

CPA Discussion Page

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

Examines Source of Right Deviation

In critically examining the causes for the development of right opportunism in the American Communist movement, some comrades have expressed the opinion that the primary reason was the growth of bureau-

cracy in our organization. It is incorrect, in my opinion, to place this as the basic source of the revisionism which has occurred. By this, I do not mean to minimize the role that bureaucracy has played, in stifling the voices of those who felt errors were being made, in developing uncritical habits of thought with regard to the line put forward by leading bodies, in leading to abandonment of the systematic practice of self-criticism, and in making us unreceptive to the reactions of many workers, both, outside and inside our organization. I am certainly among those who have been guilty of these methods of work, tending to become part of a "transmission belt," and confining myself to "applying" and "developing" our position as far as I was able, without challenging in any basic way the central thesis put forward by Browder, —even though I was engaged in educational and supposedly "theoretical work" in the CPA.

Important as these bureaucratic methods have been in contributing to our errors, however they cannot adequately explain why our movement as a whole developed a right opportunist approach to American imperialism. The question must be answered, for example, as to why instead of a left deviation from Marxism occurred.

The answer to such questions can be found only in recognizing the pressure exerted upon our movement over a period of years by the most powerful capitalist system in the world, and especially by the "democratic" line followed by the American liberal bourgeoisie in recent years. From this source, a non-working class, non-Marxian approach gradually crept into our ranks, spreading illusions about the nature of American imperialism and American democracy, and finally dominating our general line particularly with regard to the post-war period. While fighting against left sectarianism we were not alert

to this danger from the right. Furthermore, the very mistakes we were making tended to encourage bureaucracy, including the stifling of instinctively more correct working class reactions; and this in turn helped to cover up the wrong line we were pursuing.

Unless the matter is placed in this way, we would fail to follow a Marxist method in analyzing our own errors, individually and collectively—a method which requires that we discover how ideological trends are related to the "material conditions of life," and their political consequences. We would be unable, moreover, fully to correct our mistakes or guard against them properly in the future. One thing that has been driven home forcefully by this situation is that so long as capitalism and class society exists, there will be continued pressure upon the Marxist movement to deviate either to the right or left, the main direction of this pressure depending on the concrete situation. Only constant vigilance against the influence of non-working class and anti-Marxist conceptions, together with the theoretical strengthening of our organization and the development of still closer ties with the working class, can provide any safeguard against future errors. There can be no "guarantee" except constant struggle for a correct Marxist-Leninist line. This process also requires the elimination of the bureaucratic methods that have grown up in our organization and the refreshing of our leadership.

The need to base our thinking upon the "material conditions of life" has been reemphasized in my mind by the very nature of the revisionism we developed. Let me give an example. A group of us were recently engaged in systematic re-study of Marxian economics, from the standpoint of bringing our "basic theory" into line with the

concept of a post war world of "expanding capitalism," "progressive imperialism" and continuing prosperity.

We did conclude that the tendency to crisis is inevitable under capitalism and that imperialism would continue for some time—but we nevertheless wholeheartedly accepted the general perspective put forward by Browder. How did we bridge the gap? Essentially, by speaking of the growing "intelligence" and "insight" of the bourgeoisie, which would result in this class agreeing to accept not only a lower rate of profit, but perhaps even a smaller mass of profits, both at home and abroad, in order to avert "chaos"! This was in line with the statement of Browder that "Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill at Teheran were the representatives of the collective intelligence of mankind facing the threatening supreme catastrophe of history and determined to avert it." (p. 13, *Teheran and America*).

Thus in order to revise Marxian economics, in which it is recognized that the search for profit is the very driving force of the capitalist system, we resorted to an even more far reaching revisionism—the revising of historical and dialectical materialism, the very foundation of Marxist theory. We threw overboard the "material conditions of life" as the ultimate determining factor in class interests and political alignments, and substituted a sort of all-class or above class "intelligence" as the main force in shaping history. This is essentially philosophical idealism, against which the leaders of Marxian thought fought some of their sharpest battles. Historical and dialectical materialism, on the other hand, while recognizing that ideological trends contribute to the making of history, emphasize that these trends arise from the economic conditions and class relations of the time, which represent the basic and limiting factors of historical development. Only under socialism does man for the first time become free to control the material conditions of his existence, and then only by recognizing and

applying certain historical and physical laws.

