

# Perspectives for the Ex-Communists

John Gates, former editor of the *Daily Worker* who resigned from the Communist Party just before the DW collapsed, has written a series of articles for the *New York Post*. These articles are of interest to everyone concerned with the political evolution of the thousands of people who have broken with the Communist Party in the past couple of years.

First of all, the articles make no startling revelations about the CP in this country. As a matter of fact, they have nothing in common whatever with an "expose" of the party. They contain nothing of the intellectual and moral revulsion against the stifling intellectual atmosphere which characterized the American CP for so long, such as permeate Howard Fast's book and articles. The present party leadership is attacked and criticized for their slavish attitude toward the Russian Communist Party, and Gates sees for the CP no role in American society because of its rigid and dogmatic attitude. But in these articles there appears no feeling that the CP betrayed the idealism and devotion of a whole generation, or that through it these qualities were turned to the support of an unworthy goal.

Not at all. As a matter of fact, in long sections of the series one is almost led to wonder whether instead of the title "Why I Left the Communist Party," a more appropriate one might have been "Why Did I Leave the Communist Party?"

Gates has broken with the American Communist Party because he considers it hopeless, useless and worse. He is willing to criticize abuses and excesses committed in the "socialist countries," but only in a friendly, "constructive" way. And above all it is clear that he is not looking for his political future to the rise of a socialist movement in America which will represent a complete break with his past, but rather to the re-constitution of a movement based on that past.

## CANNOT PREDICT

We cannot predict the future political development of John Gates as an individual. He has come a long way in the past few years, and he may continue to travel in the direction of democratic socialism. But his present political perspective, as reflected in these articles, is even if only implicitly or semi-consciously, the eventual creation and development of a political movement in this country which, for lack of a better word, we can only describe as Stalinoid.

Not that Gates comes out for the formation of such a political movement in these articles. In all likelihood, neither he nor most of his friends and colleagues still inside or now outside the CP are remotely ready for that. He says he wants to think, read and talk to people for some time before he decides exactly what he will do. But at the present time, at least, there can be little doubt that the people, above all, with whom he wants to discuss, and to whom he looks for leadership and the initial ranks of the movement of the future are those generally clustered around the Stalinoid publications and organizations.

How can this be deduced? In part by his explicit statement that a new American socialist movement, while independent from the Russian Communists, cannot be "hysterical critics" of them, as he alleges some socialists to have been. But our conclusions are drawn more certainly precisely from the tone and approach he adopts in discussing the past of the Communist Party in this country.

## LEGITIMIZE

The whole effect of his series is, while not holding out the CP of today as an attractive vehicle for political activity, to explain, justify, glorify and above all legitimize it, and hence those who were its members and leaders, for the last twenty or thirty years.

Thus, if one accepts Gate's version of the CP's history, no one who participated

in it need be ashamed, or even embarrassed by his past. They made mistakes, to be sure, but then who didn't? The effect of their respect and awe of the Russian and other foreign Communists was to lead them into sectarian errors, and to isolate them from American life from time to time, but other socialists were sectarian too, and in any event, the CP made mighty contributions to the struggle against Jim Crow, to the CIO organizing drives, and so forth.

In a word, the Communist Party and its members and leaders always have been as legitimate a part of the progressive and socialist movements of America as anyone else, and a lot more so than most. Those of them who have managed to see the light and get out of the shrinking, ossifying sect the CP is turning into can still lay claim to participation and even leadership in the socialist and labor movements of the future, not by openly or tacitly repudiating their past and finding new political ground to stand on, but by simply learning a few lessons about where their movement went wrong in this or that detail, and by discovering the new conditions for its reorganization some time in the future.

Such, it would appear, is the message Gates seeks to convey at the present time. The whole conception is a consid-

## Third Force Group Proposes: A Basis for Peace Discussions For Arab and Israeli Socialists

The following communication has been received from the comrades of the Third Force group in Israel. Despite the fact that it appears to have been delayed in the mails for almost two months, we feel that the problem with which it deals is vital, and that the approach adopted by the Third Force warrants the widest publicity and support by socialists all over the world.—Ed.

In connection with the letter of Mr. Leon Szur and Mr. Fenner Brockway (*New Statesman*, November 23, 1957) calling on Jewish and Arab socialists to meet for a discussion of peace between Israel and the Arabs, we beg to state the following:

There are Jews in Israel who are desirous of a just peace with the Arabs. These peace-minded Israelis are not so few as the "national" leaders proclaim them to be, and they are to be found in all classes of the Israeli population. Yet they have not succeeded till now to influence public opinion in Israel in any noticeable measure.

This is due in great measure to the fact that among the Israeli Jews there prevails a belief—which is largely spread and strengthened by Zionist and especially Zionist-Socialist propaganda—that there are no Arabs who would be ready to conclude a reasonable peace with Israel, and that the only difference of opinion noticeable among the Arabs in respect to Israel is that the majority of them strive not only for the destruction of the state of Israel, but also for the annihilation of all Israeli Jews, whereas the other few Arabs are inclined to treat the individual Israeli Jews somewhat more liberally.

The evil consequences of the Israel-Arab enmity are felt strongly in Israel, and the terrible dangers which threaten the Middle East because of its disunion and weakness become clearer daily. But since a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict appears to be impossible, the public in Israel is drawn to look and hope for a violent solution. We suppose that a similar state of affairs—*mutatis mutandis*—exists in the Arab countries.

It is therefore most important that Is-

rael and Arab sincere socialists should meet and elaborate a common scheme of peace between Israel and the Arab nations, in order that they should be able to put before their respective countrymen a plan of a practical and just solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

We therefore beg to submit herewith, in the name of the "Third Force" movement in Israel—a Jewish-Arab organization ideologically opposed to both capitalistic exploitation and totalitarian despotism—that the basic conditions for a just and stable peace between Israel and the Arabs are as follows:

1. Arab recognition of the state of Israel in its boundaries as they are at present or as rectified by mutual agreement.
  2. Repatriation of the Arab refugees and payment of adequate compensation to those of them who will refuse to return.
  3. Abolition of all discrimination against Arabs in Israel.
  4. Return of all Arab property in Israel to its owners and payment of adequate compensation for the use of and any damage caused to the above property by the state or citizens of Israel.
  5. Federation of the Middle East controlling foreign policy, defence and common economic interests of the area and participation of Israel in this federation as a member-state with equal rights and obligations.
- As to the fear of Zionist expansion, we submit that there will be no place for such fear in a federation as above.
- If the above proposal is considered by Arab socialists as a proper basis for discussion of an Israeli-Arab peace, a meeting of Arab and Jewish socialists for the above purpose should take place without delay.

For the Central Committee  
of  
the "Third Force" movement in Israel,  
M. Stein, *Chairman*  
A. Zichrony, *Secretary*

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