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Cold War on the Campus

by BOB MARTINSON

The reactionary invasion of the American University threatens the continued existence of free centers of thought in the United States. The Berkeley Socialist Youth League offers this pamphlet as an aid to defeating the inquisition.

The author was a key participant in the tragic oath fight at the University of California, and his conclusions attempt to clarify the reasons for the failure of the students and faculty to defeat the Regents.

Although the exact conditions of the oath struggle will not be reproduced elsewhere, the general dimensions will be similar. Every University stands in danger.

This pamphlet is dedicated to those students and faculty members of the University of California who have had the honor of being casualties of the Cold War on the Campus.

DURING the last few years the peaceful reverie of American University life has been interrupted by an unprecedented series of attacks.

In college after college from California to New York the invasion wreaks havoc with the traditional rights of students and professors, and is only hampered, now and again, by valiant but sporadic opposition. To chart its progress is but to name some of America's most distinguished Universities.

Three professors were fired from the University of Washington for holding Communist views. A chemistry teacher was summarily dismissed from the University of Oregon for publishing a mild defense of the Russian biologist, Lysenko. The Illinois State legislature stepped up its attacks on the University of Chicago. University administrations throughout the country arbitrarily discharged professors who publicly supported the Progressive Party. A student strike at Olivet College failed to prevent the forced departure of an entire section of the faculty. Students at the University of Wisconsin were placed on probation for demonstrating against ROTC. The imposition of a loyalty oath on the professors of the University of California created chaos for over eighteen months and today threatens the University with academic dismemberment. President

Gideonse of Brooklyn College currently imposes a reign of terror on his students by shutting down the college newspaper and threatening to remove the draft exemption from those who disobey his arbitrary commands. These are but some of the high lights of the reactionary attack.

Such cases only describe part of the damage, however, for this invasion penetrates every recess of University life. The daily fare of legislative investigations, lurid headlines, loyalty checks and irresponsible witch-hunting produces an atmosphere of fear and hysteria. Professors are frightened into silence by social ostracism and economic pressure; the administration simply refuses to renew certain contracts. Students with unpopular opinions find it impossible to obtain economic aid or scholarships. The curriculum is changed ever so slightly; a lecture here and there is revised to accord with the new state of things; a speech is cancelled or a footnote is inserted. Academic sterility, like the submerged section of an iceberg, is nonetheless dangerous for being invisible.

The University Comes of Age

"Hostility toward 'intellectual activity' is characteristic of American culture." True but irrelevant. The orthodox philistine always suspected the seething, democratic questioning spirit of the free University. Bigoted attacks on Darwin's "monkey-theory," "atheistic materialism" and youthful "immorality" speckle the pages of American history. In the past, however, the intellectual always returned blow for blow and his blue-nosed critics were usually tossed out of court.

The University has only recently become a decisive institution in American life. In the

past its victory was predicated on the over-all usefulness of its scientific production to an expanding economy. The general stability of bourgeois society insured a wide latitude for critics, iconoclasts and muckrakers. Thus attacks on the University were ephemeral, inconclusive and usually spent themselves in impotent rage or ridiculous abuse.

The tremendous growth of modern industry and the increasing importance of the state bureaucracy produce a huge demand for administrators, trained technicians and semi-skilled specialists of many varieties. The University is no longer a cloistered playhouse for the sons and daughters of the idle rich. It is a necessary component of the advance of modern technology.

As the campus comes of age, the struggle to reduce its independence and to control its intellectual production becomes more acute. With the American nation attaining the status of a world power the isolated character of the University is increasingly viewed with alarm. Attempts to reduce or to modify academic freedom become more frequent.

Coming in the midst of a war scare, the present campaign is no more nor less than an effort to reduce the campus to an impotent defender of the status quo. The prolonged and insistent character of the attack reflects both the importance of the University and the power of its opponents. Although the self-appointed inquisitors advance upon academic freedom flying the flag of "scientific objectivity," they feel no anxiety about the orbit of Mars, the pre-history of Ireland or the theory of natural selection. Far from serving the real needs of scientific endeavor, their crude intervention merely expresses the insatiable demands of the Garrison State.

