

Helping the Communists

Of the millions of people in Western Europe who regularly vote for the Communist ticket, actually no more than a handful are Communists in the strict sense of the term. Evidence of this comes from France, where a recent survey showed that the vast majority of the five million Frenchmen who vote Communist do so simply in the hope of improving their living standards.

We may note also that in Italy, the membership of the Communist Party, at any time, roughly corresponds with the number of unemployed. This is not to say that all Italy's unemployed are Communists, or vice-versa. But as unemployment goes up or down, so communism's popularity increases or decreases.

We in Canada have pledged ourselves to protect Western Europe from the external threat of communism; that is, from attack by Russia and her satellites. But what of the internal threat? What of the unemployment and poverty which nourish communism in the very countries we are pledged to defend against it?

For that unemployment and poverty, there is one reason above all—overpopulation. If Western Europe is to recover economically, socially, morally, its population pressure must be relieved by large-scale emigration to other parts of the world. But that is not happening now, and there is little evidence that it is going to happen. The Provisional Migration Committee, which took over from the defunct International Refugee Organization last year, reports that the present rate of emigration is far below Europe's needs.

This is not because Europeans are unwilling to emigrate in large numbers, but because the underpopulated countries are unwilling to accept them. The four big hopes of would-be emigrants—Canada, Australia, the United States and South America—are all cutting down their immigration programs. Even if they went back to their former levels (for example, the 200,000 people Canada took in last year), that would still make no more than a dent in Europe's excess population.

The irony is that the very countries which most need to siphon off population are those which find it hardest to "place" emigrants. The quota system recently established by Canada savagely discriminates against Italians. Yet of all the countries in Western Europe, Italy is the one with the worst population problem. How, under these circumstances, can we shake our heads over Communist strength in that country? We are contributing to it.

If we were as anxious to defend Western Europe internally as we are to defend it externally, we would encourage large-scale immigration from that part of the world. By so doing, we would accomplish three things:

We would improve our own standard of living—now much lower than it could be because we are underpopulated and underdeveloped;

We would relieve Europe's population burden, and (this is probably the most important) we would turn non-producers into producers and consumers.

An unemployed German or Italian is neither a customer for Canada's goods, nor much of a customer for those of his own country. But bring him to Canada, put Canadian tools in his hands, and he is, in truth, a new man. Earning the kind of money Canadians earn, he is a customer not only for Canadian products but for European ones, too. And he is the best possible argument against communism.

It has been said that the chief thing which defeated the Communists in the last Italian election, was the letters from friends and relatives who had migrated to North America. For our own protection, no less than Europe's, we must keep those letters rolling.