

# CPA Discussion Page

Open to All CPA Members—Send Your Contributions to Communist Political Association, 35 E. 12 St., N. Y. C.

## 2 Dangers: Opportunism, Sectarianism

## Browder Line Weakened Labor's Ranks

By SAMUEL SILLEN

We must realize that not one but two errors are possible in estimating the relationships of classes and states today. One is the mistake of exaggerating and distorting the specific features that distinguish this period from previous periods. This is the mistake we are now seeking to correct.

But another mistake is already evident in the discussion—the mistake of denying that there are any new features at all.

Each error, if persisted in, will prove disastrous.

Were we wrong in believing that Teheran and Crimea registered important changes in the world? Not at all.

Undeniably this is the first war in which powerful imperialist elements, ranged against rival imperialisms, were compelled to associate their special interest with the anti-fascist interests of the people as a whole.

This, let us remember, was not the way the Anglo-American imperialists had planned the war. Their original course was charted at Munich. They tried to get back on that course during the "phony" stage of the war and the Finnish-Soviet war.

But Hitler wanted all or nothing; and when he seemed to be coming dangerously close to getting all, his imperialist rivals joined the anti-fascist forces in resisting him. But even then, as the second front struggle showed, the perspective of the capitalist powers was a mutually weakened Germany and USSR.

The failure of this calculation was registered at Teheran.

The war demonstrated that the imperialists cannot assert their anti-Soviet and anti-democratic aims with the relative freedom and maneuverability of 1938-1940. And the victory has by no means increased their freedom. Germany, spearhead of reaction, is reduced; the Soviet Union emerges more powerful than ever; the liberated peoples insist on self-government; new independence forces are in motion; and the strength of the working class and other progressive elements at home has been increased.

Thus, our mistake was not the recognition of new features in the world situation. Our error was the conclusion that the heightened contradictions of imperialism created both the possibility and desirability of fraternal cooperation with the monopolists for peace, democracy, economic progress.

We erected the tactic of association with Big Business for a specific purpose into a new theory of social development. We blindly revised our Marxist-Leninist analysis of capitalism once we forgot the plain fact that the temporary "coincidence of interest" in defeating Germany had within it the irrepressible "conflict of interest" which was bound to assert itself sharply when temporarily overlapping objectives were reached.

We took the new positive features

of the world situation and erected a theory which could only have the effect of undermining these features and throwing us back. That is, we correctly rejoiced at the gains won as a result of (a) struggle, and (b) the weakened position of imperialism on a world scale, and then we proceeded to (a) renounce struggle, and (b) develop a line calling upon the masses to strengthen the position of the imperialists. Far from pressing hard-won advantage, we now relied on those who had supported Munich, Franco, Japan, Finland, etc.

On this point, the Resolution of the National Board lacks precision. In characterizing the situation today as primarily a "regrouping in the ranks of American capital, reacting to the defeat of Germany," the Resolution tends to give comfort to the false view that we were "right" before V-E Day but must change now.

What we are witnessing today is not so much a basic "regrouping" of Big Business circles as a bolder assertion of interest which existed during the war against Germany and very powerfully affected the conduct of the war.

It is misleading to say that the monopolists are "today frightened by the democratic consequences of that victory." They foresaw and feared these consequences all through the war, and they did everything in their power to fight in such a way that the democratic consequences would be limited, easier to crush.

But their power was bounded; and it was more and more restricted as the war went on—witness the shift from Darlan to De Gaulle, from Mikhailovitch to Tito. Churchill is not "regrouping" when he once again assails the Titos and Nennis; he is merely asserting with new boldness the policy that guided him throughout, as witness the Greek and other situations in the very midst of war.

The conception of "regrouping" also blurs our own mistakes during the war. For it appears to justify our failure to react to and sharply criticize the anti-democratic maneuvers of the win-the-war imperialists. It would be instructive, for example, to re-study the strategy of the Italian campaign from this point of view.

While breaking sharply with our errors, we must oppose those who would suddenly have us start thinking about the world as though nothing had happened since 1919 or 1939. I support the general line of the Resolution not only because it recognizes errors but because it refuses to throw out anti-fascist gains won since Munich along with the dirty water of revisionist theory.