In correcting our errors, therefore it is apparent that we shall have to review the whole range of our thinking, since initial mistakes in economic and political theory when persisted in must involve revision of the basic world outlook of Marxism as they did in the case of Bernstein and others.

I should like to make just one more point in connection with the draft resolution. While I agree with its main line, an addition that seems absolutely necessary is some analysis of the economic perspective facing America and the world. While the programmatic demands include the fight for 60 million jobs, wage increases social security, fair farm prices etc., the resolution does not indicate the setting in which we believe this struggle will develop. There is virtually no analysis of the present reconversion crisis into which our nation is slipping, the likelihood of a post war boom, or the deep cyclical crisis which will follow. Since the resolution sets our sights for the next period, some orientation on these matters should be included.

Further thought should also be given to the character of the fight against the reactionary economic policies of the monopolies. There is no mention, for instance, of the need to demand revision of the patent laws which certainly represent a major source of monopoly control economy. We should also explain more clearly how and why the anti-trust laws can be used to fight reactionary practices of the monopolies—especially to smash the German - American - British cartel system, and to attack the limited production—high price policies of the trusts—without falling into the old utopian "trust busting" approach of the middle class. No doubt these and other proposals will be carefully considered by the national convention, but it seems worthwhile to mention them.

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Upholds Change To CPA During Elections

Permit me to register my protest for the poor conduct of the board resolution as regards the wording of the last part of it. Didn't the board agree on the dissolution of the party and on the change suggested by Comrade Browder? I do not suppose that Comrade Browder had a machine gun and compelled every member of the board to sign or to vote "ja." I feel Comrade Foster had no right to accuse Comrade Browder almost of betrayal, since I am assuming that he, too, signed.

I don't think it was necessary to use the language that was used. In my opinion, it is more than criticism. Our "distinguished press" went to town. Since we ourselves allowed so much "criticism," why can't "they" do it?

However, let us analyze the decision at the beginning of 1944. If I remember correctly, Comrade Browder in one of the meetings at that time said, "The American public is ill prepared," and I agreed on that. As long as the public can be sold things like "Rinso white, happy little washday song," "Pepsi Cola hits the spot," etc., we are not sure what would have happened to the elections had we not taken the change suggested by Comrade Browder.

The American people, including a good portion of the workers, are still afraid of the word Communist. The elections were so close that we might have lost on account of the Communist bogey. In my opinion, the change was absolutely necessary.

I don't think we can compare our country to France. Mainly, because the people of France are more politically developed. Proof of this is that there were a few Communist members of the Chamber of Deputies. Can you imagine 10 years ago our electing a "red" to Congress or the Senate? And, too, the French bourgeoisie acted differently. They "capitulated" to Hitler because they were afraid of their own people. At least part of the bourgeoisie here helped to combat Hitler.

Now as to Comrade Browder being a revisionist. Didn't Lenin retreat a few times? I just read one of his speeches (Volume 23), where he said, "We retreat when necessary," and the famous letter to the American workers where he cites a case when he shook hands with a French officer, knowing that they would each like to hang each other. How about the NEP? At that time I was in Odessa, and some of the comrades accused Lenin of giving in to the bourgeoisie.

In my opinion, there were no alternatives at the time of the change; otherwise, we might have lost the election. And, I repeat, if only we "might" have lost the election, this change was warranted. Of course, this does not mean that we have to continue if times again change as they did.

Incidentally, didn't the Soviet Union give some concessions at San Francisco? I am now referring to the veto question.

I fully agree that there has been a drastic change since V-E Day, and I also notice for the last three days a little retreat on the part of the bourgeoisie. Of course, we cannot tell what the outcome yet will be.

