

CPA Discussion Page

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

Urges Nat'l Board Sharpen Self-Criticism

By MAX BEDACHT.

For the first time in altogether too many years the current discussions call on our comrades for an exercise in collective thinking. This promises well for the future. A Marxist organization keeps alive

and develops strength of understanding and of action by collective examination and consequent collective understanding of new social problems and phenomena. After all, the actual influencing and leading of the people must be done by thousands of individual party members. They must do it in their unions, in their neighborhoods and in their neighborhood organizations. There these comrades must try to influence and to lead the people. If they do not learn how to apply their own Marxist judgment to the numerous small and big problems arising daily in their work, then they cannot lead. Their own capacity of analysis and judgment is the instrument without which a policy-making party can ever effectively influence the policy-applying masses.

I believe that on the whole the resolution of the National Board is correct. It seems to me, however, that it needs some strengthening. Especially its self-critical parts need strengthening. Without that, the major issue remains unclear. That major issue is not whether cooperation with the bourgeoisie is, under all conditions unpermissible; the issue rather is, whether any conditions permit us to abandon leadership of the working class to the bourgeoisie.

It seems to me that the reformist character of our recent approach was already evident in 1939 and 1940. At that time our Party was blinded to the element of people's interest in the war against German fascism. True, in those days the war was still an imperialist war. However, even then the threat of a political domination of the peoples of the world by fascism aroused the masses everywhere. This was a political factor to be taken into

consideration in the judgment of our position toward the war.

Our Party did not recognize that factor. If it did, it did not permit it to influence its judgment or its policy. That was an un-Marxian error.

Had we not made that error, we would not have had a purely negative attitude toward the war. Instead, we should have explained the people's interest in it. If we had done that, we would have worked for, and would have found no difficulty in explaining, the final transformation of the imperialist war into a people's war in June, 1941. As it was we did not explain it at all. We only asserted it. And while we asserted it we repeated our previous mistake, only this time we turned it from an un-Marxian into an anti-Marxian mistake. While before we had failed to see any involvement of people's interest in the particular imperialist war, afterwards we completely failed to see the still existing large involvement of imperialist interests in the people's war. This mistake liquidated our function as a leader of the working people. How could it do that?

The peoples interests in the war could be served only to the extent in which they themselves guarded and defended these interests. That required a leadership which had no other purpose but that of defending the people's interests. The main responsibility for such a leadership rested with us, the Communists.

Instead, we got involved in a theory of a mysterious merger of the interests of imperialism and of the people. Paralyzed by that theory, we left the representation of the people's interests in the hands of big capital. When doubts were voiced about the possibilities of an unqualified identity of interests of

imperialism and the people, we were even told that imperialism was dead.

This is new theory of the identity of imperialism's and the people's interest left us practically unprepared for the political offensives of imperialism after V-E Day.

Our correct policy for a people's unity for the sake of a people's victory would have been immeasurably more effective if within that unity we Communists would have remained leading spokesmen and defenders of the specific working people's interests.

In our sectarian days (and they are not so far behind us) we paid little if any attention to strategy and tactics. We operated with abstract theoretical formulae. An example will illustrate the point.

We had correctly learned that nationalism is both a product and an instrument of capitalism. We had learned from experience that nationalist concepts were retarding and even preventing a development of class consciousness among the workers. But, instead of working among them so that we could develop some class consciousness in them, we figuratively slapped the faces of the masses who were under the spell of nationalist concepts.

When we finally changed our policies, we fell into an opposite error. Before, we refused to embrace people because of their nationalist concepts; now we embrace not only the nationalists but also their nationalist concepts. While erstwhile we had reduced correct theoretical formulae into wrong instruments of tactics, now we changed correct tactical methods into wrong theoretical formulae. While before we had made un-Marxian mistakes, afterwards we made anti-Marxian ones.

Whenever one pointed to the un-Marxian character of this new theoretical approach, one was met invariably with a quotation from a

document, a speech or an action by the CPSU, or one of its leaders.

To those quoting such documents or actions it never occurred that the CPSU is a party in power, while the CPUSA is a party struggling for power. They never recognized the difference between actions of the CPSU, ruling a country whose people for more than 25 years have had an intensive socialist education, and actions of the CPUSA which is a struggling minority in a country whose people are dominated by a century of most intensive capitalist education. Since they couldn't see the differences they were also blind to the obvious fact that what is effective Marxist policy and action when applied by the CPSU in the Soviet Union, may be ineffective and utterly non-Marxian if applied by the CPSU in America.

One more word about the change of the name of the Party. I believe that the change was wrong. However, if it had only been a change in name and had not been accompanied by the abandonment of the function of independent leadership of the working class, it would hardly inspired Comrade Duclos to his blast. Since it was accompanied by that change in principle, the change in name also became a matter of principle.

I do not think that a reversal of that change is necessarily a burning issue at this moment. However, if the CPA will again perform the functions of independent political leadership it will have to take on again the form and substance of a political party. In that case there is every reason again to call it a Communist Party.

Coming Sunday

An article by William Z. Foster, based on his report to the National Committee of the CPA.

Seek Clearer Objectives in Policy Draft

Last night the Squirrel Hill group of the East Liberty Club in Pittsburgh met to discuss the resolution, and to authorize the following memorandum of our discussion to be submitted.

1. Fourteen members were present, and only one felt that the position of our organization during the past 18 months was correct and was a necessity because of the critical war and election situation.

