What Makes a Hollywood Communist?

By RICHARD ENGLISH

Edward Dmytryk started with nothing, rose to earn $2500 a week as a movie director before he was forty. Yet he became a communist. Here is the case history of what he now knows was his personal tragedy.

Edward Dmytryk is forty-two years old. His past is brilliant, his present clouded, his future unknown. He joined the Communist Party in the spring of 1944, went to jail for contempt of Congress in 1950.
"There isn't any simple answer as to what makes one," Dmytryk said slowly. "When I was in the party I'd guess there were perhaps 150 'intellectual' communists in the picture business. By that I mean men who work with their heads, the creators. And the 'intellectual' communists don't run to pattern either in actions or in the motives that cause them to become commies. The only thing I learned was this: the same ideals that take a liberal into the Communist Party take him right back out again."

Determined not to be regarded as either a dope or a dupe who did not know what he was doing, Dmytryk moves restlessly around the cluttered living room of his apartment. There, in a crowded room with rice-cloth walls are his books and jazz records, the bar bells with which he works out three times a week, doing 140-pound presses. Daily Variety and the Hollywood Reporter are on a coffee table, mute reminders of the business in which he was so prominent a figure. "It's not just one thing that gets you interested in communism," he said slowly. "It's where you came from, what you believe in, the way you feel about people. It's all those things put together."

To show you that Dmytryk's story which I am telling here may be more than a superficial analysis of what makes a Hollywood communist, I might explain that I have been a motion-picture writer for fifteen years. For two years I was on the executive board of the Screen Writers' Guild, having been one of a group which defeated the far-Left elements, and was the third and last editor of the Screen Writer Magazine, succeeding Dalton Trumbo and Gordon Kahn, who were both called up before the Washington hearings, although only Trumbo testified. With that background, I know something of Dmytryk's past as well as his career.

Dmytryk's childhood was not a particularly happy one. He was born September 4, 1908, in Grand Forks, British Columbia. His father, Michael, was a Ukrainian truck farmer who worked winters in the local copper smelter. Eddie was the second oldest of four sons. Harold, the first-born, is a successful businessman. Arthur, the third-born and to whom Eddie feels the closest, is a laborer. William, the youngest, is now a major in the USAF, stationed in England.

While he is not now a member of any church, Dmytryk's family was Catholic. But any formal religious training ended with the death of his mother at the age of thirty-three in Northport, Washington, a lead-mining town. Left with four small boys on his hands, his father moved the family to San Francisco, where he became a motorman. His father soon married a Protestant and moved on to Los Angeles, where he again worked on streetcars. Although he leans backward in talking of his father, who died in 1946, it is obvious that Eddie had little affection for the man who raised his family on strictly European ideas.

While Dmytryk was in grade school he and his brother Arthur became one of Professor Terman's Group. Professor Terman, one of the developers of the Stanford-Binet tests for intelligence, selected what he called "1000 Gifted Children" in 1920. All had a base I.Q. of at

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always had his eye on. "That was 1939," he said. "I got my citizenship, became a director, everything." Starting with B pictures, Dmytryk's rise was gradual until, after also working for Monogram and Columbia, he moved to RKO and hit the jackpot with Hitler's Children. His career shot up then as he made such pictures as Tender Comrade; Murder, My Sweet; Back to Bataan; Cornered and Crossfire. In eight years and twenty-four pictures, including eleven for RKO alone, his salary had climbed from $250 a week to $2500 a week. And during that time he had become a communist.

He was a success in the industry of his choice, he had an outstanding reputation for so young a man and he was making pictures with the social significance he thought so important. On the debit side, his first marriage ended in an unhappy divorce in 1947. And, regardless of actual party membership, his association with communists on certain grounds continued until last September, and only now is publicly ended.

"I know it doesn't add up," he said slowly, "but everybody goes into communism seeking different things. I thought this was the best country in the world, but that we could still do better. I know it sounds unrealistic—and is—but I was trying to help people as I had been helped. And you just can't do it alone, or through charity either. I know how I felt about charity myself. So you decide things have to be done on a scientific basis, so that people are really taken care of all the time. Then you begin hearing about systems. With me it was Marxism."

By 1942 Dmytryk was widely known in the movie industry for "wanting to make honest pictures about people" and was ripe for communist indoctrination along those lines. "Late that year," he said, "a kid, a reader at the studio, asked me to lecture at the League of American Writers about cutting. It was the first time I had ever talked about a subject that I was vitally interested in and, in talking, I found that I had developed new theories that were of great practical advantage to me as a director. Until then there wasn't any place in Hollywood where the professionals could really get together and talk over their trade. I didn't know then, just talking about cutting, that the league had anything to do with communism.

