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Los Angeles, Calif.

Dec. 12, 1973.

Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

I have the letter of the Political Committee dated Dec. 6, 1973, signed by Doug Jenness, replying to my letter of Oct. 31, 1973. The arguments made therein are so wrong and open the door to so many harmful effects for our party that I am forced to once again take up this question, I hope for the last time. In addition, I must call attention to what are obviously dubious methods of exchanging polemics. If we are going to discuss or debate a question, it serves party interests best to describe the position with which one is in disagreement accurately and without implying ulterior motives for which there is not a scintilla of evidence.

I shall take up a few points on the level of principle and tactics, both of which are involved in this discussion. Both require further explanation.

Your response to my criticism of the formulation that the Communist Party-USA is part of "the socialist movement" is that this "is not a good formulation." I believe that it is more than that; I think it represents a complete misunderstanding of our estimation of the CP and opens the door to principled errors.

But before going into that I must respond to some other questions raised in your letter. You say, "However, if you are suggesting that the Stalinists are no longer a petty-bourgeois tendency within the workers movement, then we disagree." (your emphasis) I do not see how you could possibly draw such a conclusion, if you read my letter of Oct. 31.

I wrote about the CP, "...it is a party functioning within the working class." And further, I stated in the same letter, "The Communist parties are working class organizations..."

This should be sufficient to indicate that I am not proposing any changes in our fundamental appraisal of the class character of the CP. Yet in your letter you once again cast doubts upon my views in this respect by stating that the recent Stalinist betrayal in Chile is not qualitatively new. This implies that perhaps I think this new betrayal calls for a change in our fundamental position. But I made no such proposal; I reaffirmed our traditional position. I do not want to characterize this kind of polemic at this time.

However, I would like to know if the Political Committee is of the opinion that I am trying to change our position on the CP-USA. I think it far more likely that those who place the Communist Party in some undefined "socialist movement" are trying to change our position and your strictures should be addressed to them.

Your letter says you are not clear about my characterization of the CP as a party of the anti-socialist movement. I did not spell this out as I took it for granted that anyone in our party who is familiar with the history of Stalinism and the CP-USA knows whether this organization is part of a "socialist movement" or an anti-socialist movement. I refer you to the voluminous works of Leon Trotsky, James P. Cannon and many other Trotskyists, and, if you will permit, to the series of articles I wrote for Intercontinental Press entitled "Fifty Years of Stalinist Treachery."

In the fourth article of this series, published in the Oct. 8, 1973, edition, I wrote, "In order to survive, the capitalist class must have the help of strong currents among the workers and peasants that support its hold on state power. This is supplied by world Stalinism and reformist socialism.

"The Stalinist contingent is the more important part of this support, since it exploits connections to countries that have had revolutions. In this way it fools many well-intentioned but poorly informed people. For example, the loss of thousands of youth who were miseducated and then demoralized by Stalinism in past decades in the United States stands as a historical crime of enormous magnitude.

"The continued existence of Stalinism is indispensable to capitalism. As soon as enough people realize that Stalinism is in the service of capitalism, the death knell will sound for both."

This excerpt from my article merely repeats what all of us have said many times. This is what I mean when I say that Communist parties are part of the anti-socialist movement. Up to now, no one has protested anything in the articles I wrote on Stalinist treachery. If you do not agree with the above, I certainly want to know about it.

A careful reader of both The Militant and Intercontinental Press, after reading the above and the article from Pittsburgh that places the CP-USA in the "socialist movement" would certainly be mystified. I think the Political Committee should take a stand on where the CP is to be found, either in the "socialist movement" or the anti-socialist movement. It cannot be in both places at the same time.

When I wrote my letter to the Political Committee on Oct. 31st I was under the impression that the formulation "a party in the socialist movement," as a description of the CP-USA, was only an episodic but important mistake caused mainly by looking for reasons to give them critical support. After I mailed my letter additional information that I did not have at the time came to my attention.