2. It was unanimously agreed that entirely too much blame is attached to Browder in the various letters and criticisms which have been submitted, particularly by leading comrades. We feel that neither (1) the entire national committee agreed with Browder's analysis and proposal, except Foster, in which case the policy was not that of Browder but of our entire leadership who have just as much responsibility for it as Browder; or (2) that Browder's proposals were accepted by the national committee without sufficient discussion or analysis, accepted because of the admiration and devotion to Browder as our leading Marxist. In this latter event, the entire national committee bears a very great responsibility for adopting a proposal marking a change in our policy without sufficient study and analysis. In either event, we feel it is wrong to say Browder did this, or Browder proposed that, but we should say "we did this" and "our policy was a mistake."

3. The resolution of the national committee does not clearly state our ultimate goal of socialism and our aim to educate the American people as to the advantages of a Socialist society. We feel this is a weakness.

4. We feel the mere mention in the resolution as to the dissolution of the Communist Party is insufficient. We believe that the C. P. should be reconstituted at an appropriate time, by convention or otherwise, and that the resolution should declare this to be an objective.

5. The resolution is too vague on the demands of veterans, particularly since there is already evidence of a conflict between the labor unions and the veterans on jobs. We believe some statement of policy along this line is in order.

6. What about the youth movement? It was pointed out that we liquidated the YCL and we now have no Communist youth movement which was such a source of material for leadership and action in prior years. It is apparent that the AYD is not an adequate answer to an organization for the youth. May we have some statement of policy on organizing the youth in our ranks and bringing to the youth of our country, particularly the young veterans, our program and aims? S. STRAUSS, Pittsburgh.

Wants Revisionism Speedily Overcome

The concept of the "intelligence" of the capitalist class, or any section of it, is an un-Marxian concept. The actions of the capitalists can at many times be described as intelligent, but the working class only finds the opportunity to do so when there is a coincidence of interest with them. It is impossible for the capitalist class to be "intelligent" enough to preserve the capitalist system forever, and this is not because the capitalists are stupid, but because the possibility is excluded by the laws of motion of society, which they cannot change, no matter how much they will it.

What is the basis of the compromises that the working class makes with other classes or sections of them, the compromises of the kind Lenin fought for? The basis is the coincidence of immediate interest, including the fact that the alliance can sometimes last a long time, but during the entire time there must at any particular moment always also remain an immediate interest between the classes involved. Earl Browder's revisionist errors are based on overlooking this basic principle.

Lenin did not overlook this principle, and therefore did not find it worthwhile to attempt to hide or cloak the aims of the working class from other classes, or vice versa. Instead he clearly and objectively explained all the interests involved and on that basis gave the Party the ability to mobilize the working class, and thus the working class the ability to mobilize other classes

through realizing the coincident interests involved in the given situations.

How does one account for the fact that certain red-baiting elements sometimes quite suddenly give up their red-baiting? Have they been persuaded to be "better," or has a new situation made their red-baiting a hindrance to the pursuance of their own interests? Here it is valid to note, from an opposite approach, that all the will and persuasion of the American Fascists did not succeed in putting the United States into the war on the side of Nazi Germany.

Browder's plea on the question of time reveals the revisionist essence of his argument. Time, evidently, to convince the American bourgeoisie to accept the path of American-Soviet cooperation. If time were the question, there could be some cause to despair. What is at stake is a correct Marxist-Leninist policy, which, of course, can never be arrived at too early. What is needed, as far as time is concerned, is the maximum speed in correcting the revisionist errors.

What is needed is to find the correct coincidence of interest between the working class, middle classes and including some sections of the capitalist class, which will mobilize the national democratic front against the predatory imperialist path of development which monopoly capital will and must attempt to find. This is not to say that it will always succeed, or even partially succeed in some situations.

The revisionist approach of at-

tempting to find something in common with any section of the capitalist class that the working class actually does not have in common with it, only cuts down rapidly the possible area of agreement and therefore defeats the possibility of carrying out the Teheran and Yalta agreements.

Stalin signed the Teheran agreement and spoke for it, and Churchill did the same, but it is not correct to assume that Stalin spoke for Churchill, and recent events have more than proved the futility of this approach. Stalin most certainly did mean what he said in support of the Teheran agreement, but it must also be remembered that the Fascist invaders could not have been driven from Soviet soil and brought to their knees in Berlin without the might and sacrifice of the Soviet Union. Spokesmen in the Soviet Union have on more than one occasion pointed out the breaches in the coalition approach to problems, and they were not afraid of disillusioning Churchill in the process. This objective approach instead mobilized the anti-fascist forces and again widened the area of agreement with Churchill, instead of narrowing it.

Compromises between classes must have a basis in objective reality, and if this is lacking, no amount of wishing or working for them will bear any fruit for the best interests of the working class, of peace, of progress and jobs, or the establishment of socialism. What can be done is to improve the conditions for valuable compromises, and basic

in this improvement is the arming of the working class with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, from which flows the building of the Communist vanguard and the unification of the working class.

Undoubtedly, the more carefully a revisionist theory is formulated the more palatable it may be made, but a theory which is sound and based on reality can be expressed in simple and less carefully formulated terms also. This will be so if the masses are to seize the theory and carry it into action. It is here that unusual difficulties were found in the interpretation of the political line since January, 1944, in political and educational work. Because the theory contained revisionist errors the inevitable result was that many interpretations were found and made. This situation hampered the forging of the strongest possible unity of the Communist organization and of the working class.

I wish to express my support of the resolution of the National Board and its course of action in dealing with a serious problem of our movement. Finding the correct Marxist-Leninist path has never yet been a smooth and easy path at any time, anywhere, and there is no good reason why the development in our country should be an exception. We are on the path of the correction of our errors, which is the path to a surer realization of the immediate interests of labor and the nation and the ultimate goal of socialism also. BARBARA HARTLE, Seattle, Wash.