Dmytryk was talking more urgently now, "That was the first step," he said, "talking in a private home to about ten people. Then the People's Educational Center was formed, and I was asked to take over a class on cutting. All kinds of people taught there and most of them were not commies. But I did become aware that the PEC was being run by communists, and instead of being shocked, I thought they must be my kind of people. This was in the love-fest days, and being a communist then didn't stop you from being an American. But at any rate, I liked what I had seen so far, both as an individual and as a director. I was thinking about the advancement of picture learning as much as I was about politics." The third step came early in 1943, when Dmytryk became part of the Hollywood Writers Mobilization. "This, too, was a communist front, though that word wasn't in use then. They wrote skits for the USO, prepared aganda speeches for the war effort, and again there were seminars on cutting, music, such as we'd had at PEC, but now on a much larger scale. I had decided I liked the way they did things, and I wanted to know more about communism."

In the spring of 1944 Edward Dmytryk joined the Communist Party just as it dissolved into the Communist Political Association, a result of Stalin's officially ending the Comintern. A writer who was to be one of the Ten made a recruiting pitch at a home in the San Fernando Valley and another member of the Ten passed around membership applications. Dmytryk was one of three recruits to join that night. "This is where it gets rough," he said slowly. "Nowadays, if you admit being an ex-communist, everyone expects you to be able to trot out all sorts of secret plans and big names bent on high treason. But if it was going on then, it certainly wasn't in the neighborhood groups I attended. In all, I attended seven or eight group meetings of from fifteen to twenty people, and they spent most of their time wrangling over the new by-laws and things like that. It was all directed on a propaganda plane, writing speeches and trying to elect candidates favorable to communism—things like that.

While I also attended a couple of fraction meetings where they were working on local race-prejudice angles, I was never asked to do any particular job, largely because I hadn't been fitted into any assignment yet. In a lot of ways I was a bad communist from the start. I began to suspect that the ideals that I first attracted me were going to remain just that. While there was a lot of talk about equalities, there was damn little action. It ended up that I never paid any dues, though I did make contributions out of what money I happened to have on me whenever the hat was passed. But I never went for their 'tithing.'"
The one thing the communists were almost always after to get Hollywood members to contribute 10 per cent of their gross pay and Dmytryk believes that Hollywood contributed far more money than any other group its size in this country. That he never contributed to this tithe himself is borne out by his own records. "Actually," Dmytryk said, "if it hadn't been for the hearings and what followed, this wouldn't have been an important phase of my life. I was already beginning to doubt their sincerity. And what really upset me was that the party tried to do to a picture of mine."

RKO purchased a story that was underdeveloped and released it as Cornered, starring Dick Powell. Dmytryk and Adrian Scott—also one of the Ten—were assigned to it as the director and producer, respectively. The story was that of a Canadian flier who, bent on revenge for his wife's death, trails the Nazi who killed her to Buenos Aires. "John Wexley wrote the first script," Dmytryk said, "and when I saw it I just didn't like it, and I kept it. I didn't cut the wardrobe too. He agreed and a second writer came on and did a bang-up job. I shot the picture, and as far as I was concerned, that was that."

The Wexley had protested the credits on the script, and a Screen Writers' Guild arbitration panel ruled in favor of Wexley. Now, with the picture about to be released, John Wexley called Adrian Scott and insisted that the three of us have a meeting regarding the arbitration decision. "The meeting was held at my apartment. Adrian and I felt of course that it was a good decision. We were happy. We didn't want credit. But when Wexley walked in, he had two communist screen writers with him. They came right to the point, charged that I was an anti-fascist. I didn't do so much object to its sentimentals as to its wordiness and generally unmotional treatment."

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was when Olga Kosenkina jumped out of the Soviet consulate in New York rather than be sent back to Russia. That really made me think. "When you're away," he said slowly, "you realize how much your country means to you. I really found that out the day the French embassy in London called me and said they had a subpoena there, wanting me to appear as a witness at the Victor Kravchenko trial in Paris." (Kravchenko, the author of I Chose Freedom, had sued a Paris communist newspaper, Les Lettres Francaises, for saying his book, exposing conditions in Russia, was untrue, and was to win nominal damages in his action.) "This commie paper wanted to use me as a witness to show there was persecution in America as well as Russia. I really got mad then at the communists wanting to exhibit me in a case in which there was absolutely no grounds for my appearance. It was completely callous, wanting to use me to prove that Russia was right in contrasting America, and completely disregarding the fact I am an American. That was definite proof that communists place the party above any country except Russia, and that no communist can ever possibly be a loyal citizen. Whatever my personal beef was, I was certainly not going to air any dirty linen in a foreign country and I turned the subpoena down flat."

