

IN SAN FRANCISCO—

Schneiderman Says He Doesn't Know...

By CHARLES WALKER

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About 350 Stalinists and their sympathizers, disturbed to varying degrees, attended the CP's only San Francisco meeting devoted to explaining the 20th Congress of the Russian party. It was held tonight with State CP Chairman William Schneiderman doing the explaining. Schneiderman is currently stumping California on this subject.

Schneiderman's approach was to stress the "positive" and more theoretical features of the 20th Congress, as against the more sensational matters like the assault on Stalin's reputation and the revelations of past injustices. The latter, he claimed, were being deliberately pushed by the "State Department" to "divert attention."

For the most part Schneiderman followed the course already laid out by American CP explainers. The congress

What about the role of the other Russian leaders? Schneiderman said he didn't know; wasn't there.

As for the U. S., the CP (he said) should have known better after the "Browder episode"; but even with more information, it would still be debatable as to what action should have been taken, "in the face of anti-Soviet slanders"; perhaps it would not have been mentioned at all.

Written questions submitted to Schneiderman and answered by him indicated

real uneasiness in the local ranks. Schneiderman's replies were evasive.

—Didn't the Rajk confession, and the doctors' confessions call for real doubt about Soviet justice?—It calls into question the "methods of review." However, there are no excuses for false and framed-up charges. Don't blame individuals.

—Was the re-evaluation of Stalin taking place in the best manner possible?—This is questionable. Other CP's should have participated.

—When will public opposition to current doctrines be possible in the Soviet Union?—It is now going on [so claimed Schneiderman coolly, without even referring to the armed suppression of the Tiflis demonstration or the unanimity of the 20th Congress]. It was stifled before, but it is to be hoped that wider latitudes of democracy will be opened up as the war recedes.

—Why did the French CP support Molt in Algeria? Doesn't this aid Imperialism?—We lack information. [A frequent reply by Schneiderman.] However, it seems necessary to prevent France from getting a right-wing government and becoming an American puppet. If the French broke from the U. S. and came to an agreement with the Soviet Union on international policy, this would contribute to peaceful solutions of world problems. The French CP would try to influence the French socialists better from within, as far as Algeria is concerned....

(Of course, in the meantime the Algerian people should no doubt hail the Stalinists for arming their oppressors! Note also that in this reply, Schneiderman automatically accepts, as always, the role of the other CP's as auxiliaries of Russian foreign-policy needs, with the right to sell out any fight for freedom to achieve any Moscow slogan.)

—Why was no correction of mistakes made before Stalin's death?—Don't know.

—How do you preserve monolithic unity and still prevent errors?—There is a time for discipline and unity, and there are other times when this is only a pretext for anti-democratic acts. When it's the right time for democracy, use it.

(Of course, the decision as to which time is which . . . will be made by the little Stalin.)

—Did you, Schneiderman, discuss your speech with the leadership before giving it?—I wouldn't have dared otherwise.

Schneiderman did his level best to answer the faithful. Most of the audience seemed to be composed of middle-aged and older people who have probably been around the CP for years.

Among the Labor Youth League youth, the response may be different. Schneiderman will probably also hold a meeting on the same subject in the East Bay area, and more dissent may be visible there.