rallies, walking in picket lines. He begins to get the "feel" of Party life. In one instance a communist family gathered around a table and spent an hour or two in Party self-criticism and promising to do better. Party morality is constantly being inculcated in these youthful minds, a belief that whatever helps the Party is good, whatever hinders it is immoral. In one instance a communist father denounced a federal law that restricted the activities of the Party. His teen-age son, confused by the statement, pointed out that the Act was part of the law of the land. "Son," the father replied, "if a law is bad, you do not have to obey it."

No wonder many hundreds of recruits spring from communist homes as devotees of Marxism-Leninism.

Our experience has shown that reasons for joining the Party are many, varied, and complicated. Each individual has his own personal problems, hopes, and aspirations. Any attempt to apply generalized, ready-made stereotypes is to leave the problem unsolved. Moreover, we must try to see the *total man*; that is, all the

forces, events, ideas, and motivations that brought about his tragic decision. For that reason each member deserves careful study. In the next chapter I shall discuss the reasons why members leave the Party. Here again we must understand each member as a human being, as an individual, always remembering that even though still a bigoted devotee he is convertible. Any thinking Party member will soon recognize the basic contradictions of communism.

We should be alert to help any communist back on the road to good American citizenship as soon as he shows the slightest indication that he is disillusioned with what he has found inside Party circles.

What lesson can we as a society learn from the Party's methods of recruitment? Most important, I think, is to realize that the Communist Party is attempting to exploit the rise of materialism, irreligion, and lack of faith in our society. In an era when moral standards have been lowered, when family life has been disrupted, when crime and juvenile delinquency rates are high, communists have tried to set forth a goal—dressed in attractive phrases—that would captivate the longings and hopes of men and women. They have, in truth, tried to “steal” the nobility, the fervor, the enthusiasm of a free government under God.