

# CPA Discussion Page

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

## Tour in Europe Showed Up Teheran Illusions

By JOSEPH NORTH

(Excerpts from remarks at CPA National Committee meeting.)

A few days after my return from Europe I was impressed, and alarmed by the fact that VE Day and San Francisco had caught us, most of us, off guard. I had not foreseen, nor I daresay did most of us, the rapid trend of events in which Argentina could be admitted into the United Nations; the upsurge of red-baiting and the swift spread of anti-Soviet propaganda, not only in the Fifth Column circles but among highly placed officials and groupings that had been included in the ranks of national unity; the host of developments which indicated a violent assault upon the coalition; the developments on the homefront regarding reconversion, wages, etc. These events alarmed our membership and great sections of our people.

On reading back copies of our press to catch up with events, I saw our reactions to Stettinius and to Argentina—the swinging back and forth with events—the painfully obvious unpreparedness most of us showed—and the full trenchancy of Foster's outlook which he expressed over a year ago, but which most of us unfortunately did not see.

For myself, I had to relate all these events I met on my return home with what I had seen in Europe. I witnessed many events which did not jibe with our perspective, yet I remained fully convinced that our policy was right; that despite this or that dangerous deviation from the Teheran Concord (Greece, etc.) the decisive sections of monopoly capitalism would see the error of their ways; that "objective realities" plus their intelligence would finally surmount the obstacles to Teheran I had witnessed.

There were, however, many things which puzzled me then, and having re-read my reports of events in Britain, I can more clearly see the dangers of our previous policy. In some of my dispatches I was, in effect, acting as an apologist for the dangerous actions of Churchill and the Tories; trying to rationalize their violations of Teheran while I was protesting them. This error grew from illusions that the concords of Teheran and Yalta had more or less permanently fixed the relations between the Socialist state and the capitalist states and that henceforth the relations of classes within the capitalist states had fundamentally changed. This led me to underestimate the significance of many of Churchill's actions and his speech at the Tory conference which was later followed by his diatribes about the "Socialist Gestapo." This led me to make sweeping, lopsided generalizations. For example when the London Times wrote editorials which seemed to me to substantiate our outlook, I considered its position as that of the decisive sections of the British bourgeoisie despite the warnings of our British comrades. They did not make that mistake, but I felt they were clinging to outworn approaches.

I recall my talks with leading British economists who expressed little or no confidence in the cooperative aims of American Big Business. When I asked them about Anglo-American collaboration for durable peace, expanding foreign markets, etc., they replied they would answer that if I would answer the question: to wit—"Will American Big Business let us live?" Their rock-bottom feeling was that Britain must cling to its imperial interests, and I began to see the full extent of the support Churchill felt he had, and did have, among all sections of

the capitalist class, when he said he had not become Prime Minister to preside over the dissolution of the Empire. I began to ponder why we felt so cocksure that American and British Big Business could reconcile their differences over post-war markets. I began to see what a job it will be to get Big Business to adopt and fulfill such measures as Bretton, full employment, etc.

Next, when I went to Germany, to Munich, there I saw, in one specific but typical instance, the approach toward the reconstruction of Germany. The military governor of Munich, an industrialist from Memphis, Tenn., was setting up a regional government in which German big business interests were taking a dominant position under American overlordship. I had an opportunity to speak with the new mayor of Munich, appointed by the Americans, the head of the leading wholesale bakery of Bavaria. I saw in him a man of fascist mentality, with all that connotes for relations with labor, with the Soviet Union, etc. And, on my return to Paris, checking with other correspondents, I found that was a pattern all over Germany—obvious violations of the Yalta agreement.

And yet when I first read the Duclos letter in France. I could not agree with it. I still felt that the intelligence of the capitalists would reassert itself; that objective conditions would force them to see the error of their ways. And if, in the final analysis, they did not, even then our policy was right; we could come to the people afterward, and say, "Our position was correct, but the imperialists would not see it our way."

I felt that we still had that "one chance in a hundred" to make it work out along the Teheran lines and that we must fight for that.

