

CPA Discussion Page

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Allies of Working Class in Postwar Period

By FRANCES FRANKLIN

1. The dissolution of our Party flowed from a change in policy in reference to postwar perspectives. Judgment on this act must be based upon decision as to the correctness of these perspectives.

2. There is no debate over the correctness of the general aim of national unity and Anglo-Soviet-American cooperation to exterminate fascism, preserve peace, and prevent crisis. Disagreement consists in different conceptions of the allies of the working class in the fight for these aims.

3. Stalin (Foundations of Leninism) declared that the working class in each historical epoch has two sets of allies—natural or direct and temporary or indirect. The natural allies in each imperialist country are the toiling middle classes and the oppressed peoples. Indirect allies are the contradictions of imperialism. Conflicts between imperialist nations or groups of monopolists within one country occasionally give groups of monopolists certain immediate, tactical aims which temporarily coincide with those of the working class. Their long-range strategic aims cannot coincide. We should never mistake necessary, temporary, tactical alliances (to fight a common enemy for different ultimate aims) for long-term strategic alliances.

4. Wall Street, with aims of world domination, became merely a temporary, tactical ally of the working class during the war against German and Japanese fascism, and remains such a temporary ally in reference to and for so long as it vigorously prosecutes the war against Japanese fascism. Browder disseminated the dangerous illusion that monopoly capital (if not frightened by the proletariat!) might remain an ally for a long and indefinite period. To confirm this, he had to "prove" that monopoly was becoming progressive. This led to the fantastic theory by some that "the epoch of imperialism has ended!"

5. To prove that the long-term interests of monopoly coincide with those of the people (the two interests being called "the national interest"), Browder argues that "economic necessity" (desire for profits) will impel "enlightened" monopolists to find markets through cooperation with the Soviet Union and their British rival, industrialization of backward nations, wage increases, etc. Browder presents only one side of that well-known contradiction of capitalism which causes crisis—the desire for markets. He overlooks the other side—that markets are restricted because profits come from exploitation! Browder presents one side of the contradiction as the "true" class interest of the bourgeoisie. This is metaphysics, not dialectics. Desire for increased exploitation to counteract the falling rate of profits is just as true as desire for markets. This true interest cancels the other true interest. Such is the self-contradictory essence of capitalism which Browder overlooks.

For monopolists to find markets, without counteracting the falling rate of profit by intensifying exploitation, is equivalent to a peaceful transition to socialism through a "withering away of the class struggle." Obviously monopolists reject this alternative. The other alternative—intensification of exploitation, resulting in the absolute worsening of conditions—imposes upon the working class the necessity to struggle and finally, for self-preservation, to impose socialism upon the monopolists. The necessity which impels monopolists to intensify exploitation drives them (regardless of beautiful speeches) to a head-on collision with the masses—on the path toward fascism. Full enlightenment would require the monopolists to accept Marxism. To be reasonable, they would have to give up Browder's

abstract appeal to their pure reason means nothing. For the monopolists themselves their contradictions are insoluble.

Only the working class with its natural allies can solve them by bitter struggles ending in socialism. The only other alternative is the victory of fascism. Caught in such contradictions, monopolists cannot avoid acts of suicidal madness. That is what we have been witnessing ever since the general crisis of capitalism (the acute intensification of all contradictions) revealed itself in 1914. The real new world epoch opened in 1917 with the October Russian Revolution. It is the epoch of socialism, which opened before the epoch of imperialism disappeared. Obviously this deepened the general crisis of capitalism, and we now approach its most acute stages. American imperialism sees the opportunity of world domination first arising in this deepening crisis when the enormously strengthened anti-imperialist forces stand blocking its advance. Necessity, therefore, drives American monopoly to seek to disorganize, scatter, and defeat these forces, thus becoming the very spearhead of world reaction. History has placed upon the American working class the heavy responsibility of blocking that drive. Our task

is to see that our people do not, by living in a fool's paradise of dreamy illusions, re-enact the role of the German people. That is the danger which the peoples of Europe and Asia are beseeching us to prevent.

6. There is one possible means of averting a crisis under capitalism and of simultaneously controlling the foreign policy of the monopolists, but it is not through free enterprise. Lenin described such means in his famous pamphlet, *The Threatening Catastrophe*. It is through democratic state monopoly capitalism, by democratic governmental controls over privately owned enterprises, secured through struggle by labor and the people over the opposition of the monopolists. This is not socialism, since it confiscates no property and does not alter the state-machinery of bourgeois-democracy. However, it is a big step in the direction of socialism. Instead of shying away from it for such reasons, we must show it to be necessary to prevent disaster.

7. It was a big mistake to abandon, simultaneously with the proposal to dissolve the Party, the demand for a centralized war economy, proposed by the Tolan and Truman Committees (note) and supported by broad groups, including small capitalists, who saw in government controls protection against the trusts. Our apologetics for the trusts thereafter began to alienate us from the majority of the American

people, who are traditionally anti-trust.

