

CPA Discussion Page

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Confusion in the Draft Resolution

By JAMES S. ALLEN

The resolution of the National Board carries over some of the opportunist positions characteristic of the previous policy, thus impeding a resolute and consistent struggle against opportunism. On a number of ques-

tions the resolution repudiates the past policy. But especially in the characterization of the present situation, it still reflects the incorrect method of approach and thinking for which we have been justly criticized by Comrade Duclos.

This is to be seen first of all in the way the resolution (Sections 2 and 3) attempts to place the present political situation in the United States and the role of our country in world affairs. It takes as a starting point the real or imagined regroupings within the bourgeoisie, and from this attempt to explain the "shift" in American policy. Differences of policy and tactic which exist even among the big capitalists are in many cases important, sometimes even extremely important, and we cannot remain indifferent to them.

But to start from such differences, instead of from the basic class relationships in the present-day world, is precisely the mistake made by Browder and the party in the very, very recent past. In the resolution it leads to the utmost confusion on the decisive question before us.

The National Board falls into this mistake because instead of presenting a basic critique of its own position up to the time of the Duclos letter it attempts to show that after the defeat of Hitler Germany a "regrouping" took place in the ranks of the American capitalists, which necessitates a new approach by the Communists. This is an indirect justification of the previous position, reflected also in the inadequate and partial repudiation of opportunist mistakes in Part II of the resolution.

As a result, it is impossible from the resolution to obtain a clear concept of the present position of the United States. After stating that "the most aggressive circles of American imperialism" are out for world domination, the resolution says that these pro-fascist circles are now joined, after the defeat of Germany, by "important groupings of American capital, which were opposed" to German imperialist world domination." In other words, according to the National Board, the pro-Roosevelt sectors are "joining hands" with the pro-fascist (NAM) sectors, on a program of reaction, fascism and aggression.

Thus, a sudden "regrouping" has taken place, which, according to the explanations of the resolution, accounts for the recent actions of the State Department in Europe, China and at San Francisco, for the renewed anti-Soviet campaigns and for the resurgence of anti-labor and anti-democratic currents within the country. The one-sided, mechanical and abstract nature of this approach is shown by the fact that it fails to explain entirely the past actions of the State Department or the Administration, even before our entry into the war (Spain, appeasement of Japan, Finland, etc.), not to speak of a whole chain of policies even before the end of the German war, such as the second front, Darian, Mikhailovitch, Franco, China, Chapultepec, etc. Nor does this explain

various aspects of the wartime domestic policy of the Administration, supported by the "pro-Roosevelt capitalists" who are now "joining hands" with the NAM, such as leniency towards the Fifth Column, the favored position of the monopolies in the war economy and in the Administration, the stubborn opposition to revising upward the Little Steel Formula, the expansionist drive for world markets started in the midst of the war, the resistance to continuation of government control after the war, etc.

Such an explanation involves a severe self-criticism of the CPA position on a whole series of issues, the concrete expression of the revisionism and opportunism which was built up into a whole system of theory and practice.

But the confusion is especially harmful in the present situation. After having told us that the capitalists are now "regrouped" on the basis of a pro-fascist program, the resolution calls for the "broadest national coalition of all anti-fascist and democratic forces, including all supporters of Roosevelt's anti-Axis policies." We are also called upon to "resolutely support every effort of the Truman Administration to carry forward Roosevelt's program." How can the supporters of "Roosevelt's anti-Axis policies" who have now joined hands with the NAM, be included in an anti-fascist coalition? And which group of the capitalists does the Truman Administration now represent, after the "regrouping" and "joining hands"?

The inconsistency and confusion of the whole position—which arise from concessions to opportunism—is further revealed by the perspective of the resolution "to influence the course of the nation in a consistently progressive direction," or, as put in another section, "to enable our country to play a progressive role in world affairs in accord with the true national interests of the American people."

