

CPA Discussion Page

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

Asks Clearer Teheran Stand

Having worked out a "perfect" case for Earl Browder vs. the Resolution of the National Board, I started to check with Teheran for a few quotations to document my position. In particular I wanted quotes to show he had warned that capitalism had not changed and that we must be on guard against a resurgence of imperialistic tactics after victory. Where I got the idea there was such a warning, I don't know, because the text is permeated with expressions of confidence in progressive capitalists—including Churchill. Evidently I had done a lot of rationalizing since my last reading of Teheran and had unknowingly become a revisionist of this tract in adjusting myself to its main weakness. It now seems difficult to understand how the opportunistic trends of Teheran could have been accepted in the first place.

A first reading of the Duclos article had made little impression on me because, seeking as it does to discredit Browder's position by means of his own quotations, the whole argument seemed to be built on facts out of context. A sufficient reply seemed to be to replace these quotes in their proper perspective in the text. But when I finally got around to reading longer sections of Teheran as counter arguments, I was amazed to discover that Duclos was not distorting the text at all. It was my memory which had distorted it.

Thus, the resolution becomes commendable, although in need of further clarifications. For example, is the realization of the Teheran and Crimea accords still to be the focal point of all our activity, or is this being relegated to the position of just one of many desirable things to support? There should be a specific reinterpretation of our policy in connection. Perhaps I am still too steeped in the general thesis of Teheran, but it would appear offhand that, if this goal is worth fighting for, it should be a primary objective, since its attainment would represent a foundation for worldwide progress.

Even with drastically altered tactics, attainment of the Teheran perspective could still be the main-spring of all activity, for altered tactics could make leading issues of temporary obstacles, thus preparing us at every step to meet more effectively with deviations or even a disruption of the whole plan.

Obstacles to Teheran would be obstacles to progress in any event, and, in opposing them, we would be indirectly supporting Teheran regardless of how this latter policy is reevaluated. This is not a direct struggle for socialism, but the Resolution of the NB does not advocate a "Socialism now" platform. There seems to be full agreement that socialism is not a present issue.

The Resolution's position on the change of name is well expressed—the character of our organization is far more important than its name.

FRANK COLLIER,
Massachusetts.

Please Identify The Source

Hundreds of letters have come in for this discussion page. In many instances no names or clubs are given. We want to urge all contributors to affix their signatures and name of club and if this is not possible, contributors are requested to send their articles through their respective state organizations. Names will be withheld upon request.

EUGENE DENNIS
WM. Z. FOSTER
ROBERT THOMPSON

Revisionist Policies Weakened Struggles for Negro Rights

By JAMES W. FORD
(Excerpt from Remarks, National Convention, CPA)

The Communist movement based on Marxism has brought many gains into the life of the Negro people. During the last 20 years lasting ties have been established between them and the working class movement. To the extent that the principles of Marxism have been correctly applied to the solution of their problems they have made enormous advances towards national liberation. That is why the discussion now going among the Communists about the opportunistic, non-Leninist line of revision of Marxism by Earl Browder is so vital to the Negro people.

I share fully in the responsibility for the opportunistic line which has led our organization into the swamp of revisionism. Earl Browder bears the major responsibility for changing the political course of our organization. But the National Board, with the exception of Comrade Foster, has a grave burden of responsibility to bear also, and likewise the entire national committee. Because of my long-standing in the leadership of our organization, I cannot and do not want to shift my share of responsibility.

What are the sources of my error? I had a fear of factionalism. For a long number of years we have been warned against factionalism in the Communist movement. And I know what disastrous consequences factionalism would cause in all or any phases of work of the Communist movement, especially Negro work. We have been—especially warned of the danger of factionalism between Comrades Foster and Browder, around whom a united leadership was being built. I did not speak out on a number of questions of difference between Browder and Foster primarily because of this fear of factionalism. I thought I was pursuing a course for maintaining unity and of carrying out discipline.

But I now see that I was completely wrong. Unity has to be maintained on the basis of principles and struggle for principle in the future that shall be my guide.

There was also in the National Board of our organization a very bad atmosphere which was not conducive to a really collective leadership.