Basing ourselves on the working class and the broadest anti-fascist alliance, we must learn to take advantage of temporary, partial "coincidence of interest" with sections of the bourgeoisie as part of the basic struggle to press forward the interest of the people as a whole. Let us fight both an impotent opportunism and a blind sectarianism.

The discussion that we American Communist are entering into should make our organization stronger and more democratic in structure than it has been in the past. This will be so if every member of the CPA joins these discussions in a sober, mature and constructive manner. Differences of opinion among American Marxists does not mean that we are disunited, as the reactionary press will soon howl. It means that we want to correct our mistakes as quickly and effectively as possible.

In my opinion the conclusions arrived at by Earl Browder and accepted by the National Committee last year, greatly weakened the labor movement by causing confusion, perfectly understandable confusion, and even worse, mistrust. The average worker rejected Browder's opportunist ideas and seemed to understand better than he that capitalism is not progressive and that the class struggle will not vanish from the American scene in the postwar period.

In his striving for national unity, Browder did not see that in order to strengthen it, it was essential that each and every reactionary be relentlessly exposed and attacked. Yet, Stettinius and Grew, on their appointments to the State Department were not attacked. The trusts and the cartel systems were not to be attacked too severely. Did national unity require such a policy? Clearly, it did not.

As for my assumption that the labor movements was weakened, I believe it was, because of our failure to provide sufficient impetus and leadership. Because of Browder's line, our hands were tied and we lagged behind labor on many vital issues. Browder's fantastic argument that the capitalists would voluntarily double the workers wages after the war, in order to keep their system going, did not attract very many workers to our ranks, I can assure you.

Even more lamentable are Browder's revisionist ideas about the basic nature of monopoly capitalism. As David Carpenter so ably put it in his letter to the June 10 Worker, "the laws of capitalism continue to operate as long as capitalism exists." Surely, we as Marxists should realize that the progressive days of capitalism are over.

In my humble opinion, I think that the article by Duclos is 100 percent correct from start to finish. Duclos did not overestimate the Teheran Conference, nor did he underestimate its importance. He recognized it for what it was; a diplomatic agreement, but with profound political implications on which anti-fascists of all classes could unite. However, Browder seemed to believe that the majority of monopoly capitalists would abide by the Teheran Concord after the war. As our leading spokesman, it is regrettable that he did not see that they would not follow such a course. At any rate, wishful thinking does not become a Marxist.

In the Worker of June 10, Browder in seeking to justify his position fails to clarify many things. I would like him to answer the 10 assertions made on the same page by Wm. Z. Foster, one by one in a clear concise manner. I hope he will do this soon. If he does do so, he will perhaps see that he may have been mistaken on many points. I believe that the sooner we correct our errors, the better. This state of affairs must be remedied immediately before further damage is done all around.

Our historical mission is to lead the working class, not fall behind it as I honestly think we have done since the Party's dissolution.  
TRIO RUSSO,  
Lawrence, Mass.

## Understanding Our Error Is Only the First Step

From the moment the Duclos article appeared in our press I have been reading and rereading material, arguing, rationalizing, trying to prove to my own satisfaction that the charges of revisionism, tallism, and liquidationism were untrue. I had accepted the position of our National Committee as formulated by Browder in his report of January, 1944. I had accepted without reservation the change from CP to CPA. I taught numerous classes based on the new "creative Marxism." To that extent I accept full responsibility.

I went back to Foundations of Leninism, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, The History of the CPSU, Victory and After, Browder's report of January, 1944, Teheran, Our Path in War and Peace, the theoretical articles of Minor and Gil Green of the last eighteen months, the Duclos article, the Resolution of the National Board, the articles by Foster and Browder in The Worker.

As a result of this self-critical probing I have come to the conclusion that the charges as stated by Duclos are well founded—that the experiences during the war against Nazi Germany and especially since V-E Day underscores the charges.

In a very superficial sense it is true that the entire membership shares responsibility—since all agreed to the new position. But we have to face the fact that many accepted it on faith—not on understanding. It was easy and comfortable to accept uncritically a petit-bourgeois Utopia as a substitute for Marxist understanding and activity. Yes, do nothing that will scare the bourgeoisie. Don't fight them on issues as long as they lead the war against Germany—for we may scare them from support of the war. Wasn't this very much like the Menshevik position on the leading role of the struggle against the Tsar? Is there any

evidence that it was necessary to reject Lenin's formulation as no longer valid?

