

'Socialism Requires Democracy,' Gates Says, Ending Lecture Series

JOHN GATES, editor of the Daily Worker, spoke to a packed auditorium April 4 at the Jefferson School on the issues aroused by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. An overflow audience heard his talk over a public address system piped to another hall in the building.

His was the last of four lectures in a series conducted by the school on the 20th Congress and its meaning for Americans.

In an hour-long lecture Gates described the 20th Congress as one which declared war on dogmatism and marked a new stage in the revitalization of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union. He discussed the theoretical errors which Stalin's one-man leadership imposed upon the Soviet Union and, thus, retarded advances which otherwise could have been made.

Among these, he said, was the fallacious theory that as socialism developed the class struggle would intensify. Out of this, he said, arose many harmful developments including the trials and conviction of innocent people for crimes they did not commit.

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are trying to exploit this situation for their own purposes, seeing in this "crisis" an evidence of weakness. "We must remind them," said Gates, "that the correction of a mistake represents strength, not weakness."

"Injustice and one-man dictatorship, they argue, is inherent in socialism," said Gates. "But the opposite is true. Injustice is inherent in capitalism. For as Lenin said, imperialism corresponds to political reaction as socialism corresponds to democracy. Socialism by its very nature requires democracy while imperialism, by its nature, requires reaction."

Gates recalled the debate between Marx and the Anarchists. The latter contended that tyranny and oppression was inherent in any kind of state power and proposed only this solution: that there should be no state organization. Marx held that even under socialism a government with state power is essential, and that without such power, the new socialist society of the workers would be overthrown by force by the capitalists.

But Marx also warned of the dangers of state power and urged vigilance on the part of the people to prevent abuses until such a time as the state could wither away.

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THIS MARXIST principle, Gates said was distorted by Stalin, who applied it not only against capitalist enemies without but as a repressive force against internal criticism.

As for American Communists,

Gates continued, it has often been said that they demanded civil liberties for themselves but intended to deny them to others if they should comprise a government.

"We are for civil liberty today and after the victory of socialism, for those who advocate socialism and for those who would teach and advocate a return to capitalism," said Gates to the vigorous applause of the audience.

Gates said that this position arose from two facts. First, he said, there is a strong democratic tradition among the American people. Second, by the time the American people are ready for socialism most of the world will have already become socialist and world reaction far weaker. "So we do not need to repeat what was unnecessary even in the Soviet Union, the violation of democracy which they themselves are now moving to correct," he said.

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AMONG MISTAKES of the American Communist Party, Gates cited its failure to carry on a fight against the indictment of the Trotskyites under the Smith Act. "For while we despise the political views of the Trotskyites, that did not justify us in our failure to take a forthright position on their arrest and conviction."

That democracy is inherent in socialism, Gates said, is shown by the fact that while Stalin hindered the advance of socialism he could not stop it. And although Stalin's errors were for years covered up they are now being corrected by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the governments of the Eastern European countries. They are seeking to right the injustices of the trials of Rajk and Kostov.

Injustices, he said, clashes with the very nature of socialist society, and one, either injustice or socialism, must go. "And what goes—what is eradicated," he added, "is the violation of democratic rights."

"My opinion is that had Stalin lived, these steps would have had to be taken and would have been taken."

"We expect injustice of a cap-

italist system: we do not expect it of a socialist system," said Gates, "and we cannot tolerate even a single act of injustice under a socialist system. We who are believers in and defenders of socialism must be doubly vigilant."

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OF THE PROFOUND conclusions to be drawn by American Communists for America, said Gates, the first is "that we must stand on our own feet, not repeat like parrots, not accept on faith. For we Americans are the best authorities on America and on what's good for America. Marxism is of course an universal science and we do not ignore observations by Marxists in other countries, but the final analysis must be our own."

"But this does not mean, incidentally, that we American Marxists are necessarily the best American authority on our country. Some non-Marxists know a great deal more about our country than we do, and it is necessary above all for us to learn from every possible source.

"We must be modest, especially because the Marxist movement in our country is so small and so isolated from the mass of people. We have a long road to go and we must study our country and base ourselves upon facts, not upon abstract theories and dogma.

"There are tremendous movements on the march in our country—the merged labor movement, the Negro people's movement, the farm revolt—from which we are isolated. They are moving in a progressive, democratic direction and we must become a part of them if we expect to lead our country to socialism.

"We Communists in the U.S., have just begun to examine our own policies with the view to determining our mistakes of the past," said Gates, citing several fields in which specific policy is under review. He then stressed the need for examining methods of work in order that the party establish "conditions for real democracy and full participation" by the membership in all its decisions.

Artist's View of Tax Seizure

