

# 1,600 Honor Freed Communist Leaders

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

More than 1,600 persons rallied to honor the Communist leaders imprisoned during the witch-hunt years, and to celebrate both their return and America's potential return to sanity implicit in the June 17 Supreme court decisions.

More than one speaker at Carnegie Hall Tuesday night paid recognition also to the many who, although they escaped prison, endured the blows of reaction.

Louis Weinstock, veteran of trade union struggles, sounded this note when he welcomed with beaming face and sweeping gesture those seated before him, in the name of the returned prisoners, who he said,

never relinquished "confidence that you were fighting."

Another recently freed Smith Act prisoner, Pettis Perry, said that in the 28 months and 20 days he was in prison "many nights I thought of you," sustained by the confidence his audience and many others were continuing the struggle for democratic rights, a peaceful world and the rights of the Negro people. He called for a reversal of the recent repeal of the law permitting the President to call out troops, voted 90-0, and for "a real civil rights act."

Pointing here and there in the audience, he said he recognized rank - and - file workers, painters, furriers and shoe workers. And since he appeared, on his second

day from parole, more tanned than they, he explained: "If you think I look good, you should see that jail (Danbury, Conn.). It looks twice as good." It should, for while he was there he painted it.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, her eyes misting over as she received a standing ovation and a basket of flowers, said in almost shaky tones, "They're dressmakers." But as she talked to her friends, comrades and non-Communist admirers, her voice took on its old power and ring as she urged the need of recruiting the young, "to identify ourselves with youth, Negroes, labor, all the groups we were identified with in the past."

"Never sell short the history of the Communist Party," she de-

clared as applause swept the old hall. "It was here in 1907 when  
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THOMPSON

# Rally

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Jack London spoke in this hall in 1907, and don't laugh, because after all, there did take place a Socialist revolution 10 years later—and he was speaking of the Socialist Revolution.

An equal ovation was given the man newest returned from the longest stretch of prison life, and the man who had suffered most, whose family had suffered most—Bob Thompson, looking youthful and brown, the scar in his scalp which marks the steel plate he wears as his special trophy of the battle against reaction barely visible.

Benjamin J. Davis had introduced Thompson as a living symbol of the "indestructibility of our party, our class and our people and the cause for which we stand."

He had paid tribute to the Daily Worker and the party for the campaign to free Thompson, who is out on bail awaiting a Supreme court ruling on the same issue he has raised in his plea for commutation of his remaining sentence for contempt, in the case of Gil Green and Henry Winston. Davis declared, "We intend that he shall never go back."

Earlier, editor John Gates had pledged a continuing fight against the imprisonment of Green, Winston and Irving Potash and any return to prison of Thompson and greeted Thompson feelingly, relating how they were "in the same armies together (in Spain and in World War II), the same wars together, the same jail together (Atlanta)" and who stand together in the same party.

Thompson released June 21 in the newly liberalized atmosphere of the courts, at the outset paid recognition to the fact that those before him, and many on the stage released earlier, had been "grappling with" problems still new to him.

He proceeded to assess the positive factors as well the dangers of the "most hopeful" atmosphere he found prevailing on the left. It was, he said, "an atmosphere in which ideas and policies can be debated sharply on their merits with a minimum of frozen attitudes and in absence of venom and rancor."

He appealed to those who have dropped away from the Communist party in the period—"and though I consider them deeply mistaken I will regard them as friends"—to help cultivate friendly debate and discussion.

The hall was hushed, hanging in the words of the young leader who up to this night had not indicated publicly where he stood politically in the inter-party debate.

## INSPIRING FACTORS

He spoke of the things he had found inspiring since his return to that in prison parlance is called the free world"—anything outside the 30-foot-high walls. These included: a country emerging from a decade of rampant cold war hysteria; a working class organizationally more united and powerful; the "boiling up" of a powerful Negro people's movement suggesting the democratic transformation of the south.

It was when he added, "A country which still has a Communist party"—that the applause broke loose, and thereafter he was repeatedly interrupted by applause that was anything but routine.

He continued: "—true, a Party that has been knocked about, buffed and torn," but which at its recent convention retained the ingredients for playing an "indispensable role" in the U.S.

Then he spoke of what he found deeply disturbing," making clear, however, that no ideas freely held and discussed need be feared, and such a debate can powerfully aid in routing the dangers of stagnation and isolation." Only to be feared

He assailed "this idea" that the trade union movement is "capable of developing its own original socialist consciousness and theory" and that thus "a body of science such as Marxism-Leninism is no longer needed," nor the Communist Party. Much that is good arises out of the struggles of unions, he said, and added:

"But this experience cannot give to the working class in 10 years or 10,000 years a socialist consciousness or a body of scientific principles with which it can transform both itself and society." This is why, he said, "there is not only a past, but also a future" for the Communist party, and why it must "not only be retained—it must be built."