While Dmytryk was in England, John Howard Lawson and Dalton Trumbo were tried and convicted, and appealed. The eight other members of the Ten waived their trials at that time, stipulating that they would abide by the Supreme Court decision in the Lawson and Trumbo cases. A decision was expected at any time, and so Dmytryk and his wife returned to Hollywood in August, 1949.

"After you've been away," Dmytryk said, "your eyes are really clear, and what hit me first was the way the psychoanalysis craze had hit the Hollywood communists. All of them were trying to solve the contradictions in their thoughts and the way they lived, trying to reconcile themselves to present-day conditions. The second thing that got me was the way the Ten were being turned into martyrs, another Scottsboro case. It was like everything else the commies do; they will go into a lynch case, for example, but instead of trying to help the Negroes, what they are really after is to use the incident to stir up still more trouble. The Negroes don't matter; they're just a means to an end. And that had happened with the Ten. When I left, it had basically been a good civil-liberties case. Now it was being used as a spearhead against all attacks on communism."

"People like Thomas Mann, Linus Pauling and Carey McWilliams had been attracted to the cause of the Ten, and now I saw them being used time and again for other purposes. By dialectic extension, the party was trying to make our case apply to all communist cases, such as the eleven party leaders who were tried in New York, and the Bridges case in California. I promptly got into my own fights with the Ten, wanting to keep it just a civil-liberties case, but the group always insisted and always won out, and I got so a statement was never issued without bringing in the question of peace and whatever else happened to be in the current party line."

He hesitated, then said slowly, "The hardest thing I had to live with was the realization that they were trying to protect communism in this country by invoking the Constitution and civil liberties, things that wouldn't last five minutes if the commies ever took over." For the only time his voice was low, "This was on my conscience constantly."

On May 29, 1950, the Supreme Court refused for a second time to review the Lawson and Trumbo convictions, and on June ninth, Lawson and

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**Timely Tips by Little Lulu**

**How do you score on these helpful ways to save?**

- **What's a "saving" way to clean dust mops?**
  - Shaking
  - Vacuuming
- **What's best for quieting a noisy clock?**
  - A hammer
  - A glass bowl
  - Shoot the works
  - Wear earmuffs
- **To get better looking, should you try—**
  - Bioinoculants
  - Kleenex eyeglass tissues
- **Kleenex® ends waste—saves money...**
  1. **Instead of many...**
  2. **You get just one...**
  3. **And save with Kleenex**

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**THE SATURDAY EVENING POST**

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**Kraus.**

"Actually—we're looking for a nice picnic spot for this Sunday."

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**THE SATURDAY EVENING POST**
Trumbo went to jail. Dmytryk, who had refused to go on their last money-raising campaigns, flew back to Washington and on June 29, 1950, after a perfunctory formal trial. Judge Keech sentenced him to six months in Federal prison and a $1000 fine, and remanded him to the District of Columbia, where Dmytryk drew a bootlegger as his first cellmate.

The trial was just started in Korea and it was the big subject of conversation among those of the Ten in that Washington jail. Walking back and forth during their exercise periods, they hashed it over, always insisting it was the South Koreans who had attacked the North Koreans that day.

"It was utterly insane," Dmytryk said. "We were in jail, we had no way at all of knowing what was going on, and yet a judgment favorable to communism and unfavorable to us was made right then. This showed me for the last time that communism was a kind of thinking; that there was no independence of thought, there couldn't be. I was really through then." His voice tightened. "All the things that I believed in, the things I had once believed in, had just been a blind to disarm the Western world."

With his trial over, Dmytryk was transferred to Mill Point Prison Camp on July 17, 1950. There, where he was assigned a job as a garbage clerk in a camp latrine, it was necessary to keep logging and awning operations, Dmytryk kept getting mader. Finally, he said, when the Chinese entered the war, I swore to affidavit before Superintendent Thie-

"The affidavit, while reiterating his feelings he had been right on constitutional grounds, stated his loyalty to this country and ended with the statement that, at the time of the hearings he was not a Communist Party member.

