

## THE GATES OF FABLE

By William Z. Foster

JOHN GATES, with the assistance of Earl Browder, has written a book.\* Too bad they didn't draw Jay Lovestone into it also; then they would have had the hierarchy of opportunist ex-Communists more fully represented. They are all cut from the same cloth. The differences between them are as nothing compared to their similarities—fighting the Party and the world socialist movement. The book amounts to little or nothing theoretically, as it deals fundamentally with no real problems. But such as it is, it confirms the Party's view of what Gates is trying to do. It makes clear that he wants to split the Communist Party, and develop some sort of a talking machine that would pervert the Party into Social-Democracy, divorced from Marxism-Leninism, divorced from proletarian internationalism, divorced from the American class struggle, divorced from the socialist countries of the world, and divorced from the socialist movement in general. "I am no longer a Communist," says Gates (p. 192), but to the reader of the book this fact is so clear that it is hardly necessary to state it.

In his book, Gates makes use of many of the characteristic tricks of the professional red-baiter. He sneers at the Party and its history; he lies deliberately about the Party's policies; and he slanders the Party leadership. It

is amazing how quick the renegades from the Party pick up bourgeois misrepresentations and distortions. Of course, Gates did not have far to go in this respect, when one recalls his vicious anti-Party polemics while he was still in the Party. It would be both a big task and an empty one to reply to all his fabrications. When one reads the confusionism of this book, he gets a pretty good idea of why the Gates agitation has been so barren.

As an example of the ease and recklessness with which Gates misrepresents the Party line in order to gain a point, he says (p. 158): "Our gloomy predictions of early war and inevitable fascism had been proved wrong." It would be difficult to crowd into so few words more falsifications than this. Our Party never predicted early war, in the sense of a world war, nor did it speak of inevitable fascism. Quite the contrary, the very heart of its policy was to make clear to the masses that, although there was grave danger, the deciding voice in these questions belonged to the people. The Party, however, made a historic achievement in pointing out that the post-World War II period was a war-like one. This was a pioneer act, for which the Party deserves great credit.

During the most intense period of the cold war, in the years of the Korean war, the bulk of the American people felt that both world war and fascism were inevitable. But not the

\* *The Story of an American Communist*, by John Gates (Thomas Nelson & Sons, N. Y.), 221 pp., \$3.95.

Communist Party. It was one of the very few forces in the U.S. that spoke out openly, clearly, and persistently, against both war and fascism, and declared that neither was inevitable. The Communist Parties of the world praised the heroic stand of the U.S. Communist Party during the cold war, and well they might. But Gates' slander is merely a repetition of the line of the revisionists who seek to discredit the Party at all costs. Add a few score more examples like the above, and one gets a picture of the Gates method of misrepresenting the Party line.

Gates, who spouted a great deal in the Party debate about being "honest" with opponents within and without the Party, in his book slanders freely Party militants and leaders. Of course, I am his favorite target, being vilified upon innumerable occasions. Typically, he says of me, "Foster now demanded that all those who had favored a political action association prior to the convention had to be proscribed" (p.192). But this is a brazen falsehood. The truth is that as late as two months after the Party National Convention, Gates, at a meeting of the National Committee, boastfully read a list of nine District Organizers of important Party districts, who had supported the political action association, and who continued to do so. The gravity of this boast was that the Party convention had condemned the political action association, which stood for the abolition of the Party as such, and that these D.O.'s, in continuing to support it, were openly negating the convention and the Party. I thereupon proposed that the nine D.O.'s be called upon to dissociate themselves from the political action association. This was the least

that a Communist Party could ask of them. There was no suggestion of disciplinary action. The National Committee, which was then loaded with revisionists, took no action on the matter, however, and the D.O.'s in question—those that are still in the Party—have never yet publicly disavowed the political action association. It was because I stood thus firmly for the Communist Party, its Marxist-Leninist policies, and its program, that Gates denounces me in his book as being "old-fashioned," "sectarian," and the like.

With his usual inventiveness, Gates, seeking to characterize me as a sectarian, states at considerable length that I was about to call him an agent of American imperialism during the faction fight, but was made to think better of it. This incident simply never happened. However, the very essence of the attempt of the revisionists to destroy the Communist Party during the recent period has been to further the cause of American imperialism. But Gates, in his book, goes further than merely cultivating imperialist tendencies. He would have the Party believe that the cold war could have been averted (and the Party saved from the governmental persecution) by the Soviet Union simply accepting the Marshall Plan. Here he would have us ignore that the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild and rearm Europe for the purpose of destroying the socialist world and that the imperialists would use every conceivable device to keep these funds out of the hands of the socialist countries.