With full confidence in the leadership of our beloved Comrade Browder,

SOL H.
Kensington Club.

Fight Against Trusts Is Path to Victory

It seems to me that Comrade Browder in defending his position against the National Board Resolution is thinking along bourgeois lines. In order to give the capitalist class a chance to choose a progressive

policy, he asks us to continue to base our Communist policy on continued cooperation of the working class with monopoly capital (although this has already been shown to result in demobilization of the workers in the face of reaction), or we (the Communists and the working class) will be responsible for the wars and anarchy that will follow should Big Business be forced by our non-cooperation to reject the path of progress.

This position could lead to the accusation that Communists and militant workers have faced so often from entirely different sources, that we by our militant policies are responsible for class struggles and wars.

No, the answer seems to me that only by a real policy of struggle in defense of our nation against the monopolists and trusts can the people win total victory over Japanese imperialism, maintain Soviet-American friendship, win peace and jobs. This of course, as the resolution states, must take place through the broadest coalition of all anti-fascist and democratic forces and this would include such capitalists as are willing to follow a progressive program. Only through such a struggle can the people force the trusts and monopolists to give way. Such a struggle can win very im-

portant gains for the American people, regardless of what Browder implies, particularly because of the fact that we have fought a just war, and the progressive forces of the world, including the American labor movement, have emerged stronger than ever before. Any other path leads to demobilization of the workers in the face of an inevitable onslaught upon their rights and living standards and betrayal of the whole nation through the advance of fascism in the U. S. A. We all know that fascism is not a peculiarly German product; that it grows from the most reactionary sections of finance capital in this stage of society. America has no immunity except through a vigilant and constant struggle and offensive of the people under the leadership of the working class. Such a policy will far more likely maintain and win over allies for a democratic program, including even certain sections of the capitalist class, than Browder's policy which would leave the field wide open for the political and economic leadership of the trusts.

On the dissolution of the Communist Party: Here Comrade Browder takes the position that we had to take a step which might be harmful to the movement over a long time in order to win one particular battle. If the thinking of Com-

munists leads them to such an impasse, they should re-examine their basic ideology to find out if it is a Communist ideology. Actually I believe that we would have been at least as effective in the election campaign if we had remained a Party. I thought Browder's discussion on this point vague and would like to hear a more concrete line of reasoning.

I think the National Board of Resolution would be strengthened by a warning against the consequences of anti-Communism which certain forces are trying to spread in the U. S. and which certain groups of the bourgeoisie are falling into.

So many of our members have raised the question: Isn't it utopian to push the slogan for 60 million jobs?—I wish some of the letters on the discussion page would deal with this question.

Although of course we must push the sale and study of the Marxist-Leninist classics, I think it would be very good for The Daily and Sunday Worker to print brief articles defining some of the basic Marxist-Leninist theories. Along with the other suggestions, what about an article on the characteristics of a Communist Party (we discussed them in the County Committee last night and I found I'd forgotten what some of them were). It would also be good to print an article explaining what is democracy in the Party (democratic centralism). The National Board fell down so badly

on that in not printing Foster's letter that many of our members now want to know how can we make democracy work within our ranks and still maintain a united and disciplined organization.

Bob Thompson's letter was a fine contribution to the discussion. I liked it because he explained how he, as a National Board Member, came to make these mistakes. This is a question the membership wants answered—not because they favor breast-beating and self-flagellation but because before the leadership was apparently all for one policy and now suddenly all are against that policy. How come they made such a very big mistake? When the question is answered as Bob Thompson answered it, they feel confidence in our leadership being able honestly to recognize and correct their mistakes and that they will be on guard against an uncritical and unthinking approach in the future. I feel that Bob Minor's article left something to be desired on that score and that he should be more simple and direct in his writing.

In concluding I would like to express my faith and confidence in the ability of our Communist movement and its leadership to overcome its errors and in this process to emerge a stronger organization. And that my part in this must be to study and increase my understanding and help our organization here in Milwaukee to do the same.

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