I sent for and received a copy of "An Open Letter to the Communist Party from Norman Oliver, Socialist Workers Party Candidate for Mayor of New York." Referring to the three candidates of the CP that the SWP supported critically, this letter states, "We support Gomez, Henning and Steyens because they are running against the capitalist candidates. Voters in these races will have a choice between casting a ballot for the capitalists or for candidates from a party in the socialist movement." (emphasis added) The disease of seeing a "socialist movement" and the Stalinists ensconced comfortably within it seemed to be spreading.

Now we have not only the Pittsburgh Open Letter but also the New York. Both use the same formulation, that is, that the CP-USA is a part of a "socialist movement." If this were all, perhaps the Political Committee would conclude that I am making too much of a stir over this.

However, after mailing my letter on Oct. 31st I came across an educational bulletin turned out by the Young Socialist Alliance in August 1967, that is, more than six years ago. I had not previously read this bulletin. It contains two reports and summaries made in July 1966 to the New York membership of the SWP in connection with elections to be held the following November. One report and summary, made by Barry Sheppard, explains why the New York SWP executive committee proposes giving critical support to a prominent CP figure, Herbert Aptheker, running for representative to congress on a "Peace and Freedom" ticket. The other report and summary, by Jack Barnes, explains why it is proposed not to give critical support to several other candidates, non-CPers, running for various offices. The latter report does not concern us.

Comrade Sheppard, in one part of his report, states, "The Communist Party is our major opponent in the socialist movement." (emphasis added) The disease is spreading! Here it is again! But that is not all.

Later in his report, Comrade Sheppard turns to what I have characterized as horse-trading, or rather attempts in that direction. After saying that we would put the CP on the spot by demanding critical support from them for our candidates, including one for governor, in exchange for our support to Aptheker, Comrade Sheppard goes on to state, "If they should support us that would be a major victory internationally. Think of the leverage it would give in countries where there are mass CP's as in France and Italy if Trotskyists there could say that the American Communist Party says that you should vote for the Trotskyist SWP." Comrade Sheppard later softened this perspective by saying that we should not expect this but he also held that it is possible.

From these examples it becomes clearer that putting the CP-USA in the "socialist movement" and trying to do some horse-trading on candidates with them have a history in our movement, unfortunately.

Here again, the candidacy of Aptheker, a widely known Stalinist writer and leading spokesperson for the CP for House of Representatives is used as a screen to conceal the real CP policy which was and is to support capitalist candidates for important offices. The CP did not run a candidate for governor in that election as we did.

In Boston, Where our branch extended critical support to a candidate of the YWLL in the recent elections, an Open Letter issued by our branch stated, "We will continue to urge the people of Boston to vote for you for School Committee and ask you to support my campaign for City Council." This was signed by SWP candidate John E. Powers, Jr. Comrade Powers did not credit the YWLL or the CP with being members in good standing in the "socialist movement," but did attempt some horse-trading, which must have failed as nothing that I know of was reported in our press.

Once again all these attempts failed to jolt the Stalinists in France and Italy who survived our election campaign unscathed. I suggest that some other ways should be found to influence French and Italian Stalinists; the methods used so far that I have mentioned above indicate there is something lacking. If we exposed the true nature of Stalinist electoral politics instead of what each instance of critical support to the CP does, perhaps we can jolt the American CP, if not those of France and Italy.

The Political Committee must decide just where it places the CP, in a "socialist movement" or, as we have for years, in an anti-socialist coalition based upon class collaboration. The CP cannot occupy both places at the same time.

Although you admit that the results of giving critical support have been "relatively modest," in another place in your letter you refer to anticipating "...that there will be more, rather than fewer, opportunities to successfully apply our tactic of critical support to CP candidates." (emphasis added) You can't have it both ways. If the results have been "relatively modest," which is something of an understatement, then it is inappropriate to speak of successful applications.

