

How CP Members React to End of Stalin Cult

By Daniel Roberts

About two and a half months ago the U.S. Communist Party began reports and discussions on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The pattern of the meetings throughout the country, according to Militant correspondents present, have been invariably the same. The official speakers all sought to present what they called a balanced report touching on all phases of the Congress speeches. All sought to place the dismantling of the Stalin cult "in its proper focus."

But invariably, the overwhelming number of questions and speeches — where these were allowed from the floor — concerned themselves with the Stalin question.

"Why did the Soviet leaders wait three years before disclosing Stalin's dictatorial rule?"

"What were Khrushchev, Bulganin and the others doing while Stalin was building his dictatorship? Weren't they hand in glove with him and aren't they now just passing the buck? Why don't they explain their own role?"

RANKS ASK QUESTIONS

Each new revelation from the

Soviet Union only swelled the volume of questions asked by CP members of their leaders. "What measures were used to obtain confessions from Rajk and the others?"

"What assurances are there that the outrages against the Jews in the Soviet Union will not be repeated?"

"Who are the 'rotten elements' denounced in Pravda and Izvestia? What kind of a discussion is it if people who oppose party policy are cracked down upon?"

A Militant correspondent writes the following about a Los Angeles meeting, April 13, where William Schneiderman, California Chairman of the CP, spoke. "Many questions relating to the frame-up of Tito, the execution of Rajk and the slaughter of Jewish intellectuals indicated the profound dissatisfaction of the audience with the explanations that have been offered by the CP leadership."

"The only applause of any size received by the speaker came when he stated that he was in favor of abolishing capital punishment in socialist countries. Otherwise, the audience was undemonstrative."

The release of thousands of

political prisoners from Polish jails occasioned one young CP supporter to ask at a Jefferson School forum in New York: "Are these people now going to be given political rights? They were called criminals. But if that is true, why were they released? And if it wasn't true, why were they put in prison, and what is going to be done to make it up to them now?"

At a subsequent discussion at the Jefferson School on whether under socialism in the U.S. capitalists would be granted democratic rights to advocate a return to capitalism, one CP supporter stated: "I am more concerned about the chance of workers in the Soviet Union today to exercise democratic rights, including the right to form new parties. We talk about the crimes of Stalin. These weren't committed against capitalists. They were crimes against Socialism — against the workers. Are we going to back their rights?"

At another meeting in Los Angeles on the 20th Congress, "there was burning indignation expressed about the crimes against the Jewish people. One woman said: 'I can't trust either you or the leaders over there

any more because you permitted these things to happen. I felt that things were wrong for a long time, but I was afraid to open my mouth because I would be called a reactionary.'"

THE MOSCOW TRIALS

The question of Trotskyism and the Moscow Trial frame-ups are stumping the Stalinist leaders.

At a Los Angeles forum a member of the audience, referring to an article in the current issue of Masses and Mainstream, said: "In this article, Gerson says that the CP committed a deep error in principle by not defending the Trotskyist victims of the Smith Act in Minneapolis and also James Kutcher. . . As I understood it at the time, and still do, the basic reason why the CP refused defense was because the Trotskyists were said to be proven wreckers, assassins and agents of fascism in the Moscow Trials. If the CP is now changing its position on the Trotskyists, isn't it necessary to review the Moscow Trials which provided the basis for their previous wrong position?"

Bernard Burton of the People's World, one of the speakers, replied, "We changed our position

because the Smith Act if used against one can be used against all." "That's what the Trotskyists said." "I don't care what they said," Burton replied. He did not dare renew the charge of "fascist" against the Trotskyists. (Nor have other speakers at other meetings.)

Arnold Shimberg, Los Angeles youth leader, held a different view. "He said there were two reasons for the CP's change of position; the one given by Burton and the other which was his own. In view of the sweeping character of the violations of socialist democracy, he believed incumbent upon both the Soviet and American CP leaders to re-evaluate the role of the Trotskyists. It was one thing to conduct an ideological struggle against people with wrong views — and he believed the Trotskyist position would have prevented the building of socialism in the USSR. However, it is another thing for a socialist country to engage in frame-ups."

One of the motives in the frame-ups conducted against Leon Trotsky was to prevent CP members from learning what his ideas really were about the problems of building socialism in the USSR and on a world scale. For

over 30 years, Stalin and his henchmen erected a barrier of misrepresentation, then slander, then frame-ups between the CP rank and file and the Trotskyist movement.

By repudiating the Stalin cult, Stalin's heirs have unwittingly undermined all credence in the monstrous accusations. Revolted by the record of Stalinist crimes, CP members are demanding that their leaders abandon bureaucratic for Leninist methods — i.e., adopt ideological struggle instead of frame-ups. A good beginning for CP members seeking the truth would be a study of Trotsky's basic writings. The question of the road to socialism in the USSR — 30 years ago and now — opens up a rich area of discussion on the fundamental problems of world socialism, including the very questions now agitating CP members as a result of the 20th Congress.

Rex Bell, husband of "It Girl" Clara Bow, and Nevada's No. 2 politician, talks about politics in the May 28 New York Post: "It's not too different from the acting business. My social and public duties are about the same now as when I was in Hollywood."