

# CPA Discussion Page

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

## We Lacked Faith in the American Working Class

By REBECCA GRECHT

I wish to express agreement with the fundamental criticism of our policies made by Comrade Duclos, and with the main analysis and program of action of the resolution by the National Committee, which offers the basis for correction.

There is no doubt that the seeming strength of the American bourgeoisie influenced the thinking of the national leadership, and of state leadership as well (of which I am a part), blunting and dulling Communist perception. We had much to say about Marxism in the abstract, repeating over and over again that "Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action." We failed to recognize, however, that our constant repetition of this formula to explain the "unorthodox" character of our policies actually covered up departures from Marxist principles. Now that Duclos' sharp criticism has made us look first of all to the fundamental teachings of our movement as the basis for all policy, it is possible to begin to understand the nature and source of our mistakes.

There can be no doubt that the policy we were pursuing could lead eventually in only one direction—the liquidation of the Communist movement. As one who had the benefit of Marxist-Leninist theoret-

ical training, and extensive practical experience in the Communist movement through years of organizational work, I feel very deeply my own weakness in failing to recognize the liquidationist tendencies inherent in our political line; in forgetting that Communist cadres have the special responsibility to guard and cherish the integrity of the Marxist vanguard of the working class.

A Communist organization can base itself only upon the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism—principles which have fundamental validity in our country as in all lands, and which must determine our broad strategy and course of action, whatever may be the concrete application at any given time. When we give up policy based upon the class struggle; when we place our major reliance upon the "intelligence" of the bourgeoisie rather than on the power and understanding of the working class; when we minimize the sharpening contradictions of monopoly capitalism and blur over the basic reactionary character of imperialism—then we give up our Marxist ideology, and in so doing give up the reasons for our very existence. Whether we intend it or not, a rejection of our ideology must eventually lead to the rejection of the necessity for an

independent party of the working class based upon such an ideology.

It is significant to recall that the 25th anniversary of the Communist Party in September, 1944—an event of utmost importance, which should have been utilized for a broad educational campaign on the history, role and present contributions of the American Communist movement—became instead the occasion for Browder, at a meeting in Madison Square Garden, to declare ourselves ready, "as an unconditional contribution to victory," to "sacrifice our prejudices, our ideologies and our special interests," and to "loyally support the existing system of private enterprise!" This was, indeed, a far-reaching concession to monopoly capital—and at the same time a blow at the very foundations of our Communist organization.

For what, objectively, could Browder's statement mean? Nothing less than this: That the existence of a Communist Party based upon Marxist-Leninist principles was harmful in the most critical and decisive moment in our country's life! If at such a time we found it necessary to give up our ideology, dissolve the Communist Party and form the Communist Political Association, did we not then pave the way for further weakening of our organization at other critical and decisive periods?

Furthermore, did not our readiness to yield on fundamental principles tend to give objective weight to the charge of reactionary forces that Communism is "alien" to America? For it could be said that if the science of Marxism-Leninism could not serve our country in its hour of greatest need, because of the peculiar exceptional character of American monopoly capital and political institutions, then it cannot serve our country at all and is, therefore, un-American.

Thus, objectively, Browder's position, supported by the National Committee, could strengthen the contention of the enemies of the working class that the existence of the Communist Party is a menace to the welfare of our nation. Such was the dangerous logic of our position.

It is meaningful testimony to our opportunism and lack of faith in the American working class that we Communists in America posed the relinquishing of our ideology and the dissolution of our party at the very time when the Communist parties of Europe were held in highest esteem, and the relentless struggle and self-sacrificing leadership of Communists in the underground resistance movements were playing their part in helping to eradicate the poison of anti-Communism in our own land. It is indicative of how isolated we believed our country to be, and we were in a sense ourselves, from the advanced democratic currents which were sweeping Europe, that at a time when the influence of socialist thought was rapidly increasing over there, we in the United States gave up even the propaganda for socialism. Yet, especially with the profound influence of the Soviet Union affecting the whole world, we had the best opportunity to bring Marxist thinking and an understanding of socialism to the working class and other anti-fascist groups.