A question which is being handled very gingerly is why so many who participated in the initial decision eighteen months ago, accepted a non-Marxist analyst and program. Why was the Foster position suppressed? Why wasn't it possible for the membership to examine both sides and then come to a genuine Marxist decision? Was it because the leadership had little confidence in the ability of the rank and file to make a decision? Why did Foster give up the fight and with reservations go along?

The charge of revision of Marxism is well founded in fact. In the name of using Marxism as a "guide" and not as a "dogma"—in the name of "bold creative thinking" we said that since wars no longer were inevitable under capitalism, that therefore Lenin's characterization of Imperialism had to be revised. We were entering a "New Epoch of World Democracy"—a transition period of long dura-

tion—of class peace—of world compromise between socialism and capitalism—of colonial liberation, etc. etc. And so the Marxist-Leninist concept of the State had to be revised.

The question of Socialism was resolved in mystical fashion by pointing to a long comfortable peaceful evolution—possibly without the transitional form of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

The National Question? Colonies would get their independence since the imperialist bourgeoisie of necessity could no longer profitably exploit them in the old way—that the changed situation as a result of the new level of productive forces plus an upsurge of the people's movements in the struggle against the Nazis was the guarantee that the bourgeoisie who were anti-German were also anti-fascist—that they could be depended on to cooperate in rooting out reaction and backwardness the world over—that the imperialist bourgeoisie would adopt a new policy akin to the revolutionary progres-

sive role of the pre-monopolist bourgeoisie of England, America, and France in the 17th and 18th centuries when they took the lead in the founding of the nation.

Is it enough to say that a mistake was made—and then proceed without fundamental changes. Our whole leadership is up for evaluation by itself and the membership. A serious party of the working class cannot afford the luxury of regarding the admission of a basically wrong policy to be more than the initial step of a hard struggle to rout out opportunism and revisionism.

Certainly the present situation demonstrates that we have not matured as a Marxist organization—that without a struggle for correct theory we cannot expect to carry out our practical tasks as the vanguard of the American working class in the coming period of "crises and storms." Our mistakes stem from a general contempt for theory—an overemphasis on the practical tasks of the moment with lip service to the theory involved.  
M. SHIELDS, Flushing, N. Y.

## Illinois-Indiana District Backs Board Resolution

The Illinois-Indiana District Committee, CIA, meeting on June 10, endorses the Draft Resolution of the National Board on "The Present Situation and the Next Tasks."

We urge our membership to engage in the freest and fullest participation in the discussion on the Resolution. And we feel confident that as a result of thorough discussion, the policies and tasks set forth in the Draft Resolution will be understood and endorsed by our membership in this district.

In exposing the opportunist and revisionist errors to which Comrade Browder still adheres, and in bringing us back to the theory and practice of Marxism and Leninism, our National Board through the leadership of Comrade Foster, is making it possible for the Communists to

pursue a correct policy and to strengthen their ties with the masses of workers and the progressive movement.

The Draft Resolution of the National Board gives us a correct appraisal of the present international and national situation and the relation of class forces. It provides the basis for the unity of the American people and particularly for the mobilization of the working class to realize the democratic goals of Teheran and Yalta.

The Communists, as a part of the working class, on the basis of the program outlined in the Resolution, can inspire and unite the broad movement of workers, farmers, professionals, small business men and all those groups who supported the anti-Axis policies of Roosevelt. This anti-fascist coalition can exert its influence on the course of events,

for victory over Japanese imperialism, for the complete destruction of fascism everywhere, for a durable peace, for advancing the economic welfare of the people and for the extension of democracy.

In the spirit of self-criticism we must recognize our mistakes and the necessity of involving our membership more fully in the formulation of our policies. We welcome the Marxist opinions expressed in the article by Comrade Duclos which will enrich our discussion and make us aware of the serious dangers inherent in deviations from Marxism.

Following this discussion, we will emerge more united, more deeply rooted among the working class, and firm adherents of the science of Marxism-Leninism. [This resolution carried unanimously with one abstention, several absent.]