

THE STALINIST CRISIS: UNITED STATES

A CP Leader Beats His Breast

By GODFREY DENIS

As previously reported in *LA* (April 2) the Jefferson School has been holding a number of forums attempting to explain the new line for the American CP which is developing as a result of the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party. The last forum of the series was held April 4 with John Gates, editor of the *Daily Worker*, as the speaker.

In a way this particular talk was the most interesting of the lot since the major topic—"Democracy, Criticism and Self-criticism"—tackled the central problem in the minds of the faithful, the role of Stalin, as given in the latest version by Krushchev and Co.).

The audience, well over 300, included a considerable number of ex-Stalinists, sympathizers and the curious. Anti-Stalinists were present, some vocally at the meeting itself, and some outside were distributing *LABOR ACTION* and the *Militant*.

While there was nothing particularly new in John Gates' speech, the emphasis was disorienting for his flock, not merely because of the loud repetitions of mea culpa throughout the talk but also because of the rather obvious fact that Gates did not attempt to answer some of the real questions that had arisen from the limited discussion in and around the CP.

His basic theme ran something like this: Stalin made great contributions to Marxist theory and toward building the foundations of socialism in the USSR "from 1903 to about 1933." However, because of the distortions caused by the cult of the individual, distortions in part explained by the tremendous difficulties of the tasks before the Soviet Union, a number of injustices occurred. Also a number of distortions of Marxist theory became accepted.

The 20th Congress, the audience was told, was a momentous event because it marked the now-established strength of the "socialist bloc" and because it revised the distortions in theory mentioned above.

The main "distortions" were: Stalin's view that as socialism became more firmly established the repressive power of the state would have to increase; the "mistaken" notion that so long as imperialist powers existed, wars were inevitable; the "mistaken" notion that socialists could not achieve power peacefully in the still capitalist countries, whereas now, it seems because of the power of the "socialist" bloc, a gradual transformation via parliamentary elections is no longer excluded.

REASSURANCES

Further, it appears that Gates now feels that the *Daily Worker* and the American Communist Party were lax in their defense of democracy in the U.S., and, as an example, he mentioned the Minneapolis Smith Act trials where, he feels, the party should have defended the "Trotskyites" although their politics are "degenerate." Now the CP defends democratic rights for everybody, we were told, at least in the U.S.

One of the worst mistakes, Gates said, was the expulsion of Tito's Yugoslavia from the "socialist" camp and the Cominform. This mistake is apparently no longer the fault of Beria, who was hardly mentioned, but was squarely laid to Stalin. The 20th Congress corrected this, and recognized the possibility of "alternate paths to socialism": Russia's, Tito's, Nehru's, and so forth.

Neutralism came in for high praise, and the release of the Social-Democrats in Hungary, in Gates' opinion, raised the possibility of more than one party being permitted to exist.

However, to reassure those who might feel that if such an imposing list of errors were possible once, they could be repeated again, Gates assured the audience that the basically healthy nature of "socialism" was so strong that even if Stalin were still alive the re-evaluation would be going on, since insofar as Stalin was wrong he contradicted the social system in the USSR.

Gates gave an analogy, which he warned the audience not to take too literally. He drew the analogy between the USSR and, of all things—a trade union led by "misleaders or even dictators" which nevertheless is a working-class institution and fight for workers' interests. The rustling sound your reporter heard at that point might have been caused by the ghost of Trotsky stirring in his grave, as Gates borrowed this "trade-union analogy" to prove that Russia was

at least a "workers' state."

Gates then moved to the American scene. The old errors are responsible for the isolation of the CP from the united labor movement, for the mistrust it inspires in some honest though critical quarters, for the somewhat inadequate nature of discussions, criticisms and self-criticisms.

Criticism, Gates said, "all too often" went from the top down only, as against the correct Marxist-Leninist way of going both ways. This is because all kinds of ideas which approached those of various oppositions were treated as if they were disloyal and were suppressed in Russia (through an excess of zeal caused by the degeneration and treason of "some leaders" of the Bukharinite and Trotskyist oppositions).

HARD QUESTIONS

The discussion period that followed Gates' talk was open, as far as the eye could see. A number of fairly routine questions were followed by at least two that were not.

THE STALINIST CRISIS: POLAND

In Warsaw the Turn Is Deeper

By A. RUDZIENSKI

In the period just before the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, which condemned Stalin's regime, the "thaw" in Poland had gone further than it had in Russia. The rehabilitation of the Polish CP leaders who had been liquidated before the war was an announcement, in effect, of Stalin's political "insanity" and also a token of the political liquidation of some hundreds of "little Stalins" in Russia, Poland, and West Europe.

Therefore the (physical) death of Boleslaw Bierut, former president of the Polish "Popular Democracy," coincides with the political liquidation of Stalin's political machine, in the same way as the death of the old tyrant coincided with the end of his personal dictatorship in Russia. It doesn't matter whether Bierut was liquidated in the same way, perhaps, just as it doesn't matter whether Stalin was murdered by his collaborators or not.

As Bierut's replacement in the secretariat of the ruling party, Edward Ochab was named—the former chief of the security department of the Politburo. Since Ochab does not represent any political tendency of his own, the political leadership of the party is in the hands of Jakob Berman, Hilary Minc and (perhaps) Zambrowski—the men who managed the party during Bierut's life.

They are also all, in origin, old Communists from pre-war days, with links to the old staff of the Polish CP; thus they have so many grounds on which to hate Stalin that it is quite possible that the anti-Stalin turn will be deeper and broader in Poland than in Russia.