If this is true, as the resolution holds, that the capitalists are now "regrouped" as a whole, that they have embarked on a program of reaction and fascism, that they have already made their decision for a fascist way out of the post-war political and economic crisis, then clearly it is already impossible for the country to play a "progressive role," let alone act in a "consistently progressive direction." In order to bring about such a state of affairs it would be necessary for the "labor-democratic coalition" to take over power against the bourgeoisie, now "regrouped" as a whole. Does anyone believe that this can be seriously posed as the task of the day?

Thus, the resolution is full of inconsistencies, contradictions and confusion, because it starts out by speculating about "regroupings of capital," instead of first reevaluating, in the light of our previously erroneous position now made apparent, the actual wartime role of the United States in the anti-Hitler coalition, and, secondly, the changes in the world position of the United States (not of this or that group of the bourgeoisie) brought about by the war.

On the one hand, the resolution places the matter as if fascism had already won over the bourgeoisie, on the other, it continues to spread the illusion that our country, as at present constituted, can act in a "consistently progressive direction." This results in skipping a whole stage during which the labor and democratic forces can mobilize the people against the reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie, thus playing their role in preventing fascism. It results also in weakening and disarming the working class and anti-fascist forces by spreading illusions about the "progressive" character of American imperialism.

The important starting point for us in the present situation, is not the real or imagined shift of "groupings" among the American capitalists. It is that the activation of the United States as a world power today, in the midst of the social changes proceeding in Europe as an outcome of the liberation war and of the new upsurge in the colonial liberation movement, is becoming the biggest obstacle to the anti-fascist and democratic movements on a world scale.

This arises from the fact that the United States emerges from the war by far the most powerful imperialist power, for the first time in its history possessing military might corresponding to its economic power. This must be recognized as the starting point of any analysis, and it involves a complete rejection of Browder's position which is premised upon the false conception that American imperialism can play a "progressive" role now or in the future. To recognize this does not mean to proclaim the "inevitability" of American world domination, nor to imply that the development in that direction will not meet with serious setbacks. Such a position would be equally false, for it would fail to recognize the inner contradictions of American monopoly-capitalism (the approaching post-war economic crisis, the resistance of the workers and anti-fascists to reaction, etc.) and the opposition aroused abroad to American expansionism (from imperialist rivals, from liberated Europe, from the colonial sectors, etc.).

But it is necessary to recognize that the participation in world affairs of the United States—now, not in a future period when another class relationship may prevail in the United States is in a reactionary direction. That is the real meaning of the Duclos article. And the ease with which Browder's position took hold among us is in itself an important indication of how far the big capitalists had already gone in pulling wool over the eyes of the workers, in convincing even the Communists of their democratic and progressive intentions.

In my opinion, the resolution must be viewed as a transition document, serving temporarily as a basis for discussion. It cannot be considered a satisfactory basis for a correct statement of Party position. There must be a searching analysis of our past mistakes, collectively and individually, and in the first place by the signers of the resolution, who owe the entire membership a self-critical, Marxist analysis of their own mistakes.

We Must Avoid the Danger Of Error of Sectarianism

I agree with Duclos and the National Board that serious revisionist errors have been made, and a change of policy is needed, most definitely. At the same time, I want to point out the possibility of a dangerous new error—that of sectarianism.

Human beings tend to go from one extreme to the other extreme. In this change of policy, there is a high probability that the CPA will overshoot its mark a little and become somewhat sectarian for a while; then, after a few months, readjust to a better-balanced position. But our organization is fairly mature today—isn't it possible for us to foresee such a danger and avoid this possible excess? I think it is. It's not so dramatic, not so satisfying, to hold back just enough to land in the right spot, and it takes patience—but it's necessary. We are not playing marbles—we're trying to help humanity at a time of humanity's greatest crisis.

Sectarianism is, basically, oversimplifying. Life, society, politics are not simple—they are highly complicated. Let us look back to the '20s, when our organization was highly sectarian—we often got too far ahead of our fellow-Americans (the reverse extreme of our tall position today), we didn't bother to gauge their state of mind much, but simply pushed ready-made, fully-developed concepts on them mechanically, and in a mysterious jargon full of long words. This immature, inflexible approach is not something we want to get into again in our effort to correct our recent mistakes.