These factors were of course not my basic error nor were my main responsibility lies. I had a conviction that Comrade Browder was correct on the main line, that he was developing a broad policy which had been absent in the American Communist movement from its inception. I was surely convinced that Comrade Browder by advocating a broad policy was establishing wider contact with the Negro people's movement.

I thought on the other hand that some of Comrade Foster's policies would lead us into a narrow sectarian path. But of course life has proved this to be absolutely wrong. Like other members of the Board except Foster, I was blind to Browder's leadership. Browder's policies were leading us into the arms of the bourgeoisie. He was revising Marxism and leading us away from the working class as the only true defender of the nation's and the people's interests. I share a large responsibility for creating illusions that Roosevelt and the Democratic Party were full-fledged bearers of democracy for the people. Roosevelt was the leader of bourgeois democracy.

I know from my knowledge of Marxism that bourgeois democracy is the class instrument of the bourgeoisie. The workers and the people will achieve few democratic rights under bourgeois democracy

if they depend upon the bourgeoisie. The workers have to fight for democratic rights and they are the main bearers of the struggle for democratic rights for the people.

Bourgeois democracy under conditions of the rise of capitalism is entirely different from bourgeois democracy in the epoch of imperialism. In the former case the bourgeoisie makes conscious liberal reforms, not merely as liberal concessions. During the epoch of imperialism and monopoly capital, however, the attitude of the bourgeoisie to democratic rights for the workers and people is that expressed by fascism, or at most only "liberal" concessions.

My error here is grave, especially in regard to what I did to create illusions in my individual capacities, among the Negro people of expectation of democratic rights gratis from Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.

Clearly connected with this are the illusions I had that the bourgeoisie would industrialize the South and itself open up the path of bourgeois-democratic development. (I must say here, however, I never thought we should liquidate the Marxist organization in the South and did on occasions speak against doing it).

The weight of power of political Congressmen precludes that the bourgeoisie will ever willingly develop democratic rights in the South. These Southern feudalists are the foundation of monopoly capitalist oppression of the Negro people.

What was the source of Browder's revision of Marxism that led to his false concept of the ways of social evolution in general and in the first place the social evolution of the United States? It was in the first place his complete reliance on the bourgeoisie; and secondly the fact that he never adduced detailed analysis of the economic development of the United States nor of the relation of class forces, revealing the growing strength of the rising working class—the most advanced class in modern society.

Browder's studies in American history are false in this regard also. His historical American concepts have been mainly of political expediency, based on bourgeois political advances and not upon basic economic consideration and relation of social forces.

While Browder made contributions to the fight for Negro rights, yet he never adduced detailed economic and social facts about the life and status of the Negro people on the basis of which he should have said with such finality that they had chosen the path of integration into American life. Browder took that prerogative for himself. It was not theirs.

I sensed that something was wrong here. But I did not sense that it stemmed from Browder's revisionist policies. I sensed that something was separating us from the Negro people. Unquestionably,

reliance on the bourgeoisie and the revisionist policy which Browder was following, if carried to their logical conclusion, would have led to a cessation of the fight for Negro rights. We have yet to look more deeply into the causes and affects of Browder's opportunistic line and revision of Marxism as it relates to the Negro question.

I wish to deal with a formulation of mine contained in "the Communists and the Struggle for Negro Rights." I wrote in that pamphlet: "This is a war against fascism, and every honest and sincere opponent of reaction and oppression in any form understood immediately that only the complete defeat and destruction of fascism in this war could assure the continuation of human progress, and that ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE SUBORDINATED TO THIS CENTRAL OBJECTIVE." (Emphasis not in original) and I continued "... No thoughtful and sincere spokesman for the Negro people will pose victory in the war against Negro rights. He understands that the two are inseparable, for the simple reason that victory for fascism would not only rob the American nation of its independence and democratic gains but would mean the greatest disaster particularly for the Negro people.

I believe this position is essentially correct. But I think we placed too much reliance on the bourgeoisie to carry this out. In our work here we suffered, as in all our work, in not setting forth the long ranged advantage of socialism. We did not show that complete elimination of national oppression was only achievable under socialism.