He assailed also a concept that recognizes "the need for imparting to the working class a body of scientific socialist thought"—but not Marxism-Leninism. Tied in the same package, he said, was what started with the idea that certain scientific concepts become obsolete and are replaced—a correct premise, he said, but one from which "the thought then proceeds to take off into the wild blue yonder."

Thompson did not identify any of the concepts he attacked as coming from any individual or group. He described Marxism-Leninism as "the most dynamic instrument of change the world has ever known," and ridiculed the professed need "to depart from it under the name of need for change."

He warned that "each of us, and every Communist Party has a tendency to hang on to . . . outmoded concepts," and that a struggle to overcome such tendencies "is exactly the kind of struggle that is being mounted today by Marxists everywhere." He called for "boldly analyzing" changed conditions and confidently and aggressively "seeking out the new ways" in which the party "can play—in the historic sense—its vanguard role" under the new conditions.

He confessed to "serious weaknesses and mistake" while chairman of the party in New York, without specifying them, and refused to attribute them to built-in weaknesses of the party.

Rather, he said, they were "more a product of certain deficiencies of Bob Thompson." He voiced hope that criticism and self-criticism, long held theoretically as Communist practice, actually will be learned and used, adding: "Any individual, or for that matter if need be an entire leadership in our party, can be criticized right out of leadership, and if the criticism is sound and constructive and we all learn from it, our party and the working class will be strengthened, not weakened."

Thompson, however, decried as "ignoble, a shameful, warped and distorted thing," the "so-called self-criticism" which "degrades and drags in the mud the historic role of the Communist Party" or "sullies and destroys confidence" in Marxism-Leninism.

"I am referring," he said "to certain ideas with respect to the relationship between the working class of our country, in particular the socialist minded sectors, and the rising tide of socialism on the world scene."

The imperialists, he said, would like to see the labor movement, even its socialist sectors, "isolate itself from its most natural and powerful friend, the great system of socialist states arising in the world."

But, he said, "socialist-minded" Americans were part of the worldwide "rising tide," and thus had a right to "speak out freely and clearly when need arises against negative developments anywhere in the socialist world."

"As for example," he continued, "in the case of the important violations of socialist democracy, or mistakes in the handling of the Jewish minority problem, in the

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Soviet Union and elsewhere."

More importantly, he said, being part of the "rising tide" means they can take deep pride in the buoyant advance of socialism on a world scale "which is largely responsible for the new horizons" and possibilities for social gains for the working people unfolding in our country.

John T. McManus, general manager of The National Guardian, warned that already on the heels of the Supreme Court decisions, the Eastlands, Jenners and Walters were moving toward the subverting of the decisions, "and nowhere in the nation is there a political force to oppose this."

He criticized the American left for supporting "crooks, ignoramuses and hypocrites for public office as the less worse of a shoddy political grab-bag" while "thousands of people throughout America are looking for something positive—aggressive—from the groupings and leadership of the American Left." They want, he said, independent political action "of the sort that will make any and every political candidate in this country sing for his political supper on the issues . . ."

Seated on the platform were other recently returned Communists who went to prison for their beliefs, V. J. Jerome, Alexander Bittleman, Jacob ("Pop") Mindel, Betty Gannett, as well as the New York leaders whose Smith Act convictions are on appeal and for whose legal expenses \$1,742 was donated.

Other speakers included Paul Novick, editor of The Morning Freiheit, and Eugene Dennis. Those on the platform represented a total of 114 years in prison served. Of 160 indicted nationwide, 114 were sentenced to 456 years in prison, said Weinstock.

# School Bill

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hower's original \$1,300,000,000 school plan for their own compromise measure.

But Smith then made his sudden move to kill the entire bill by striking its enacting clause. It carried on the 153 to 126 teller vote, in which members are counted as they move up the center House aisle.

The amendment to tack the segregation amendment to the bill was offered by Rep. Stuyvesant Wainwright (R-NY).

House Republican leader Joseph W. Martin Jr. (Mass.), House GOP whip Leslie Arends (Ill), and Rep. Charles A. Halleck (Ind), a principal spokesman for Eisenhower in the House, all voted for the amendment.

Supporters of the bill warned that adoption of the segregation amendment was certain to kill the bill.

Only one of the three Negro