

A Theoretical and Political Magazine of Scientific Socialism

Editor: HERBERT APTHEKER

Statement on the Declaration of 12 Communist Parties

By the National Executive Committee, CPUSA

On December 22, 1957, the National Executive Committee, CPUSA, adopted the following statement concerning the Declaration adopted in Moscow in mid-November, 1957.* That Declaration was published in full in our December issue.—*Ed.*

THOUGHTFUL AMERICANS will give serious consideration to the Declaration of 12 Communist and Workers' Parties because it represents the considered opinions of those who guide the destinies of more than 900 million human beings—more than a third of mankind embarked on a course of Socialist development.

Naturally, special interest has been displayed in the attitude of American Communists toward that declaration, and we therefore deem it desirable to state our views.

The declaration, in the first instance, expresses the judgment of 12 governing parties, carrying the

grave responsibility of leading their respective countries through various stages of socialist development, seeking to arrive at a common estimate of the world scene and to strengthen their fraternal alliance so as more effectively to contribute to the cause of peace and colonial liberation and social advance, and striving to find the best solutions to problems that are common to each of them.

The declaration is an important expression of unity among these 12 parties of the Socialist countries, a unity achieved through fraternal discussions and the mutual exchange of views.

We note with satisfaction their reaffirmation of the estimate that "the question of war or peaceful co-existence is now the crucial question of world policy." This has been the

* The vote on this statement was as follows: *In favor*, 11: G. B. Charney, D. Davis, F. M. Fine, J. Gates, D. Healy, C. Lightfoot, M. Lima, C. Ross, M. Russo, S. Stein, M. Stone; *Opposed*, 7: B. Davis, E. Dennis, E. Durham, E. G. Flynn, J. Jackson, H. Lumer, R. Thompson; *Abstaining*, 2: J. Stachel, C. Winter; *Absent*, 2: W. Z. Foster, G. A. Meyers.

conviction of American Communists, as well as of many non-Communist Americans. In the same sense, we greet their solemn pledge: "The Communist Parties regard the struggle for peace as their foremost task. They will do all in their power to prevent war."

The gyrations and aberrations in Washington, in the wake of the Socialist man-made moons, underscore once again that powerful forces in our own country oppose the principle of peaceful co-existence, resist disarmament, and are ready to gamble the lives of our people and all mankind in "limited wars," in Dulles' brinkmanship, in devious support to colonialism—all for the power and the glory and the profit of giant monopolies.

We are of the firm conviction, as are the 12 parties, that the forces for peace are sufficiently powerful to prevent war, that "peace and peaceful co-existence have now become the demands of the broad masses in all countries," that peace can win despite the machinations of imperialism.

The declaration passes judgment on many questions of theory and policy in the world Communist movement. This judgment merits thorough study by Marxists everywhere, and needs to be weighed in the light of their own experience and the reality in their respective countries.

In doing so, we American Communists should not repeat the mis-

take we often made in the past, of accepting the views of brother parties regarding their own problems as necessarily applying in the same way to the problems our Party faces, or of accepting a generalized estimate of the world situation without our own critical appraisal as to whether it is fully correct, or applicable to our own country. To do otherwise, we would be ignoring the lessons of our own pre-convention discussions, and the decisions of the National Convention of our Party. While we have the utmost respect and admiration for the leadership shown by brother parties to the working-class and its allies in their own lands, and the contributions they have made to the cause of peace and to the advancement of Marxist thought, we firmly believe that there is much we can learn from the experiences of other parties. But we also believe that only our Party can estimate best our tasks for the immediate struggles ahead and in charting the American road to Socialism.

These problems of theory and policy have been the subject of much thought and discussion in the ranks of American Communists. Our Convention Resolution states, "We are in full agreement to study further the question of our theoretical and tactical approach to war, the theory of the State, Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and other questions that time does not afford an opportunity to resolve at this National Convention." In doing this we are guided by our

own national convention of last February, which resolved:

To advance the struggle in the United States for peace, democracy, civil rights and socialism, the Communist Party must further develop its independent theoretical work. It must free itself from deeply ingrained habits of dogmatism and doctrinairism which breed sectarianism, and which in turn lend encouragement to Right opportunism.

In order to succeed in this, the Party must study thoroughly the realities of American life today, the history and tradition of our working class and people, the special features of capitalist economy and bourgeois democracy in our country, the distinctive features of the American road to socialism.

These momentous tasks we have now undertaken in a discussion to shape a program for the American Communist Party. Affirming, as our convention did, that "Marxism-Leninism is a scientific analysis of the universal and objective laws of social development," we are guided by our Convention's injunction that "the Communist Party of the United States interprets, and applies, and strives to develop further [the principles of scientific socialism] in accordance with the requirements of the American class struggle and democratic traditions."

We will learn what we can from the experience and judgment of the 12 Parties in the discussion of our own program. But the creative application of Marxist-Leninist prin-

ciples in the United States is our responsibility, and one that we cannot abdicate.

In discussing dogmatism and Right opportunism, the 12 parties concluded that Right opportunism is "the main danger at present." We do not assume to pass judgment on this score, as it is reflected in other Communist Parties, and how this squares with the struggle to fully carry out the line of the 20th Congress, CPSU.

We believe the 12 parties were wise in adding: "However, dogmatism and sectarianism can also be the main danger at different phases of development in one Party or another. It is for each Communist Party to decide what danger threatens it more at a given time." The independent decision of our Party was rendered by its National Convention which declared that "the main task of the Party today is to overcome completely the influence of Left-sectarian estimates, policies and tactics in all fields of work," and that "the necessary struggle against Right-opportunist errors must be carried on in such a way as not to weaken the main task."

The deliberations and conclusions of Marxists anywhere, especially the spokesmen of the 12 Parties who can draw on such a rich store of experience, serve to stimulate, enrich and advance Marxist thought everywhere, if subjected to critical analysis, free debate, and a determined effort to learn from the mistakes of

the past. Their declaration points up the challenge we posed before ourselves to make our own independent contribution to the further development and enrichment of the theory of scientific socialism.

The orderly, systematic and collective process for doing just that is afforded by the discussions, just begun, to fashion a program for the Communist Party of the United States.

Such a discussion, however, in the present state of the Party's situation, would only be of value if, first, it is understood as not replacing the urgent need for the Party's finding ways and means of engaging in mass activity and playing some role in the immediate struggles facing the

American people; and secondly, if this discussion is conducted in the spirit of scientific objectivity which will seek out and explore the unique features of our country's development, as well as the common features characteristic of all capitalist countries; which will not start labelling every beginning in that direction as a departure from Marxism-Leninism, thus slamming the door on any fruitful discussion ever getting started, and paralyzing the Party into inaction, and which will lend an attentive ear to the views of other socialist-minded forces in helping us to chart our course.

Here is a most urgent task before American Communists.