

Aptheker Says He Would Debate the SWP on Hungary

CHICAGO, June 18 — Herbert Aptheker, a leading spokesman for the Communist Party, addressed a meeting of about a hundred here tonight on the subject "The Truth About Hungary." He presented a summary of his new book of the same title.

With only half an hour available in the discussion period, there was little time for a full discussion of Aptheker's thesis that the Hungary revolution was imperialist-inspired and organized. However during the discussion, Howard Mayhew, Chicago organizer of the Socialist Workers Party, took the floor to indicate the viewpoint of the SWP and of the Militant that the Hungarian revolution was a progressive movement for workers' democracy and national independence. He then asked Aptheker if he would debate the issue with a spokesman for either the SWP or the Militant. Aptheker replied that he would be willing to accept such a debate.

* * *

DAILY WORKER REVIEW

Aptheker's book and viewpoint is apparently receiving a divided reception within the Communist Party itself. This fact is indicated by the review of the book by Robert Friedman in the June 19 Daily Worker.

Friedman writes, "Aptheker, despite his searching examination of the failings of the Hungarian Communist government, places prime responsibility for the uprising at the door of imperialism.

"I do not believe either this book, or life itself, sustains this judgment. Nor do I believe the evidence bears out his hopeful assertion that the present Kadar government is ending the repressions which Aptheker condemns and which the Hungarian people abhor.

"For this reason, despite much that is thoughtful and illuminating, I do not believe the Truth About Hungary is the full truth about Hungary. . .

"Aptheker sees in Hungary after the storm a government which has learned its lesson from the past. I am not so sanguine. Russian has been restored as a compulsory second language. The right to strike is proscribed by death penalty. The Hungarian people have no more opportunity to recall Premier Janos Kadar by popular referendum at stated intervals than they had to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with Rakosi."

Indicting the Kremlin role in Hungary, Friedman replies to Aptheker that: "The Soviet Union itself bore partial but significant responsibility for the Rakosi-Gero government. Directly, because as an occupying power it, admittedly, outraged the national feelings of a people. . . Indirectly, because the Rakosi-Gero regime was only aping its betters, acting out in miniature the excesses, the obsessive suspicions, the grandiloquent identification of self with state that marked the rule of Joseph Stalin."