Today the American University, despite its lack of sophistication, despite its rallies, football games and political naivete, is critical enough to threaten the politically and ideologically imposed unification required by the approaching Third World War. But the student hesitates. He refuses to be embroiled in the anti-subversive frenzy and in the fierce drive for orthodoxy which have seized the ruling summits of American society. He examines uneasily the purges, the police measures, the hysteria and mud-slinging and for the life of him, cannot participate. As the University comes of age, the demands of the American ruling class have become more insistent that the student be crushed and battered into submission for his hesitation.

Academic Freedom or Intellectual Suicide

In spite of its intellectual prestige, the University community meets the bewildering attack in a disorganized, almost instinctive manner. The time has come for an assessment of damages, a critical analysis of mistakes in strategy, and firm and realistic measures to combat this dangerous trend. Passivity or cynicism will not help, for it is impossible to dodge the issue by withdrawing into the deceptive security of academic life. The intentions of the attackers are unmistakable, and the only alternative to a vigorous and clear-sighted defense invites intellectual suicide.

To those who would sacrifice academic freedom to the insistent demands of a spurious war-time unity, the case cannot be put too strongly. Intellectual freedom is not merely an ideal; it is an absolute necessity to the advance of science and the enrichment of American culture. A barracks discipline, a regime of fear and distrust cripples an educational institution. Yet

why not, if thought control is necessary?

Fascist Germany and Stalinist Russia present pertinent examples, for they encased their artists, scientists and intellectuals in uniforms and forced them to subordinate their ideas to the demands of the totalitarian state. Under such conditions, thought is replaced by apologia, police literature and the frightful rituals of obeisance which have become so common. It is time to heed the lessons of the destruction of science in Germany, Italy, Russia and Spain, for the shadow of George Orwell's 1984 hangs like a pall over the future of American education.

The Cold War and the Campus

The attack on the University is an inevitable response to the cold war. No one worried about the danger of Stalinism to the University while America and Russia were allies. Liberal apologists for scientific objectivity like Sidney Hook are strangely mute concerning the circumstances under which the "cleansing" of the educational profession is taking place. To consider academic freedom in the abstract is to proceed with eyes closed, but then this is, perhaps, the only method left to those who consider the war to be the overriding consideration.

The general atmosphere produced by the cold war can most aptly be described as "organized hysteria." Star chamber proceedings, juicy spy trials and loyalty investigations provide a backdrop to the introduction of the Taft-Hartley Act, the Ober and Feinberg Laws and the McCarran Bill. The arbitrary hand of the FBI touches more and

more citizens with its semi-legal police measures. War in the name of democracy increasingly provides the rationale for the liquidation of democracy.

The preparation for imperialist war proceeds as usual under the slogan of strengthening the peace. But the tenuous nature of this peace smokescreen permits preventive war advocates to arise in the highest echelons of the government and the military. Wars for the partial redivision of the earth are over; the coming war will decide whether Russia or the United States is to control and exploit the entire world. The enormity of this conflict demands unprecedented military and economic expenditures and presupposes a servile and obedient citizenry. But in this the Russians have a twenty year head start!

To really prosecute the struggle, the American government must impress the population with the boot and the knout. The authorities must prove, contrary to obvious facts, that they intervene in the affairs of half the world on behalf of democracy and freedom, and, most difficult of all, they must provide the youth of America with efficient reasons for laying down their lives on battlefields.

To generate enthusiasm for the coming war, then, is a mammoth task. The absence of a Pearl Harbor and the failure of American foreign policy to contain Stalinism breeds panic and uncertainty among the war-makers. Despite the dubious victory in Korea, the world appears to be slipping from their grasp. To fight Stalinism they are forced to rely on odious and backward regimes hated by the people. The names Chiang Kai Shek, Bao Dai, Syngman Rhee, Quirino, spell oppression and misery to the Asiatics and thus, as in Ger-

many, Japan, Austria, Korea, American military might is everywhere...and is nowhere effective.

