

Excerpts from Town Meeting

January 23, 1939

Is American Menaced by Foreign Propaganda?

J. B. Matthews, p. 13:

Moderator:

Thank you, Mr. Browder. And now may I present Mr. J. B. Matthews, author of the *Odyssey of a Fellow Traveler*, and an outstanding witness before the Dies Committee.

Mr. Matthews:

In answering this question affirmatively, I am not thinking of America as a geographical entity. It is true that the dictatorships--all three of them--have developed the technique of propaganda or ideological penetration of foreign countries as a measure preparatory to later armed conquest. But the America which is menaced most immediately by foreign propaganda is a spiritual rather than a geographical entity. It is, in brief, Americanism which is menaced by the invasion of foreign ideologies.

Americanism is a spiritual force, working, economically, in a system of private property and free enterprise; embodied, politically, in a government of checks and balances; and expressing itself culturally in tolerance, religious liberty, and freedom of thought.

The totalitarian systems--Fascism, Nazism, Communism, and the anonymous "planned economies" of lesser infamy--are antithetical to Americanism. Despite the wretched faces they make at each other, the dictatorships resemble each other more and more. Some have forgotten and others should be told that the Communist International hailed Hitler's triumph in Germany in the following language: "The establishment of an open fascist dictatorship, by destroying all the democratic illusions among the masses ... accelerates the rate of Germany's development towards proletarian dictatorship." In those days, Nazis and Communists were alike frankly intent

upon destroying "democratic illusions." Hitler and Stalin were the tweedledum and tweedledee of dictatorship.

All of the totalitarian systems are now engaged in flooding the world with their propaganda. Of all the countries in the world, besides their own, America is the most logical object of their propaganda drives. The aim of the Communist International is, in its own words, "the establishment of a world union of socialist soviet republics." A world revolutionary movement with such colossal ambitions would hardly be so stupid as to overlook the richest potential member of its world union. Stalin himself remarked: "I consider that the Communist Party of the United States is one of the few Communist Parties to which history has given decisive tasks from the point of view of the world revolutionary movement." In view of the strategic importance of the United States among the nations, it is clear that international propagandists trying to sell any kind of revolution or any kind of war would concentrate much of their best efforts upon America.

The Communist International is at the moment peddling proletarian revolution only as a side line; its main line of goods is a military alliance in the anticipated world war. Six years ago, it hailed Hitler's triumph as a welcome destruction of "democratic illusions"; today it poses as the world's heavyweight champion of democracy. The remarkable difference between these positions is due solely to the Comintern's now dominant desire to have the United States--left intact as a bourgeois nation--as a military ally in the forthcoming war to make the world safe for Stalinocracy. To that end, proletarian revolution in the United States must wait upon war-mongering.

The Communist International is the creature of the Stalin dictatorship, all the organizational subterfuges to the contrary notwithstanding. Likewise, the Communist Party of the United States is the creature of the

Communist International, despite the chorus of denial. The official literature of the communists makes this crystal clear.

The Communist Party, U.S.A., operating for the Stalin dictatorship, employs two agencies, more than all others, for the spread of its propaganda here. These agencies are the united front and the trade unions.

The Communist Party has set up scores of united-front organizations whose dominant purpose is to extend the party's influence far beyond the boundaries of its card-holding membership. These united-front organizations claim to reach approximately ten million Americans. The most significant fact concerning the success of communist propaganda in the United States--and at the same time a fair measure of its menace--is to be found in the amazing phenomenon that every important united-front gathering of the Communist Party in the United States within the past year has been opened in person or with written greetings by someone high in the councils of the American Federal Government.

The leader of the Communist Party in this country has made clear the precise nature and degree of the control which his Party exercises over these united-front instruments of the Comintern. "In the center," he declared, "as the conscious moving and directive force of the United front in all its phases, stands the Communist Party."

Labor unions have been looked upon, from the very beginning of the Marxist movement down to its latest Stalinist emendation, as the most useful tool of proletarian revolution. "The trade unions are schools of communism," wrote Marx.

The communist view has always been that a trade union which does not serve a revolutionary end should be destroyed as speedily as possible. Both the ethics and the trade union strategy of the communists are well illustrated by Lenin's brutally frank advice on trade unions. "It is

necessary to be able," he wrote, "to resort to all sorts of devices, manoeuvres, and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuge, in order to penetrate into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on communist work in them at all costs."

The most notable successes of the propaganda of the Communist International in this country in recent years have been the swelling ranks of organized labor. Twelve of the forty members of the newly chosen governing body of the C.I.O. are Communist Party members or well-known fellow travelers. It would be a great mistake, however, to jump to the conclusion that the Communist Party ignores any opportunities for penetrating the A.F. of L. and for carrying on communist work in its unions.