You write that our aim is to "...break a few members away or discourage others from joining." Why do we have to legitimize CP electoral politics in order to obtain such meaningless results? Why can't we "break a few members away" without underwriting Stalinist politics? You do not say.

By giving critical support to CP candidates, who are in reality only acting as screens to conceal their class collaboration politics, your policy aids the CP in this deception. It is logically impossible to give

critical support to a CPer and at the same time explain the nature of the CP campaign and its main purpose which is to ward off criticism of class collaboration politics from their members and supporters. That is why explanations of CP electoral policy, insofar as it is represented in an occasional "independent" candidacy, is largely missing from our propaganda. Your policy has succeeded only in whitewashing the "independence" of CP electoral politics.

As a matter of fact, if Stalinist policy is understood for what it is, it would exclude from the very start the idea of giving them any critical support because it is not independent in the first place. It is only designed to fool the unsophisticated and it is a disgrace to assist the Stalinist in this kind of venture.

This applies with equal force to their candidate for mayor in New York. The CP could afford the luxury of appearing to contest the mayoralty because everyone knew the Democrats could not lose. Where there is a possibility that a CP candidate would take enough votes to effect the outcome of an election from a capitalist candidate favored by the Stalinists over another candidate, the CP does not contest this office.

This is what happened in Los Angeles last spring when the CP ran a fake campaign for controller but did not enter a mayoral candidate against the Black Democrat and ex-cop Tom Bradley. They openly supported Bradley. We were unable to explain these shenanigans because the branch gave critical support to the CP candidate for controller. What a price to pay!

I propose that we reverse the policy of legitimizing fraudulent Communist Party candidates and instead expose the Stalinist real policy.

You refer to the article in The Militant of Nov. 23, 1973, published after I had written my letter to you. Permit me to add an additional point. The article states, "...a vote for its (CP) candidates would be seen as a vote against the capitalist parties." This is said in reference to explaining why the SWP urged voters to cast their ballots for the three CP candidates running independently. Just who would "see" these candidacies in this way is not explained. However, only the most naive people are taken in by the kind of candidates the CP is offering to which the SWP has given critical support.



The article would have been more accurate and effective if it had explained that the CP fakers run some candidates for relatively unimportant offices as a screen for supporting the main candidates of capitalist parties. This is what the article should have explained instead of complimenting the CP for running independent candidates. This is an example of how an incorrect policy leads, unwittingly I hope, to making it appear that we approve of Stalinist chicanery and are taken in by them.

Your attempt to bolster your position by using the example of Trotsky's proposal to give critical support to Earl Browder, CP presidential candidate in 1940, omits what I wrote on that point in my letter, while at the same time tossing out more hints that maybe I am trying to smuggle in a change in our position on Stalinism.

You have forgotten a few things. First, the Browder candidacy was not a screen for supporting a capitalist candidate because the CP disapproved all capitalists in the race. Second, the CP was a large party and had mass influence at that time. Third, the SWP did not agree with Trotsky on his proposal. I think the Old Man was wrong on this point and I frankly said so in my letter. If you now think he was correct, you should say so.

My letter pointed to the fact that in principle it was proper for Trotsky to make his proposal. The SWP leaders thought it was not correct tactically. That is a good deal more than can be said for the policy of giving critical support to CP candidates who are running for the sole purpose of pulling the wool over the eyes of their members and followers.

You have also forgotten that we gained no recruits to speak of from the Stalin-Hitler pact and other crimes you list as preceding Trotsky's proposal. The Stalin-Hitler pact was signed in 1939, in the year prior to the presidential election. If we got nothing out of that, the prospects for recruitment as a result of giving critical support to Browder became very dim.

Your letter did not respond directly to my request that a discussion be started within the National

Committee on these disputed points. However, distributing the correspondence to NC members does this in an informal way and is satisfactory to me. I request that this letter be distributed in a similar way.

Comradely,

*Milt*

Milton Alvin.