It was only after considerable study of the Duclos letter and the national board resolution that I came to the conclusion that we had adopted a path which was disarming us and the masses in our method of fighting for Teheran; even that "one chance" would not be fought for at maximum if we continued to rely upon the "intelligence" of the big bourgeoisie. I then saw that for us to have adopted the position we did—which in effect was reliance upon their leadership—we were obliged to revise the Marxist-Leninist tenets concerning imperialism.

I then saw how acceptance of that revisionism had impelled me to adopt, in effect, an arrogant attitude toward our brother parties in Britain, in France, to believe that they were clinging to antiquated ideas, that only we had the right line, in short, that everybody was out of step but Johnny.

I saw then that only revisionism could oblige us to assume the Teheran agreements had opened a new era in the relations between classes within capitalist states of the coalition. The essence of the National Board resolution is the repudiation of our "false concept that after the military defeat of Hitler Company, the decisive sections of Big Capital would participate in the struggle to complete the destruction of fascism and would cooperate with the working class in the maintenance of post-war national unity."

The resolution rejects this view by reaffirming the Marxist-Leninist concept of the class nature of American monopoly capitalism. And I agree that from this estimate of the role of monopoly capital stems the resolution's program of action; the consolidation of "the broadest national coalition of all anti-fascist and democratic forces" and underscores the independent role of the

working class and especially the progressive labor movement and the Communists.

I see now what was unclear to me before, when I was in England, that our British brothers, by and large, have been far more correct in their approaches to the problems of national unity in the course of the war and their approaches to post VE Day. Now I see what I couldn't see before: a national coalition in Britain based upon labor-progressive predominance. I see now what Pollitt and his co-leaders, based on the trade unions, meant when they told me that if their party were to adopt our approaches it would immediately cut itself off from mass support. I understand now why Pollitt insisted on going among the masses, tirelessly, learning from them as well as helping guide them.

I can now understand something which I wrongly evaluated while there. It so happened I had the privilege of attending two meetings of the Executive Committee and saw how members from all strata of British life, but predominantly from the working class, the trade unions, questioned Pollitt on various aspects of the leadership's position, vigilantly obliging him to explain, in great detail, and to convince them when necessary, why it proposed this or that tactic. At that time I was brash enough to feel that there was "too much democracy" in the British Party; that it led to the immobilization of the leadership. I believe now that what I saw reflected the close connection the membership and the British masses had with the formulation of party policy. I can now see that imperative necessity to create the methods here whereby we can constantly consult genuinely with our membership, leaders, with the rank and file of the working class and primarily the unions.

## Asks Explanation on Foster Letter Why Was Only Foster Right?

I have been following with real interest the discussions being conducted in our paper re the Duclos article, the National Board's resolution and Browder's rejection of these policies. Such a discussion can only serve a healthy purpose of clarifying our thought, strengthening our organization and unifying our ranks.

If this had been done over a year ago democratic centralism would have served the purpose for which it was intended. Probably no one will deny that there was thorough discussion throughout the country in all the clubs on the dissolution of the Party. But it appears that this discussion was one-sided.

Foster held an opposing position that never reached the membership. What was the thinking behind the Central Committee decision to withhold an opposing view from the membership? Were we incapable of arriving at a correct decision, would it disrupt our ranks, or prove harmful to the war effort? The present situation refutes any of these arguments. The membership has not been told why Foster's policy was withheld. If we are starting with a clean slate it would be well to clean up this question in order to erase any doubts the members may have that this can happen again.

When the Duclos article and the Board's resolution first appeared my immediate reaction was that the

entire membership must be held responsible and I said so. But after reading the letters to the Daily Worker and The Worker and hearing one report from a National Board member I am not willing to accept an equal share with the National Board or the National Committee.

I haven't studied Marxism for years. I read our paper, Browder's books and many of the pamphlets that have come out, but it has been a long time since I have done any serious studying. I am offering no excuse for my own feelings or shortcomings. It would have been imperative (as it is now) to have studied a year ago however, if both Foster's and Browder's positions had been made public. Yet Robert Minor was present at the Board meeting, was fully aware of William Z. Foster's charges of revisionism, conducted a column in the Daily Worker "clarifying" Browder's position and apparently "studied" Marxism, for he charged that any policy contrary to Browder's was "un-Marxian." I failed to find a real self-critical examination of his present position in his article.