The *Trybuna Ludu* enthusiastically greeted the resolutions of the 20th Congress, appraising them as a "turn to the left." While Prague, Paris and Rome are trying to narrow the significance of the destruction of the Stalin myths, Warsaw is intensifying it more than Moscow. It would seem that the only hard pro-Stalin man in Poland was Boleslaw Bierut.

CLIMATE WAS RIPE

But the main political problem is not that of Bierut's successor but of the new policy of the regime with respect to the opposition in Poland and abroad, that is, to the political emigration as well.

The regime is socially and politically weak; in spite of its successes in the industrialization and reconstruction of the country, because the political opposition was never as thoroughly destroyed as it was in Russia, and because there still remains, and even grows, a sponta-

"Why," asked an innocent, "did Rajk confess if he was innocent as we are now told?" Gates confessed his own "bewilderment," adding two other thoughts. First (after all there's no point in taking unnecessary chances) he said that we did not as yet have full information about what happened in Hungary; but secondly, if an injustice had been done, as now appears, then the culprits should be punished, especially under socialism.

The second question was even more difficult. What happened, asked an inconsiderate voice, to that well-documented spy ring that Tito ran in the Eastern Popular Democracies and the USSR? Gates did not know.

Following these two questions, the Cannonite city organizer took the floor and, after some confused remarks about the Chinese and German revolutions, praised Gates' "excellent" analogy between the USSR and a bureaucratic trade union, without even making the obvious point that socialists should fight against the bureaucracy in such a union and attempt to oust it. His particular question (unanswered) was why Trotskyist politics were "degenerate" since Gates analysis was similar.

Most interesting perhaps were statements made from the floor by two who were obviously members or friends of the CP.

One attacked Gates, the Central Committee, and the party press for the super-

neous economic opposition by the workers and peasants against the sacrifices required by the industrialization of the country.

More than 40 per cent of the people are still independent peasants; the social and economic reality demands an answer to the question: will the peasants be forced into the collectives, or will the political structure of the regime be changed?

Since today it is very difficult to destroy completely the economic independence of the Polish peasantry, there are likely to be reshuffles in the "popular power." Naturally the first step must come from the Kremlin, because they are the bosses.

The political climate in Poland was quite ripe for the new turn. It was not only the death of Bierut that facilitated the changes; even some organs of the regime had been critical of the government from time to time.

Nova Kultura, the official organ of the Polish writers' association, had published a poem by Adam Wazyk, an old Communist, who described the situation of "dehumanized Poland" in very tragic terms. The responsible editor of this magazine, also a member of the state party, was suspended for publishing Wazyk's poem. The "cultural" press criticized the "administration" under the cover of loyalty to the regime, in typical doubletalk of course.

But the criticism has been getting bolder every day. Organs of the Polish regime are publishing replies to critics in the émigré press; they fight the latter of course, but in this way a broader public gets to know about the criticism from abroad.

It is almost as if the opposition-in-exile were writing and acting in Poland itself, because today it is only a short distance from Warsaw to London, the émigré center; and in London the emigration has full freedom and security for its activities, such as it could not have had even in a bourgeois-democratic Poland.

The political conflict between the regime's press and that of the emigration goes on daily, publicly, and, in this way, "legally," thus contributing to the increase in political looseness; so that the existence of the Polish emigration on British territory gives it a certain superiority in the political fight. This is one of the reasons why the Warsaw regime wants to convince all the exiles to return to Poland, at any cost.

On the other hand, in London itself there were voices raised saying that the political struggle by the emigration does not have any more possibilities before

it, and that it is necessary to seek new and "softer," "more liberal" political roads.

The political crisis in the emigration divided it, as we have reported before, between the "government"-in-exile of Zaleski (Pilsudski's ex-minister), and the "Executive" which embraces the political representatives of the traditional Polish parties (Socialists, Peasants, and the Nationalists of various hues). As we have also reported here, one of the "premiers" in the Zaleski government, Hanke, a politician of Christian-Democratic color, went back to Poland; and another ex-premier, Mackiewicz, is writing violent polemics against supporting U.S.-British policy as being harmful to Poland.

The Warsaw press joyfully supported the point of view of Mackiewicz. (Few people know that his cousin is the president of the Ukrainian republic in the USSR.)

CRISIS IN EXILE

On the other side, the majority group of the Executive, supported by the traditional parties, is also undergoing a political crisis, because of its collaboration with U.S. British policy.

Its president resigned, and Adam Ciolkosz, a leader of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party), was invited to organize the new Executive. Ciolkosz, who is a left-wingish leader in the PPS, is the only man they have who can be balanced against the Warsaw regime, in the political tug-of-war with the latter. He was a vigorous fighter against Pilsudski and the "colonels," and went to prison for his activity. He never belonged to any government-in-exile because the bourgeoisie was afraid of him. He is a little to the left of center in the Social-Democracy, and so is considered a "radical"; he is looked on as honest and courageous.

Because of his past, he has great political possibilities, but he has his share of mistakes: in particular, collaboration with the right-wing Nationalist Party. While he argues that he had to do this as the only way to fight the Pilsudski group, my reply is that from the standpoint of socialism it were better to seek collaboration with the Populists (peasant party) or to remain in "splendid socialist isolation," rather than collaborate with the Nationalists.

But the Russians cannot take advantage of this mistake of Ciolkosz's collaboration with the Nationalists, because they themselves want to win over the Nationalists to collaboration. Thus Ciolkosz can play this card to his advantage.