

# Gerson on Nightbeat Sees 'Repression' Period Waning

By DAVID PLATT

Simon Gerson, executive editor of the Daily Worker, appeared on "Nightbeat" last Friday night. It was the first time the popular New York TV show had ever had an admitted Communist as its guest.

It was a good show. Gerson made many telling points, giving frank and honest answers to a whole series of tough questions, mostly about the Daily Worker and the Communist Party, put to him by John Wingate, the program's capable questioner.

Wingate introduced Gerson as having been associated with the Daily Worker off and on since the early '30s. Gerson, he said, was born on the East Side, attended public schools in Manhattan, was a one time copy reader on the old New York American, a former assistant to the Office of Borough President and former legislative director of the Communist Party, and was acquitted of Smith Act charges in 1952.

Wingate, before launching into his Nightbeat interview of Simon Gerson, held up the first pages of the city's newspapers, including, for this one time, the Daily Worker. But while he quoted the main headlines of the other papers, he skipped over the Daily Worker's top headline, "Cost of Living at All Time High," though it was visible to the viewers, and cited the headlines on Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's campaign and Gerson's appearance on TV.

Then quoting from a stereotyped New Yorker article that reading the Worker was like "taking a long walk through a tropical jungle", Wingate asked Gerson whether the Daily Worker can "sincerely claim" to perform an honest journalistic service.

"It not only claims to but does perform a service that no other American newspaper does", Gerson replied.

"It brings forward in the most vigorous and aggressive manner what we believe to be the most fundamental issues before the American people and above all before the American workingclass. That service is performed by no other newspaper."

Wingate asked whether Gerson was suggesting that none of the big metropolitan dailies perform any service to their readers. "Are you," he asked, "saying the Daily Worker is the only paper that tells the truth"?

"Not at all", Gerson replied. "Each paper performs a service to a particular segment of the community. We perform ours primarily to the advanced American workers, mostly those who are socialist-minded. We do not pretend to speak for Wall Street."

Gerson pointed out that there are many newspapers in the U. S. which "to one degree or another reflect a segment of the truth". He cited the Negro press in this country which "reflects quite vividly the trials and tribulations and problems of the Negro people." He said he would be "the last to deny that what they are talking about is not truthful". He emphasized that the Daily Worker expresses the views and aspirations of the most advanced American workers and its program is for the benefit of the workingclass and the country as a whole.

In answer to other questions about the Daily Worker, Gerson said he didn't recall the sweeping negative evaluation of the entire contents of the N. Y. Post reportedly made by the Daily Worker some years back. "If we took that position," he said, "we were wrong".

He denied that it was "silly" for the Daily Worker to give a trade union slant to a story about Dodger pitcher Johnny Podres, when it referred to Podres in a story Oct. 4, 1955, as a miner's son and a proud holder of a union card.

Whether it's silly or not depends upon the audience you are writing for, said Gerson. He pointed out that Don Newcomb's father is a member of an electrical union in Jersey. A fact like that is of interest to readers in Jersey and to the electrical workers, he pointed out. Even the New York Times, he added, has referred to Willie Mays as the son of an Alabama steelworker.

"But suppose a ballplayer is the son of a Republican or a Democrat. How far will he go in the Daily Worker"? Wingate wanted to know.

"If he's a good ballplayer he'll go far", Gerson shot back.

The next question concerned the circulation of the Daily Worker. "Why is it so low"? Wingate asked.

Gerson said one reason was the "savage repression of Communists, leftwingers and progressives."

"Savage repression? Or defense against your ideology"? Wingate asked.

"I mean just what I said," Gerson continued.

"It is savage repression when a young student is hounded because his mother reads the Daily Worker. It is savage repression when the FBI harasses a small advertiser in the Daily Worker. It is savage repression when a man seeking a job is questioned about his father, a subscriber to the Daily Worker."

Wingate then suggested that the Daily Worker and the Communist Party were "figureheads" for Moscow. Gerson denied that the Communist movement in this country was the expression of some foreign movement. He said American Communists are the

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product of the old socialist movement which existed in this country when Russia was still ruled by the czar. He said the Daily Worker was born in 1924, and that the Communist movement here grew out of the leftwing socialist movement and the leftwing unions, which long antedated the Russian Revolution.

"Can it be", Wingate retorted, "that a great many people in New York and the U. S. A. really don't care about your message, preferring to live under bourgeois capitalist society?"

Gerson said he was confident that the time was coming when the circulation of the Daily Worker would go up. Asked what made him so confident, he said, "The very fact that I am here tonight on your program."

The political atmosphere in the country is improving, he added. "People are beginning to draw a free breath".

Wingate then quoted Attorney General Brownell's statement that the Communist movement is a "tool of the Kremlin".

Gerson replied that the American CP is an independent American workingclass party. "We are not Stalinists, Titoists, Khrushch-evists," he said. "We are American Communists. Our only allegiance is to the American people".

He cited Brownell's "shameful" allegation that former President Truman had named a "spy" to high office, and called Brownell a "white-collar McCarthyite."

Wingate then asked Gerson about Hungary.

The last official position of the CP, said Gerson, was "sharply critical" of the policies of the Soviet Union and the Rakosi government which led up to the tragic events.

"While neither condoning or condemning the second intervention," he said, "at the same time the CP urged the American people not to allow themselves to be inflamed to the point where peaceful existence with the USSR is endangered."

"There was mass public discontent in Hungary and this was successfully exploited by Radio Free Europe and Voice of America."

What happened was a "tragedy for socialism, a tragedy for democracy", Gerson stated.

"Did you say so, then," Wingate asked.

"The Daily Worker said so on Nov. 5, 1956."

"Has the paper repudiated its stand?" "No", said Gerson.

He said there were differences in the Communist Party on Hungary. It is a complex issue, he added.

"That's why," he said, "we are trying to get Dulles to give us a passport so that one of our reporters can make his own investigations".

Wingate then asked what Gerson thought of the chances of the Communist Party.

"We feel", said Gerson, "that the CP has a number of basic answers. We believe we have the answer to the problem of inflation, monopoly capitalism and to most of the basic social questions facing the whole American people."

"We believe that in time and not too long a time, the American people will be looking around for some basic answers to questions. When that time comes we are going to help them find their way to socialism."