Gates makes a big issue of the fact that in a recent article I had spoken of the need to "Americanize our Party." This he says was "the most damning

indictment of our Party that possibly could be made"—that is, at this late date, to still talk of the need to Americanize the Party. Gates ignores the fact that practically every leader in the Party since its foundation spoke of the imperative need to Americanize the movement. And we may be sure that they will continue to do this in the future. The reason for the necessity to hammer upon this question is because we are a member of a very powerful international movement, our Party is of small size compared with the others, and because of the many specific qualities of the American class struggle—all of which tend to over-emphasize the international aspect if we are not alert nationally. What we mean by Americanizing the Party, however, of keeping the American angle of the Party's line in proper relationship to the international angle, is something totally different from the "national Communism" of the revisionists, who would have us play down or ignore the international basis of our movement and concentrate exclusively upon distorted national features of the movement.

Gates shows a strong political affinity for Earl Browder, which is natural enough, considering their common revisionism. Browder, in fact, has written a preface to the book, in which he rather loftily accuses Gates of being confused. He says that Gates, with his ideas unsettled, is on his way to a more definite point of view. Browder is not very clear, however, as to just what he means by this, but one can guess the general idea without great difficulty. All that is necessary is to take a look at what has become of the other leaders who have deserted the

Communist Party from time to time, to get a pretty good picture of Gates' ultimate goal. Take Browder himself, for example: it is only recently that he published a book (*Marx and America*) in which he engages in the task of trying to disprove Marx on numerous key points—a typical counter-revolutionary job. But if the "evolving" Gates does not finally choose Browder as his specific model (as Browder suggests), he has a considerable group of other dubious characters from which to choose his mentor, including Lovestone, Eastman, Wolfe, Gitlow, Zack, Fast, etc. These renegades from Communism may vary somewhat among themselves: from professional anti-Marxist writers to common stool-pigeons and police informers; but they are one group politically, united in their bitter hatred of the Communist Party, Marxism-Leninism, and socialism—especially the Soviet Union. This is not much of a choice, but Gates is definitely on his way already to finding his place among these elements.

One of Gates' principal purposes in his book is to inflate the punctured myth that Browder, as a broad mass worker, built the Communist Party over the years. He does his best to rehabilitate the discredited Browder. He says, for example (p. 70) that Browder was "far more successful in rooting the Communist Party in American life than any previous leader. . . . As a student of American history, Browder made serious efforts to link the Communist movement to the democratic, revolutionary, labor and liberal traditions of the country. The Party won substantial influence in labor unions numbering more than a million members." The fact is that the broad

base of the Party during its most successful years rested fundamentally upon the working alliance between the Left and Progressives in the trade-union movement. This was the basis of the Party's influence among the "more than a million members" in the CIO, and it was the foundation of every other healthy movement conducted by the Party. Earl Browder had little or nothing to do with the establishment of this basic policy. I must also say a word in opposition to the extravagant effort of Gates to make Browder appear as an effective theoretician and leader in the field of Negro work. This he certainly was not. Perhaps no better estimate of Browder's work among the Negro people is needed than the simple fact that he, as part of his Teheran phantasy, abolished the Marxist movement altogether in the South, on the grounds the Negro people had won their fight.

Inasmuch as Gates is trying insistently to remake Browder into a leader, it is time that our Party began to look a little into his real leadership qualities. For example, few will be surprised at the fact that for many years, along with Comrade Bittelman, Browder was the leading Leftist in our Party. Take in 1929: at that time the Party in general was markedly Leftist, but none was so Left as Browder. Thus, he took special leadership in transforming the Trade Union Educational League into the Trade Union Unity League, which contained the Party's worst blunders in the direction of dual unionism. Or take in 1936 (which was a full year after the famous broad-gauge Seventh Congress of the Comintern was held and the United Front policy adopted): Browder distinguished

himself by making a last ditch fight in the leadership for the Party to embark upon the sectarian policy of launching a labor party in the current national election. This would have been a disastrous mistake. It would have resulted in another skeleton labor party, and as the workers were very powerfully for Roosevelt, also in the isolation of the Communist Party from the masses for an indefinite period. It was only after Browder had been backed into the corner, with him alone supporting his Leftist line, that he finally threw in the sponge and gave up the fight. The Party adopted instead the broad mass policy of giving Roosevelt our support. This was one of the most successful political campaigns ever carried on by the Communist Party. It cemented the Left-Progressive alliance in the CIO, instead of disrupting that alliance as Browder proposed to do. It was a basic factor in creating the strong Left influence in the CIO for the next dozen years.

Gates, and the revisionists who follow him, never cease talking about socialism, as Gates does in his book. Actually, however, their whole movement is directed against socialism in this country and abroad. It is a reflection of the more difficult position in which American imperialism finds itself at the present time. As the monopolists feel the pressure of expanding and growing socialism on a world scale, they make more and more desperate efforts to rally their forces against the common enemy—socialism. This is the basic reason why such revisionist forces as Gates represents take the field against every practical demonstration of Socialism in the world.