Albert Maltz pleaded with him not to go through with the statement. "I used the clincher they always have on ex-communists," Dmytryk said slowly. "He said, 'You don't believe you'll ever bow; they'll think that if you were once a communist you're always one, and Hollywood will be as afraid of public opinion as it ever was.' And maybe I'm right. But I had to have it off my chest. The only reason I didn't admit that I had ever been a communist was that I wanted to wait until I had put it all together in my mind, all the things that took me into the party and back out again."

Released November 15, 1950, after serving four months and seventeen days, as a result of his good behavior, Dmytryk returned to Hollywood to pick up his unknown destiny. While only one independent producer has shown as much interest in him as Twentieth Century Fox for a picture at some future date, the communists had already started their smear campaign. At Lucy's Restaurant one of them explained away Dmytryk's affidavit, saying, "You know the inside on that, don't you? He made a deal with the producers that he was going to start work at MGM at $5000 a week the minute he got out, if he would just sign that affidavit."

THE KREMLIN'S BILLION-DOLLAR STOOGES

(Continued from Page 29)

THE KREMLIN'S BILLION-DOLLAR STOOGES

235 boxes of communist propaganda
40,000 pounds of coffee
3 chains of Meissen china
500 pairs of rayon stockings
26 optical instruments

Still another variety of smuggling goes on along the Belgian border through Germany's "hole in the West." There the city of Aachen lies close to a border that winds through extensive woodlands. Tens of thousands of people make a career out of smuggling. They work in carefully organized bands often armed and protected in military fashion by advance and rear guards.

In this region of a few dozen miles of border country, communist police made about 40,000 arrests last year—each arrest averaging six pounds of coffee. "Those figures look fine on paper," one customs guard said, "but for every pound we catch, at least fifteen escapes us."

They got no trick of the trade that the smugglers haven't learned. Methods differ, and so do the smugglers. But where the small professionalesses of Aachen, homeless DP's, members of the occupation forces, the poor fanatics of the Communist Party, big-time organizers, the result is the same.

Vast sums of money which should be used for the specific reconstruction of Germany go into private pockets. And large amounts of vital materials go to the Soviets when they should be available for the defense preparations of the West. Some "independent" smugglers have no connection with the Soviets. But they help Moscow by their operations.

Though the Russians do not control the whole weird world of Germany's black market, they are fast increasing their holdings. They are now responsible for well over half of its activities. German officials estimate. Their control varies from direct operation to tenuous manipulation. Sometimes the chain of command is so tenuous that the man doing the job doesn't even know he is working for the Politburo.

The growth of the Soviets' contra-bands organization is particularly remarkable, since at first, after the war, the Russians had little to do with the organized illicit trading in ruined Ger-

The Germans' main interest was to keep alive by hook or by crook. The occupying powers had their hands full. The new German customs forces were unarmed, often corrupt and totally insufficient in numbers. Above all, they were permitted little authority over non-German nationals.

That was the era when a whole nation danced, not around the golden calf, but around a packet of cigarettes and a handful of coffee. Which visitor to Frankfort does not recall the official coffee bar, the Handlungszentrale, whose rows of stools went on just outside the American compound? German housewives brought their values to the Zentrale and received American cigarettes, coffee, soap or candles in return. Two packages often brought a fine camera, worth $100 or more, and an antique coffee table could be had for four packs. In those days anybody who had an American at the Zentrale could make a small fortune. And many did.

Gradually the occupation forces tightened their regulations. Allied citizens were required to submit to customs examination. More self-gov-

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May 19, 1943

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also discovered that the Soviet's own monopolies prime opportunities to engage in black marketing. Before long, the Soviet-protected racketeers were running a side show of their own in the Soviet zone. It was a particularly lucrative business—since the Russians didn't know about it and there was no competition for the spoils.

Inevitably, the Russians discovered that they were being double-crossed. On July 3, 1950, the People’s Police, in a raid, seized the black-market headquarters. They arrested all and sundry, and carted away vast stores of contraband.

The effects were felt throughout Western Europe. Black-market prices skyrocketed into a fever curve. Those private smugglers who had survived the growing Soviet competition now had a clear field. Their trade mushroomed into even greater prosperity.

Russian need for Western Germany's black-market supplies must have been urgent, for the People's Police showed an unheard-of leniency toward the arrested racketeers. The men were released after a few weeks and set up in a new and better headquarters on Berlin's Spittelmarkt. But on last November nineteenth, Gen. Zaiser Government tried to crack down on his overenterprising partners again. This time the break was final. Those who had become active in "independent" black-market activities were either expelled from the Soviet zone or bundled off to Soviet concentration camps.