It is the fundamental task of the Communists to protect the political and ideological independence of the working class, to increase its class consciousness and, thereby, its fighting capacity. But the policy we accepted and followed after Teheran facilitated the spread of capitalist ideology within the workers' ranks. This is true even with regard to those non-Communist workers who could not believe that the interests of their employers coincided with their own on matters affecting their economic security. For a deeper un-

derstanding of class relationships, of imperialism, of bourgeois democracy, of the socialist goal, is necessary to counter the effects of bourgeois propaganda and turn the workers from an acceptance of the capitalist way of thinking and of life. Such understanding only Communists can bring. When we, therefore, deviate from our fundamental Marxist principles we cannot but strengthen the influence of the bourgeoisie upon the working class. And in so doing, despite the fact that our hope was precisely the opposite, we could not but tend to weaken Communist influence upon the masses.

The looseness in organizational form, the neglect of industrial workers, the laxity in Communist discipline, the hesitancy to require of our members that they participate in some form in the work of our organization—these and other weaknesses flowed from our policy.

Through our failure to give our members during the past two years fundamental Marxist education (all training, in New York, was based upon the Teheran policy), we lessened their political ability to participate democratically in the determination of policy.

It has become clear that we must reconstitute ourselves as an independent Marxist party of the working class, the "highest form of class organization of the proletariat," the "organized detachment of the working class," its vanguard. We must revive in our organization a profound understanding of the role and character of such a party. We will thereby reawaken that Communist fervor, zeal, readiness to sacrifice, if need be, which are essential attributes of the effective Communist worker, without which, indeed, we cannot live up to our great responsibilities and tasks.

## Proposes Leadership Operate From New Industrial Center

The discussion taking place in our organization is of extreme importance. Out of it will come greater theoretical and organizational strength.

For quite some time we have seen our organization growing weaker. Today, we can understand why. We can understand the gap between leadership and the individual member, the apathy that was beginning to effect most of us, our hesitation in bringing to the open our feelings and reactions to policy. One could go on and on.

Suffice it to say, we can today see our lack of Marxist-Leninist understanding and the degree to which we followed a theory far removed from that which they gave us.

It is of great importance for us to understand how and why this happened so that we can learn from our mistakes and begin to start building our organization into one of strength and effectiveness.

To Comrade Browder, I can only say the following: When my husband and I first read the resolution, and the position of Comrade Foster and your statement, we were overwhelmed. We spent a whole week in preparing a letter for the Discussion Sheet proving how correct Comrade Browder was. Many hours of labor were spent in reading, evaluating and polishing up what we thought was a clear position. Our net result served only to prove how incorrect your position was and our support of it.

We began by being overwhelmed but coming to the conclusion of how incorrect our past policy was, we were appalled.

How? Why? What accounted for almost an entire leadership and membership for having gone so far afield. At this point our work for clarity and understanding just began.

The contributions which followed in the Discussion Sheet of our Press we read and reread. Much value was gained in the theoretical analysis of our past position. Very much is being brought out which will serve to make our Communist organization a much better one.

It is my opinion that a good portion of our leadership needs more contact with the basic workers. One of the questions which puzzled me and many of our members was how

far removed many of our leading Comrades seemed from us. It seemed somehow that after they became part of the leadership of our organization they developed within themselves tendencies which removed them from our problems, our lives; that somehow they were always correct, and all we had to do was to listen to what they said and follow it out. Lest it be misunderstood, their sincerity was not in question, but something was WRONG.

During this period we are arriving at some very important conclusions, we are setting ourselves theoretically straight. I would like to make a few suggestions which to me would help to develop a stronger leadership and a better organization.

1: That our National Committee and its full time leadership, together with our Press, settle in a vitally industrialized city of our country. As a suggestion—Detroit. New York City is only a small part of America and does not and can not give our leadership a correct pulse of the basic worker. Our leadership has been so far removed from the coal mines, steel mills, iron mines, and farms. The tone and temperament of industrial cities is far different from that of New York City. I have experienced both.