How could the Board have taken so lightly the charges made by Foster?—a trusted, respected Communist with a record of 40 active, fruitful years in the labor movement. Browder deserved the respect and admiration we have accorded him for his years of leadership. He has contributed much to the American labor movement and to our study of early American history.

But Foster also has amply demonstrated his loyalty and Marxist understanding to deserve attention and consideration when he speaks. Certainly the membership has never taken him lightly. What situation has existed in the Board that

prompts Bob Thompson to say (in a very fine Bolshevik manner) that in a "stupidly arrogant manner" he "often failed to pay proper attention to the point of view presented many times in our National Board discussions by Comrade Foster." It appears to me that this is not only an individual criticism, although Comrade Thompson intended it as such, but might very well apply to the entire National Board.

I agree with the Duclos article and our National Board resolution. Browder's speech, which was printed in the June 10 issue of The Worker, convinced me of the disastrous path our previous policy would have led us. There are certain theoretical questions as well as organizational ones that have to be answered in my own mind. These I will raise in my club or perhaps participate again in the discussion in the paper.

I know that it is not un-Marxian to make mistakes and that we learn and become stronger after recognizing them. But the mistake that we have made indicates to me a basic political weakness in our democratic processes that should not be permitted to continue. If we re-examine our conduct of democratic centralism and correct our methods of arriving at decisions we will have a better guarantee of real democracy within our organization in the future.

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Michigan.

### Dennis, Williamson Reports in 'Worker'

The reports of Gene Dennis and John Williamson to the National Committee meeting of the Communist Political Association held June 18-20, will be printed in The Worker of July 1.

I wish to state first that I am in complete agreement with the resolution of the National Board of June 2d. However, I feel that several points were left unclarified, which should be thoroughly examined in order to make sure that the CPA shall never again take the path of revisionism. No reason has yet been given for the suppression of Comrade Foster's letter to the National Board. I would like to hear an explanation of this action from Comrade Foster and from other members of the Board.

The second point which I would like the members of the National Committee to explain is: How is it that our entire leadership, with the exception of Comrade Foster, all of whom are tried and true leaders of the American Marxist movement, could have made the same error? How could all of these Marxists have taken the path of social-democracy? Was our leadership guilty of blind faith in one man—no matter how correct he had previously proven himself? What guarantee have we that this will not repeat itself in the future, perhaps in some other form?

On Browder's discussion of the resolution: He says "That judgment rest, of course, upon the judgment that the dissolution of the Party—helped to win the election." Can anyone deny that red-baiting and Communism was one of the principal issues raised by the Republicans; that Roosevelt, himself, found it necessary to fight this issue in one of his speeches; that the very reactionaries whose fears we were trying to quiet called the change a trick? Roosevelt and the people won the election despite the red-baiting.

Comrade Browder says "The bourgeoisie, because it is in the historical position of a dying class—and it could fall into this mad panic that would lead it into a military attempt against the Soviet Union. But clearly, and obviously this is contrary to its class interest."

Why does Comrade Browder think that a war against the Soviet Union is contrary to the class interests of the decisive sections of monopoly capital? Doesn't the socialist system mean ultimate destruction of monopoly capitalism? Is it not a fact that every year the USSR exists and grows stronger is a threat to the monopolists? Hoover, Vandenberg, Taft, Hearst, etc., are not "crazy" when they see the Soviet Union as the greatest long-time threat to their existence. Neither was Hitler crazy. They represent the decisive section of finance capital.

No, we cannot count on the monopolists to take the lead in "living with" the USSR. The working-class, the middle-class and the progressive elements in the bourgeoisie must take the lead, and pull the monopolists along as far as they will go.

Although Comrade Browder does not discuss internal affairs in this particular article he has repeatedly said that the bourgeoisie must find a way to solve our postwar economic problems. What has been the result of labor's waiting for the bourgeoisie to lead the way in creating 60,000,000 jobs? Reconversion is upon us—there are already thousands of workers being fired—and we are just beginning to look for methods to avoid this. Had labor and the progressives taken the lead, we might at least have secured some action to meet the situation.

TANYA M. N. Y.

### Announcement

William Z. Foster's letter of Jan. 20, 1944 will be printed in full in the July issue of Political Affairs with an accompanying foreword explaining why the letter was not previously released to the membership.