

my H-J.
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Concerning the Youth Congress

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In another column appears a letter from Mr. Joseph Cadden, executive secretary of the American Youth Congress, strongly objecting to our application of the term, "Communist-controlled" to the Congress. We have no doubt that his indignation is sincere and equally no doubt that his citation of the many organizations represented in the Congress and the make-up of its cabinet begs the question. These organizations and the personnel of the cabinet ~~might~~ in the great majority have no consciousness of Communist affiliation and yet respond to the touch from Moscow.

As testimony before the Dies committee has made plain, the Stalin technique in this country is to promote support of his policies through "innocent" fronts. Mr. J. B. Matthews, who confessed to lending himself to the process as a conspicuous "fellow traveler," has described it at length. Buried in the membership of an organization to be manipulated for Stalin's purposes is a nucleus of Communists who do most of the work. They operate behind a screen of "fellow travelers," usually middle-class intellectuals who do not belong to the Communist party but who "go along as faithfully as if they were party members." Further to conceal the Communist control are the prominent persons, in the category of Mrs. Roosevelt, for example, whose sympathies, aroused by the cry that critics of the movement are Red-baiters, are only matched by their influence. Finally come the "innocents," the name given by the Communists to the rank and file.

Now, until the Stalin-Hitler pact and its sequels (of which the most recent is, of course, the Russian invasion of Finland), demonstrated to our radicals the true nature of Stalinism, the Youth Congress was undoubtedly one of Moscow's "innocent" fronts. Gil Green, national secretary of the Young Communist League, one of the affiliates of the congress, made a report on it in 1935 to the Comintern in which he referred to it as a "united front" representing over 1,000,000 youths. In commenting on its first convention the year before he said: "We defeated the enemy and turned the Youth Congress into a broad, united front." Though Mr. Gil Green, together with Mr. Earl Browder, has been excommunicated by Mrs. Roosevelt, the entire course of the congress in the interim supports his boast. The astute, politically minded Communists, in its membership, though comparatively small in number very possibly, found it easy to guide its actions to the ends they desired.

But it seems entirely reasonable to suppose that the day of their domination is at an end and, if it is, that Mr. Cadden's remonstrance has some justification. We ardently hope it has. Meanwhile let us take this opportunity to reiterate the attitude which we have consistently maintained in these columns toward the problem of separating the sheep from the goats in organizations of the kind. When Mrs. Roosevelt two weeks ago emphasized the distinction between Americans who, "with the love of our land in their hearts," agitate their convictions, and the agents of a foreign power, we applauded her without reserve. We agree with her that even when the former become dupes of foreign agents as much care should be taken to preserve their rights of free speech and assembly as to point out their deception. On the occasion of the testimony of Mr. J. B. Matthews to the Dies committee more than a year ago we expressed the faith that our radicals in the long run would resist Communist contamination. Recent developments show that we were right.