8. The present Wagner-Murray Bill for Full Employment can lay the foundations for democratic controls over monopoly. Since it empowers the government to provide jobs for all under 60,000,000 not employed by private enterprise, its passage and democratic administration can give the democratic forces machinery for securing both economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and industrialization of backward lands in such a manner as to ensure their full independence. The fight for this bill can relate foreign policy to the fight for jobs and pay.

9. It is megalomania to believe that dissolution of our Party helped the election. Red-baiting continued. Most monopolists supported Dewey anyway. If the energy dissipated in reorganization had gone into the election, we would have won more votes for Roosevelt.

10. Our utopian perspectives have caused the whole form of our organization to become Social-Democratic. The important question now is not our name or electoral status, but how to become rapidly a Leninist vanguard. We must master Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*. We must re-establish industrial clubs, require work of all our members, and practice true democratic centralism, emphasizing both democracy and centralism.

Must Not Conceal Differences in Future

In January, 1944, the members of the National Committee disagreed about the course of action the Party should take. This is shown by Foster's letter to them, quoted by Duclos and Foster himself.

This situation compelled them to consult a still greater Marxist authority than they are themselves namely, the collective understanding and experience of the whole Party. They accordingly called a special convention before which to place the issue. But before going into the convention, the National Committee decided not to ask the convention for guidance. Instead, they decided to keep quiet about one of the policies they were considering, merely asking ratification of the other. The reason given to the Party members for calling the convention concerned the importance of the proposed decisions, not their correctness.

By this decision the National Committee took full individual responsibility for the correctness of a policy on which they could not agree.

Democratic centralism requires members to obey majority decisions even if they happen to doubt their correctness. But when policy is being decided, democratic centralism also requires that everyone's best thought be laid before the Party. Thus, when the National Committee reported to its superior body, the convention, then the convention had the right to hear the opinion of William Z. Foster. This right was denied to the convention, and has been denied to the CPA for a year and a half.

What can explain this decision? The National Committee must have feared that if its disagreement became known, there might be factionalism in the Party or confusion among the people. This reasoning was a serious error. For a group within the Party secretly to adopt majority decisions and then push them unanimously in Party councils is factionalism. Thus the National Committee itself committed factionalism by using wrong methods of preserving rank-and-file unity.

The greatest danger of confusion

among the working class or the people comes from a Party policy that is not tested by full discussion and criticism within the Party. Further, the CPA as a whole became confused because of its fear of confusing the people.

What about the content of the policy that was formed by this un-Marxist procedure? This content has been called "tailist" and "opportunist" by Foster and others. This estimate of the content is thoroughly in accord with the un-Marxist character of the form. Fear of the rank and file under the guise of Party unity; fear of the people (and trust of the imperialists) under the guise of national unity.

There is a method for preventing or promptly correcting errors. The method is democratic centralism and self-criticism. The method has evidently not been applied.

I have heard some rank-and-file leaders speak in this vein: "Of course, we will never be real Marxists, but we must all study in order to understand that our policy is correct and to apply it better." This is defeatism and opportunism and

tailism with a vengeance. We shall indeed be real Marxists, and before long, not just in order to understand "that our policy is correct" but in order to understand how to criticize and improve and when necessary to correct the policies we are constantly carrying into life.

This cannot wait. Without criticism from the rank and file, the best leadership in the world will fall into error, and practical work based on error is a waste of time. It is well known that, as Stalin says, theory without practice is sterile; now let it be equally well known that as he says in the same place, practice without theory is blind.

Let the whole attitude of impatience toward education, the whole tendency to push theory aside under pressure of "practical" business and leave it to specialists, be discredited for the impractical and un-Marxist rubbish it is. Let it be expected that every decision, by the very fact of being unilaterally carried out, is being tested in life by the rank and file in the light of their collective understanding and experience as well as their leaders.

E. VAN HAAGEN, Chicago.

Leading the Democratic Struggle

I should like to give, in somewhat of an outline form, my thinking on the present discussion.

As working class leaders, we must always lead in the fight against fascism and for democracy. As a section of the working class, we always have as our allies the small farmers, and at any particular time, such as in this period of a war for national liberation, the petty bourgeoisie, and even the bourgeoisie. It is our responsibility, even though we accept the bourgeoisie as allies, to fight mercilessly against any anti-democratic tendency which manifests itself in their ranks. In this way, we prevent our becoming a tail to bourgeois policy. Instead, we act as the leaders of the democratic movement, which is our role, and not that of the bourgeoisie.

In the past period, reasoning that the bourgeoisie would follow the line of their real class interests, which is that of cooperation and

full employment, we concluded that we could relinquish our role of leadership in the democratic movement to them, to finance capital. We no longer based our policy on the working class, accepting the vacillating, now-progressive, now-reactionary bourgeoisie as allies, but rather we stood this elementary principle of Marxism on its head. We based our policy on that of the bourgeoisie, and handed over the leadership to them.

The logic of this position compelled the dissolution of our Party, whether it was to be in 1944, 1945 or 1946. (Recall, also, that it was the extension of this policy which was supposed to lead us to socialism!)

Obviously, such a course was bound to be disastrous to the struggle for democracy. It is fortunate, indeed, that the realization of this has come before it is too late.

A. S., Brooklyn, N. Y.