Undoubtedly most Marxists understood that Negro rights had to be fought for, and perhaps some of the win-the-war forces did also. But were these not forces in the win-the-war camp who would refuse to carry this fight out in practice because of their capitalist bourgeois prejudices? And what is more, would they not use the war to prevent the securing of Negro rights?

We can say definitely there were those who failed to struggle through for Negro rights and those, who although they were in the win-the-war camp, did not go all the way through in fighting for Negro rights.

In the light of the discussion now going on amongst Communists, there was an error made in failing to give a clear and thorough Marxist analysis of the relation of forces inherent in national unity.

A change in our line becomes all the more important now in the light of the new stage of world developments. I who am a Communist and also an ex-serviceman, should above all feel deeply about discrimination and segregation of Negro soldiers. I may say that in the last war I openly fought against discrimination of Negro soldiers in the army in France.

Lost Sight of Goal in Fight For Daily Aims

Regarding the Resolution of the National Committee, it was always my understanding that two basic considerations motivated the policy and strategy of Communists, everywhere.

First was the immediate goal, second the ultimate goal and that both were closely related. The immediate goal is always based on the current needs of the working class which always coincides with the best interests of the nation as a whole. The ultimate goal is, naturally, communism or its first stage, socialism. This is furthered by succeeding in the immediate objective and, even more important, by the method of conducting the fight for our immediate objective.

For example: in our leadership in the struggle for unemployment relief (WPA), unemployment insurance, industrial unionism, etc., our strategy was always two-fold and double purposed. 1—To save democracy and defeat fascism by strengthening the working class organizations and (2) at the same time taking a step forward towards the ultimate struggle by the same strengthening of the workers organizations and preventing them from being declassed into lumpen-proletarians.

In other words the methods of achieving the immediate objectives is just as important as the objectives themselves. To conform to the Marxist test they must answer this question satisfactorily: Will the method increase the strength of the working class? If the answer is not in the affirmative then the methods must be abandoned, even while retaining the objective.

It is our job, always to strengthen the forces of the future of progress.

This we failed to do in the recent period. The mistake was brought about by a complete disregard of our ultimate goal in taking our position on immediate objectives. This led to a correct position on all the main issues of unqualified support of the war, national unity, support of Roosevelt, etc., and an incorrect (in part) method of attaining these objectives.

Our method in the main was to counsel reliance on the monopoly capitalist bosses to voluntarily lead in carrying out not only these objectives but the postwar one of "long period of universal peace, prosperity and general democratic advancement." This could only lead to a weakening of the working class and to our ties with them. This is true despite the increase in union members. Their class-consciousness and unity (AFL and CIO) could have been greatly accelerated.

By failing to keep in mind that each daily battle is but a step towards the final battle, we failed to prepare the labor movement and all progressive forces for the current battle—the Reconversion fight.

Let us develop democracy in our organization based on an intensive Marxist educational program.

In the future let us look to Marxism as the basis for our policies at all times.

G. G., Jamaica Club.

wordy and hard to follow. I think the best answers are found in every issue of the "Daily." Yesterday there was the article, "Between the Lines from Germany," showing how we are failing to build democracy and stamp out Nazism. Today there is the article on the FBI's projected red-hunt, from the UOPWA in California. So it goes. This is only the beginning. Let's have no illusions about the battles ahead.

And let's get our Communist train back on the track and going in the right direction—with everybody on board!

ALICE HENRY,
Greenwich Village Club, N.Y.C.

'Let's Have No Illusions About Battles Ahead'

I have been following the discussions in the Daily Worker with great interest, and Lone has struck me more forcibly than the one by Whitey Goodfriend in the issue of June 19. It was so true, I nearly wept when I read it. I have never been bombed or torpedoed, but I have a small son, and the prospect of another war brings nightmares. Still, I do not think the capitalists can be trusted to prevent it. I hope

the many comrades who still cling to the "illusion of Teheran" will read Whitey's letter carefully. It uncovers and debunks the seeds of their reasoning.

I also want to say how excellent I found the analysis by Comrade Foster at the beginning of this discussion period. I have not read enough appreciation of that to date: it was clear, concise, and easily understood. Browder's discussion was