Every step taken by American imperialism lends new support to Stalinism; this is the lesson of five years of cold war. When ideas appear useless, force decides; this is the lesson of history. American armed intervention into Korea is the admission that the stage of argument has passed.

But an unpopular war lends itself to criticism, doubts and finally, anti-war activity. The student meets American military moves with an implacable passivity. Fired with no enthusiasm to give up his life in the farthest reaches of Asia, his faith in the ability of capitalism runs thin as soon as he is offered a uniform.

Since serious problems admit bold solutions the student expresses his dissatisfaction by turning to pacifism, World Federalism or socialism. Even Stalinism, which can gain few adherents in its own name, attracts many students with its demagogic peace appeals.

But a critical, thinking student body becomes more and more dangerous to the progress of the war. In a war to "get the Cocks" cannon-fodder, not intelligence, is mandatory. To save the world MacArthur must have at his command millions of America's youth, armed to the teeth and ready to fight. Thus the preparation for the war with Russia calls forth a twofold response: anti-war activity and the draft. The purpose of the prolonged assault on civil liberties and academic freedom is the repression of this contradiction by a forceful invasion of the American campus.

Should Communists Be Allowed to Teach?

"Oust the Communists from our Universities." This is the slogan which covers the drive for thought control. Many students and professors embrace this formula without examining its real function, for on first glance it might appear reasonable.

"The Stalinists are totalitarians; to allow them to teach in our free Universities is to subvert democracy." It is true that the reactionary social aims and totalitarian methods of Stalinism present serious dangers to the democratic process, but it does not follow from this that Stalinists should be expelled from the Universities.

The C.P.'ers cannot be defined as espionage agents of Russia. The Communist Party is a political organization, based on certain ideas no matter how odious they may be and supported by thousands of ordinary Americans.

To defeat ideas requires better ideas. Repression may drive the Stalinists underground, but it will never defeat Stalinism as a social movement. The detectives of subversion fear critical discussion and the open, democratic competition of ideas and turn in desperation to loyalty oaths, expulsions and purges. Those who have failed so miserably to defeat Stalinism abroad are making it impossible for the students to combat democratically the ideas and power of Stalinism in the University.

All supporters of the present virtual illegalization of the Communist Party start from the same false assumption: that the C.P. is a "clear and present danger" to American democracy. Such is the justification for the McCarran Bill, the trial of the eleven Communist leaders and a whole

raft of dangerous and reactionary legislation.

But one look at the facts and the assumption tumbles to the ground. Before Murray decided bureaucratically to expel them from the C.I.O., the Stalinists suffered a wave of defeats in the labor movement. They lost the huge U.A.W. in a prolonged, democratic trade union fight. They had begun to lose the U.E. before the expulsion and were thrown out of power in the N.M.U. Generally, the more open and democratic the fight, the more complete the defeat of the C.P.

The cold war against civil liberties has hurt the C.P., but it has not defeated its ideas. To expel Stalinist professors from the Universities on the grounds of their membership alone is to repeat false and dangerous methods. Paradoxically, in order to defeat Stalinism completely, it is necessary to defend the right of the C.P. to exist legally while carrying on a bitter struggle against its ideas.

In any case the Communist Party today is underground. Its leaders are in jail, its power has been broken and its members are threatened with arrest and detention. It is a small, disorganized, pariah group. Why, then, does the holy crusade against civil liberties and freedom of thought continue?

Who Is a Clear and Present Danger?

The rulers of America are gripped at their bowels with a persistent and deadly fear. They strike out blindly at any criticism, any opposition to their war plans. The Stalinists, small and discredited as they are, oppose the war (since they favor the victory of Russia) and must be crushed along with all other opponents of the administration.

In order to silence honest and justified opinion, the bogey of Communism is evoked. To win an election, Communism is made the issue. To prepare the population for war, Communist spies are discovered. Under the banner of fighting Communism the illegal "subversive" list is compiled, government workers are terrified, and the McCarran "concentration camp" Bill is shoved through Congress.