2: In regard to New York State. That it consider its center of operation and leadership from the industrialized section of the state, Buffalo, would be the spot. This also would bring it in close contact with the rural portion of the state. A problem that needs much attention. New York City would not suffer and its branch leadership can capably handle its work, on a community scale, as well as a city scale through the medium of a Communist City Council.

This period is proving our need of strengthening our leadership and membership. New steps are necessary to take and we will welcome any which bring us down to earth, and make us part and parcel of the Working Class of America.

I, for one, am proud of our leadership in taking such a bold self-critical position, and am learning with you.

A. S. M., Rochester, N. Y.

## Communists Missed Chance To Defeat John L. Lewis

At one of our minning conferences during the period of class collaboration, Comrade Foster stated that "during all of our struggles against Lewis, this was the most opportune time to once and for all rid the labor movement of the Lewis menace." We all agreed with the statement because there were a number of important factors that were present to expose the role of Lewis. What were these factors?

1—Lewis's objective was not that of trying to solve the economic conditions of the miners, but only to use these conditions and the traditional militancy of the miners to promote his program of disruption, in the same manner as the Fascists use the economic conditions of the workers to promote their program.

2—Lewis was against the war and collaborated with the anti-Roosevelt reactionary elements to disrupt the war.

3—Loss of political prestige especially as far as Roosevelt was concerned.

4—The unrest amongst the membership against the Lewis dictatorship.

These were the major and important factors that could have brought the downfall of Lewis. What happened, why weren't we able to expose this role of Lewis to the miners?

We presented an economic program for the miners that could have been won, and fought Lewis on the grounds that in the eyes of the miners Lewis was the champion, that of solving their economic conditions.

What solution did we have to offer? Our basis was to be class collaboration. The traditional militancy and the deep rooted hatred of the miners towards the bosses was to be changed into a course of shaking hands. "Their common interest of course was the same, they both wanted to defeat Fascism, so the intelligence of the bourgeoisie in order to bring about the defeat of Fascism would recognize the conditions of the workers and help to better them, especially the Coal operators."

What were the results?

We accused Lewis of Social Democracy, we were the ones pursuing that policy and Lewis actually became a part of that reactionary group which we should have been fighting against. We were to collaborate with those elements that Lewis not only collaborated with but became a cog to disrupt the Roosevelt Administration and the war. History has proven time and again that with policies of Social Democracy you fail and the workers suffer. Marxist teachings and the bit-

ter lessons should have taught us otherwise.

During that period we presented genuine demands to the miners that would have bettered their conditions and at the same time could have been won without disrupting the war, but even these demands were soft peddled in the interest of the bourgeoisie, of course our policy was such at that time and we had to convince the miners that they could win that way.

I don't know how many have tried it, but I not only tried to convince through arguments, I have also tried to set an example to convince them that the bosses interest was common to ours and therefore they will come across and we could win with collaboration. While at the same time the miners were daily witnessing the maneuverings of the bosses in using patriotism to further their aims, and their stubborn resistance in signing contracts. If the bourgeoisie had such deep interest and intelligence as Comrade Browder points out they should sign contracts without resistance.

Then on the other hand Lewis's objective not being that of winning the miners' demands, he could go back for the last 25 years and dig up all of the grievances that have been bothering the miners. What had he to lose if they weren't won. His objective was to get the miners to follow him so that he could fulfill his share as a part of the reactionary clique's effort to destroy Roosevelt and disrupt the war.

The miners will follow a program that they think will get them the best conditions. They realized that there was a war to be won, but they also knew that the coal operators are reaping enormous profits and they want their just share.

They followed Lewis's course because they saw no other way out. It is alright to classify the coal miner in the same category as the German workers but the miners as the German workers were betrayed by the policies of Social Democracy. The coal miners as the German workers followed a course that they thought would better their conditions, and consequently paid for it.

The vast majority of the workers are not so politically developed to reason out the consequences as soon as some one yells, "this way for more bread."

The Communist movement is the vanguard of the working class, if we provide leadership that drives the workers into the camp of reaction then we are responsible. We failed during this period and Lewis got away with his treachery. Let's dump Social Democracy and fight the struggles for the working class.

G. K.

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