The Communist Party finds in the unions the values of class hatred. T Maxim Gorky wrote in his glorification of "proletarian hatred": "We shall convince ourselves that each banker, manufacturer, landlord, is the murderer of hundreds, and, it may be, of thousands of the most healthy, efficient and talented people. A genuine, sincere revolutionary....cannot but maintain an attitude of conscious, active, heroic hatred towards his vile enemy."

Thanks to Martin Dies and his Congressional associates, foreign propaganda of all varieties has received a severe set-back in America. Let Congress and the American people keep Dies on the job. With \$150,000--less than one-half of one per cent of the cost of a battleship--placed at the disposal of Dies and his committee, most of the menace of the foreign "isms" can be dispelled.

Moderator:

Thank you, Mr. Matthews.....

Moderator: Now, Mr. Matthews, will you comment?

Mr. Matthews:

It would be presumptuous on my part to stand here as a defender of the Dies Committee; but may I point out that the witnesses who appeared before the Dies Committee cannot properly be charged against the Committee itself, including the person who stands before you now? The Committee was handicapped to the very limit of the possibilities of handicap by the Administration at Washington. It was not provided with counsel, as requested by Congress, which would have enabled the Committee to go more thoroughly over the testimony of witnesses in advance of their appearances, and to smooth out some of the unmistakable evidences of the presence of crackpots in the anti-communist fold.

I wonder if Mr. Ernst has read the report of the Dies Committee to the Congress. The report differs very greatly from the record of the hearings. The report is a summary of what the Committee considered the substantial evidence, substantiated by the usual rules of evidence, and not simply isolated things testified to by crackpot witnesses. This report will, in my opinion, stand up under the closest scrutiny from the standpoint of the rules of evidence employed by any Congressional investigation in the past, and by the courts, as a rule; for, whatever we may think personally of the Dies Committee, the country has unmistakably given its verdict and has requested that Martin Dies' Committee stay on the job.

Woman (to Mr. Matthews): If as you say the Dies Committee is combating all foreign "isms" in this country, why were Fritz Kuhn, the Nazi leader in America, and other members of the Nazi Bund guests at a private banquet given in honor of Martin Dies by the New York State Economic Council?

Mr. Matthews: The dinner given by the New York State Economic Council was not a private dinner. It was a public dinner, I am reliably informed.

As a matter of fact, I read it in the papers, as well as receiving private information to that effect. So far as I know, Fritz Kuhn may be in this audience tonight. If he is, he is here under exactly the same auspices that he was under when he attended that dinner, and no other.

Moderator: You mean the same conditions, not auspices.

Mr. Matthews: The same conditions, yes; not auspices. Just this further word? When his presence was known at that dinner, Martin Dies pointed his finger and, I am told, shook his fist at Fritz Kuhn and soundly denounced the things for which Kuhn stood. And the fact that his statement to Kuhn in that respect was suppressed in a large part of the press of New York City is a fault not to be laid to Martin Dies but, rather, to that goodly flock of fellow travelers who infest the press, not only of the left but of the entire country.

Moderator: ...will you give us your definition of Americanism?

Mr. Matthews: I would like to repeat mine, that America is an adventure, working economically in a system of private property and free enterprise, embodied governmentally in a government of checks and balances--not with WPA checks and debit balances--expressing itself culturally in religious liberty, tolerance, and freedom of thought.

Moderator: I recognize, up there in the box, Dr. Clyde Miller, the executive secretary of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, which has been referred to several times. Dr. Miller, have you a question or comment?

Dr. Miller: I should like to ask a question of Mr. Matthews, who apparently has spoken for the Dies Committee, and that is why the Dies Committee has not investigated the propaganda of the Reverend Winrod, of Kansas who for years has incited hatred of Catholics; why the Dies Committee has

not investigated the propaganda of Father Coughlin, who has incited hatred of another religious group; and, finally, why the Dies Committee has not asked/^{why}Henry Ford took that decoration from Hitler, and is keeping it.

Mr. Matthews: There is a presumption in the question that answers an important part of the question: namely, that the Dies Committee has not investigated thus and so. Personally, I am not in possession of any information that would enable me to be as positive about that as Dr. Miller seems to be. I do happen to know quite accidentally--casually, let us say --that the Dies Committee has had investigators working at a number of clues on which there has not yet been any public testimony, and not yet anything in a printed record. But that is not saying that the Dies Committee has not investigated this, that, or any other.

If Dr. Miller wishes, I am sure that the Committee would be glad to receive from him, if it is continued by Congress, a suggestion that it investigate these and other things which may occur to him.

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Moderator:Mr. Dies was asked to come tonight and speak. He could not come, and Mr. Matthews is here in his place. Mr. Dies had another engagement....

Man (to Mr. Matthews): If, in view of disclosures here this evening, there are 800 Nazi organizations in the United States, wasn't your testimony before the Dies Committee last year inaccurate, when you said there was no Nazi propaganda in the United States?

Mr. Matthews: I never said that there is no Nazi propaganda in the United States.