The conclusion is unmistakable. The gentlemen are hysterical, and in their frenzied attempt to force the American people into the strait jacket of the Garrison State, they are undermining and subverting the long-established freedoms and liberties in whose name they speak. They, not the Stalinists, are the clear and present danger to American democracy!

The Liberal Inquisition

Enemies of academic freedom justify their actions, of course, by a long series of intricate and subtle arguments taken mostly from the liberal lexicon. Moves against democracy must be embellished with democratic phraseology.

"If we are to maintain our traditional educational system, the student must be protected from the wily, clever, prejudiced teachers who are trained to sneak their viewpoint into their lectures." Such a statement may be harsh, but it fairly presents the argument for paternalistic education, which assumes that the student is too immature to think and choose for himself, and must therefore be guided in the right direction.

The average student, of course, trusts to his own intelligence and would be only too happy

to try his teeth on a real live subversive. As a young adult, he should have the right to test his political beliefs against all comers, and he rightly suspects his paternalistic protectors of grinding their own political axes.

The most imposing arguments for removing Stalinists from the schools come from Sidney Hook, teacher of philosophy at New York University. He should be happy to discover that his name was invoked time and again to justify the Regents' political test at the University of California.

Professor Hook's viewpoint can be paraphrased as follows: "A teacher, by joining the Communist Party, commits an act which destroys his ability to function as a free intellectual. He cannot honestly consider ideas opposed to the party line which 'is laid down in every area of thought from art to zoology' but must turn the classroom into a forum for propagating the ideas and program of Stalinism. As a dangerous opponent of democracy and the scientific method, he should be dismissed from his post." Hook discards the argument that teachers should be judged by their performance in the classroom alone, on the doubtful ground that a system of spying might be set up, and insists on applying a political criterion for hiring and firing. Finally he proposes that action against Stalinist teachers be decided by faculties and not administrations or regents.

Hook merely offers an up-to-date, "liberal" version of the paternalistic theme. With the witch-hunters (not the Stalinists) subverting freedom of thought, Hook calmly proposes certain "safeguards" while virtually supporting by his silence the general implications of the attack.

The pundits of American education are not

the paragons of impartiality assumed by his arguments. Nor are all Stalinists cloak-and-dagger defilers of the Truth. A University is an intellectualized mirror of the outside world and would become a dead, useless institution if "one-sidedness" (different viewpoints) were suppressed. Hook's arguments are ex post facto rationalizations for the attack on academic freedom, not proposals for the strengthening of academic objectivity.

This "liberal" inquisition is a new phenomenon in our intellectual heritage. Stalinism has forced an entire generation of liberals into using police-state methods to fight its ideas. Today there seems to be a "crisis of overproduction" in the liberal's "free market place of ideas." Just as the Americans for Democratic Action helped to produce the McCarran Bill in the field of civil liberties, so the educational crisis is to be solved by the well known expedient of plowing under the surplus.

The Year of the Oath

Unfortunately for the purveyors of abstract formulae, arguments eventually come home to roost in the real world. The now infamous case of the long, bitter struggle between the professors and the Regents of the University of California over the imposition of a special non-Communist loyalty oath, presents the most striking example of the damage produced by the invasion of the campus.

In fear of an attack on the University by the California Legislature's Tenney Committee, President Sproul proposed that all University

employees sign a special non-Communist oath. The Regents passed the oath measure on June 24, 1949, and immediately imposed it on the unprepared faculty.

The intervention of summer vacation cut short any effective opposition, and many faculty members, either through fear for their jobs or through lack of information, signed the oath. A large minority (the non-signers) refused to be coerced, and the key to the entire subsequent fight lay in an adamant refusal to comply. This stalwart band of scholars was whittled down by a series of betrayals and compromises from hundreds to a tiny group of ten, who are today fighting the issue in the courts.

The struggle opened quietly enough, for at first the area of agreement was so great that the official faculty negotiating committee accepted the oath on principle, but demanded that it be reworded so as not to "insult" the "loyal and patriotic" faculty. Thus a lack of clarity was introduced from the very start. The faculty implicitly agreed that Communists should not be allowed to teach, but disliked the oath as a method of removing Communists. The non-signers, meanwhile, vociferously demanded the complete revocation of the Regents' action.

