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BEHIND THE HEADLINES. The Communist Party in Switzerland.

The Swiss Communist Party, which belongs to the Kominform, only possesses five representatives, out of the 194 members of the National Council, that is the Lower Chamber, in Switzerland. One of these, a parliamentary representative for Basle, has left the party! The remainder, with the exception of the old Genevese Leader, Léon Nicole, and his much cleverer — as regards tactics — colleague Vincent, have been changed repeatedly. The new parliamentary elections are to take place in the Autumn. This will unquestionably lead to a still further decrease in the Communist minority group. Should this comprise fewer than five National Councillors, it can no longer form a "splinter" party, and will lose the right to be represented on any important parliamentary commissions. A popular manifestation against Communism took place recently in Zurich, on a very large scale. One of the things which contributed largely to its success was the presence of several Swiss personalities who had returned from Russia or Poland, where they had been settled, and had experienced personally all the hardships and cruelty of the existing régime. One of the high lights of this meeting occurred when the former President of the Swiss Colony in Poland, Engineer Pfister, called upon a handful of young Communists who were present, to have the courage to face reality and not to let themselves be deluded by propaganda speeches and empty slogans. No Communist dared to get up and speak, although there was absolute freedom of speech. A wave of indignation will lead to the disappearance, once more, of the Communist parliamentary representatives. It is also noteworthy that there is a split in the Communist Party. Such old-established Communists as the former Commander of a battalion in the Spanish Red Brigade, Otto Brunner and others, have been excluded from the Party in Zurich, under the accusation of being Titoists, and traitors to their Party. A hateful internal Party terror exists, similar to that practiced in the countries behind the Iron Curtain, with the sole difference that here it is merely a matter of Party annoyances and that no acts of brutality can harm those who have been either excluded or have retired from the Party. The Trade Unions and the Social-Democratic Party which at first took up the attitude of "wait and see", are now energetically and effectively engaged in warning the workers of the danger of Communism and trying

to instill truly democratic ways of thinking into the minds of their members. Thus, both the middle-class and the organised workers are firmly united in their defence against the Communist danger. Is this a real danger? In Switzerland, the Communists have never exercised any influence worth mentioning, but one knows how clever they are at camouflage and with what tenacity they hold and defend acquired positions, in which they have managed to place their own people and listening posts. This is done mainly among a certain class of intellectuals and artists, who live on the fringes of bourgeois society and are inspired by a certain feeling of resentment against the bourgeois order of life. Among them are to be found people who, although they are not convinced Communists, might very well be called "fellow-travellers". It is they who should be warned and brought back to a right way of thinking. The events in the East are more likely to achieve this, than any amount of talking or writing. Indeed, there are very few among these half-Communists who believe, nowadays, in the democratic principles of the Kominform Powers. It is an open question, however, as to whether these fellow-travellers will ever find their way back to a free and democratic society. For, there will always be people in every society who are never satisfied and can never fit into it. So long as they are not in a position to do it harm or to play the part of a traitor, they are not especially dangerous. Their propagandistic efforts will have little effect on the popular masses which have a sound political sense.

Up to the present, the Federal Police have shown as much patience in regard to the Communists, as has Parliament in regard to the Communist Party. The day of reckoning will come, however, during the elections. It will be all the more effective if the Communists cannot represent themselves to be martyrs or the victims of the police, and their sentence as enemies of democratic society is passed by the people themselves at a free election. The big Zurich meeting was a highly significant beginning. The wave of horror which has swept over the Swiss people as a result of the methods of persecution employed in the East, will not ebb away before the election of the Federal National Council takes place. The last Sunday in October, 1951, will do away with the last vestige of doubt in this respect. And, it is pretty certain that the leaders of the Communist Party have not the slightest illusions on this matter.

D.A.J.

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