In line with this, we must remember clearly that the war is not over, the no-strike policy must continue for the duration, and, in my opinion, we must try to keep and extend such national unity as helps win the war. This is a complicated problem today, with the European phase of the war won, and the Pacific phase not yet won. It will mean constant day-by-day adjustments to the specific situation of the moment—adjustments which will achieve the best balance possible between keeping up war production for the workers in the army and preventing abuse of the workers at home. A sectarian approach, an infantile leftism, would run counter to the mature flexibility that's needed.

One other thought: In trying to evaluate our National Committee, I think we should consider the possibility that all its members who admit sincerely to the collective mistakes may be actually twice, as valuable today, precisely because they have made a bad error and corrected it. They have learned something they will never forget; they will be doubly on guard against such errors for the rest of their lives. Vigilance we must always have; however, to attain vigilance we must use our heads, not just our emotions.

A final word: The Daily News, Hearst, the NAM and all the rest of the enemy would like to get their fascist crowbars into the CPA and pry it into fragments. Don't give them an opening.

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Says Dissolution Was Unnecessary and Harmful

I firmly hold that the dissolution of our Party did not contribute to the re-election of President Roosevelt. My conclusion is based on this: The capitalists know that the Communists are loyal to the working class and that they would continue to be loyal to their class and nation regardless of what name they carried. They know, too, that loyalty to the interests of the working class and the nation (which are synonymous) is something the capitalist cannot be accused of. Hence the capitalists cannot take our declaration, no matter how charmingly formulated, seriously. Their attitude can only be: Are you kidding? Well, we can't kid them; why should we kid ourselves?

2. Capitalist "intelligence." Where was the "intelligence" of the German ruling class when they started this war which brought their ruin? And the "intelligence" of the Italian upper crust? What happened to the "intelligence" of the 'Sons of Heaven' when they made their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor?

It wasn't "intelligence," after spilling so much blood to smash fascism, to admit fascist Argentina to the San Francisco Conference, yet what happened to the capitalists' "intelligence" in this case? Or in the case of the British and American refusal to let go the fascist Butcher Franco from their embrace?

But didn't the American capitalists wage war against the German capitalists who supported fascism? Sure they did. But they did this only because the German ruling class wanted to wield the Big Stick over the world. They would not be averse to doing that themselves, however. (We need not quibble about that.)

And on a smaller scale, does every boss who starts a war against a union win? Aren't they often ruined in the enterprise? Then what happens to the wonderful factor of "intelligence" in all these cases?

We must base our policy on the

interests of the working class and the nation, completely independent of any reliance on any hope that the capitalists will make it easy for us because, according to our analysis, it is to their interest to do so. We must not for one moment depend on their "intelligence" that they "may" do the right thing, but act with relentless persistence to make sure that they will pursue the correct course.

Nor should we allow ourselves to become deluded if things go right for a while. A horse pulling a wagon along a good road at a considerable speed will find that even if it relaxes its effort for a moment, the wagon will roll on. But let the horse, because of this, stop pulling, and the wagon will suddenly stop dead altogether.

3. The dissolution of the Party was not only unnecessary, but it was harmful. It was more than just the change of a name. Coming as it did after our incorrect evaluation of Teheran, it symbolized the abandonment of the independent role of the working class and the substitution thereof of the sweet but fatal dream of peaceful collaboration with capitalism into the far postwar future. As a symbol of the complete righting of our course, therefore, with no trace of our past weakness left, I suggest, that the Party be reconstituted again. This will not hurt our efforts for unity. Those who will want to work with us in a unity of effort will do so on the basis of correct and mutually acceptable policy, not a name.

4. More emphasis should be made in the National Board resolution on Socialism as the ultimate goal of the working class.

5. It is difficult to read Bob Minor's articles until he has satisfactorily purged himself (publicly) of his post-Teheran offensive writings.

6. I am distressed at the attitude of Comrade Browder.

A. S.

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