More raids meant no changes. A new organization was set up as part of the East German Ministry of Trade. It was made as watertight a bureaucracy as possible.

It takes two to make a deal. And without the willing co-operation of the Germans, it is unlikely that they will ever again sell black-market coffee, cigarettes or stockings, there could have been no black market. The reason for this is as simple as it is compelling: smuggled goods are cheaper than the legally imported.

Coffee, for instance, costs fifty-five cents, or 2.30 German marks a pound on the world market. To this basic price the American government adds customs duties and taxes amounting to a whacking 370 per cent. By the time the wholesaler and grocer have taken their profit, the German housewife has to pay more than fourteen marks for the pound that costs 2.30 marks in Amsterdam. That is a prohibitive price in a country of coffee drinkers where the monthly wage of an industrial worker averages under 300 marks.

Since the smuggler pays neither duty nor taxes, he can sell his coffee at even or twelve marks and still make a huge profit. The situation is the same with tea and cigarettes.

"At the legal price, my husband and I can't afford more than two cups of coffee a day," the wife of a university professor told me. "By buying on the black market we have a few cups extra for Sunday afternoon or if the professor has to work late at night. And I don't think that makes me a criminal!"

Other inducements to smuggling are provided by the wide gap between the exchange rates of the two German marks—one issued in Western Germany and the other in the communist zone.

The rate has fluctuated anywhere around seven East to one West mark. As an example of what this means, let us take a look at the smuggling operation in women's stockings. When Germany was split into four zones in 1945, 85 per cent of her hosiery industry fell under Soviet control. As a result, women's stockings are scarce and expensive in Western Germany, while the Soviets have an oversupply of a "luxury" they usually frown upon.

Now a pair of good nylon hose costs one East mark in the Soviet zone—that is 0.15 mark in West money. But a few miles away in Western Germany, the same pair sells for ten West marks. Thus a smuggler's truckload of 150,000 pairs costs him 7500 and brings him 500,000 West marks—a tidy profit in any currency.

Of course, there is a limit beyond which it doesn't pay the Russians to bring stockings into Western Germany. Too many stockings would bring the black-market prices down. The same is true for cameras, Meinse china and other Soviet-zone products. Likewise, it pays the Russians to restrict their shipments of coffee and American cigarettes into Germany.

That is where the "independent" smuggler comes in. His cut-rate competition has at times been serious. But he cannot match the power of the technical assistance the Russians can give their smugglers. Consequently, he is the first to know that improving Allied and German customs control.

The German customs force will soon reach 40,000 men. Telewriters and a radio communication system as well as motorcycles have been added to their force. A drastic tightening up of control procedures is directed mainly against the misuse of transit shipments.

On the Allied side, too, the war against the smugglers is being fought with a new determination. You may never have heard of Parcht-in-the-West. It is a railroad connecting Western Europe with Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Balkans. Twice a day, a train decorated with the Soviet star arrives with produce from behind the Iron Curtain. Just as often a couple of trains enter from Western Germany, destination East.

Until a few months ago, the calm of the endless Bavarian forest was scarcely disturbed. The trains came and left quietly. Now and then, a few tourists would watch as rail cars carrying what looked like heavy armor plating, rumbling East.

Then, in September, Sergeant Lee, of the 7751st MP Customs Unit, moved into a little room in Furth station. On that day Furth lost its idyllic peace. Not that Sergeant Lee is a noisy man. On the contrary. When he says "No," he says it quietly. But the one word is enough to send Czech officials shouting "Fascist saboteur!" to make the wires hum between Furth and Bonn, and to bring high German brass in for inspection.

For Sergeant Lee's "No" means that yet another shipment of strategic supplies has failed to get behind the Iron Curtain. Already his veto has stopped a complete radio station, trainload of electronic instruments, chemical products and armament steel from reaching Red Prague. In Furth, at least, the border is no longer wide open. Soviet contraband runners have had to move elsewhere.

Gradually the holes in Germany's frontier are being plugged. It is uphill work. As the Russians find it increasingly difficult to obtain critical supplies, they will strive their hardest to keep the dark channels of Germany open. Nor will they give up their attempt to undermine Western Germany. But the chances are that in 1951 a good many German night clubs and luxury hotels will have to close down. When that happens, it is the Russians who will have lost another battle on the European front.

"It wouldn't be so bad if you could depend on 'em, but some mornings they run on time."