The Regents' ultimatum of February 24, 1950, finally cut short the futile and endless negotiations between them and the faculty committee (with its compromiser majority). Sign the oath or get out! The deadline for signing was set for April 30.

The ultimatum immediately sprang into national prominence. The campus rocked with charges and countercharges as University after University sent messages of support and promises of finan-

cial aid. Classroom activity somehow continued amid denunciations, resolutions and faculty and student meetings. The faculty, not daring to make a real fight, passed resolutions endorsing the Regents' anti-Communist policy in the hope that the oath would be removed, but the Regents refused to budge although the dismissal of the hundreds of non-signers threatened the University with virtual dismemberment.

The temperature of the campus reached white heat as April 30 approached. Student groups, led by the Berkeley Socialist Youth League, organized into a committee and held a series of demonstrations and meetings in preparation for a possible student walkout in support of the faculty. The academic world, finally aroused to the danger, deluged the University with protests, resolutions of support and promises of financial aid to the non-signers.

The "compromise" of April 21, proposed by the Alumni Association, and accepted by the faculty Committee and the Regents, cut short all activity. The special oath was replaced by its equivalent in the professors' employment contract while the faculty committee on tenure was given the power to investigate the political beliefs of the non-signers and to make recommendations to the Regents. The faculty committee traded academic freedom for the right of the faculty to police its own members within the rules set down by the Regents.

Thinking the issue was over, the faculty set up a committee and rather sheepishly examined the "loyalty" of the non-signers. But even this abject capitulation failed, for the Regents refused to accept the recommendations of the tenure committee and after surveying the wreckage, reintroduced the ultimatum. By this time, the long

series of betrayals and equivocations had cut the non-signers down to a small impotent group and the fight was over. The Regents disrupted University life for over eighteen months, forced every employee to sign the oath, and finally even removed tenure decisions from the hands of the faculty.

The results have been disastrous. More than eighty teaching assistants and lecturers resigned or were fired. Twenty-one faculty non-signers (many with over twenty years of service) cannot teach forty-three scheduled courses during the Fall semester. The Psychology department is dismembered, graduate students are leaving en masse, and various professional associations have blacklisted the University.

The issue of Communism proved to be a smoke-screen, for only two persons were ever dismissed for membership in the Communist Party. The success of the invasion of the campus is complete, for a free University has been reduced to an academic shambles.

How to Defend Academic Freedom

What can be done at other Universities to hinder the spreading inquisition?

In the first place, the mistakes made during previous fights must not be repeated! The student body must actively intervene in defending the campus from its enemies, for their right to an education lies in the balance. The faculty will attempt to convert the issue of academic freedom into a power struggle over tenure, and it will hesitate to stand squarely for the right of

Stalinists and other political dissidents to teach. At the University of California, this led to the sacrifice of teaching assistants and non-signers as a compromise measure which in turn produced complete collapse.

The following program, distilled from the many struggles which have already taken place, is essential to a successful defense of academic freedom today: (1) no political tests for teachers, (2) the only test for hiring and firing should be individual competency in the classroom, and (3) the right to judge competency must rest with the faculty, not the regents, administration or legislature.

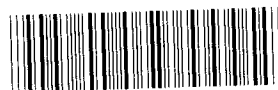
By combining these principles with a determined mass effort of faculty and students, the voice of free thought can be raised against the witch-hunters. Timidity and compromise have already failed! Faculty reticence should not tie the hands of the students who should step forward and take open and decisive action. Meetings, demonstrations and protests can provide support to the faculty and can convince them that any compromise is a death blow to both academic freedom and tenure.

In the last analysis, only general hints are possible. A convinced and conscious student body will discover its own tactics in the heat of the struggle, as proved by the magnificent efforts of the students of Olivet, the University of California and Brooklyn College. What is important is a firm determination to defend the University from its enemies . . . to drive the cold war off the campus.#

November 15, 1950

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