
THE TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE WAR

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

(Concluding remarks of William Z. Foster, National Chairman, at the National Committee Meeting of the Communist Party, U.S.A., held in New York City on December 7, 1941.)

AS WE, members of the National Committee and guests, are about to depart to our respective homes from this historic plenum, it is necessary that a few words be said about the effects upon the line of our Party by Japan's unprovoked war attack upon the United States this afternoon. At the outset let me say that we are not taken by surprise by this brutal aggression. Our long insistence that the United States was in urgent danger of fascist assault has been dramatically verified. For months past we have been forecasting Japan's attack, and in the report of Comrade Minor and others to this plenum its imminence was clearly foreseen. Our analysis of the war situation has been completely borne out. Our policy was correct and it remains so.

What has happened is that the American people, yesterday standing upon the brink of overt war with Japan, have today been plunged fully into war by Japan's wanton attack upon American citizens and territory. This tremendous event throws before us a host of new

problems. But it does not change the basic line of our Party. It merely swiftly matures our analysis and makes necessary a tremendous intensification of our work in all directions, according to the main policy we have already developed.

The National Committee statement which we have just adopted is the authoritative document of this plenum. It applies the main policy of our Party to this new phase of the world war. Although brief, this statement of policy is clear. It will be followed shortly by editorials and articles further concretizing our work. After I finish speaking Comrade Hudson will outline some of the tasks immediately confronting us.

Now let me touch briefly upon the effects of the new situation upon several aspects of our Party policy, as we have been developing it during the past several months and as we were further concretizing it in this plenum when Japan attacked. First, in respect to our attitude regarding the Government's foreign policy. As you know, we had been

supporting the Government's resistance to the aggressor powers, Nazi Germany and Japan. Now our task is to enormously increase this support. This is a just war. Our Party statement pledges our full support to it. We have offered to give up our lives if necessary to defeat the fascist enemy. Our Party must do all in its power to see that American arms, jointly with those of Great Britain, the U.S.S.R. and China, emerge victorious from the present conflict.

Now as to national unity—do we have to change our main line upon that? Not at all. Our job is to press forward ten times more determinedly than before, along the path we were already traveling. More than ever must we seek to develop the strongest possible collaboration among all classes and organizations in American life that are ready to fight the Axis enemy. If it was necessary yesterday, when the country was not yet fully in the war, to participate in all the organizations and activities that were developing towards a solid front of the American people against Hitler and his puppets, now the need for such activities on our part is incomparably greater. Swiftly the country will be covered with a whole network of civilian war activities. Demands will be made for strengthening the armed forces and to finance the war. As American citizens determined to help crush the enemies of our country, we must play our full part by supporting all these movements and tasks. The Communists must show that there are no better fighters for America and freedom than we are.

Full steam ahead for national unity and the winning of the war.

And how does the question of the fight against the appeasers, against the America First Committee, stand in this new situation? In no sense do we have to reorientate our policy in this matter. Instead, we have to redouble our battle against these fascist-minded traitors. But, the conditions of our struggle against them will be greatly changed. This is because, in the face of national indignation of the American people at Japan's attack, the treacherous America First Committee will lose much, if not most, of its mass following, who have been misled by its demagoguery about peace. Many also of its opportunistic leaders will be compelled to endorse the war. Already the radio has told us that the appeaser Senators Taft, Vandenberg and Wheeler, as well as that American-brand fascist, Representative Fish, have spoken out for war against Japan. Doubtless more will follow.

But such development must not mislead us into believing that the appeaser danger is over. Far from it. While the followers of the America First Committee will genuinely change their minds and support the war, the copperhead traitors will only alter their tactics to fit the new situation. They will lose no opportunity to stab the United States in the back. One of their many devices to help their friend Hitler will be to try to get the United States to direct its entire force against Japan and to abandon giving aid to Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. This insidious maneuver we must be par-

ticularly alert to fight against. With renewed vigor we must propagate our established correct line that this is one war, a world war between the forces of fascist tyranny and those of democracy and civilization. It is one indivisible war between the fascist Axis powers and the world coalition of the United States, Britain and the U.S.S.R. We must therefore insist that instead of aid being diminished, more munitions than ever be sent to the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and China. We must also advocate the opening of a second front in Europe. We must never let the American people forget that the center of the present world fascist aggression is in Berlin and that, above all, Nazi Germany has to be smashed. A full-scale military alliance between the United States, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R. and China has now become a fundamental necessity for American national defense.

Regarding the battle for production, which has played such a central part in our Plenum discussions—what about that? Well, everything we have been saying all along, as well as in this plenum, is now more true than ever. In this situation the trade unions, in closest cooperation with employers, and the Government must push for maximum production. We may be sure that the American people, in their determination to defeat the insolent Japanese aggressors and their boss in Berlin, will develop a munitions output that will amaze the world. The labor movement, and not the least our Party, must play its full part in developing this huge flood of war ma-

terials. The establishment of the Murray Plan, or a workable variation of it, has now become a national imperative. In all shops, industries and localities, as we have discussed in our plenum, the workers must take the initiative in working out plans to help win the battle for production.

And now how about labor unity, which, in the form of united labor action upon war issues, has been playing such a large role in our Party's life? Here, too, we have no need for reorientation. Except that we must press all the more energetically for united labor action than ever before. The war situation makes it vitally necessary for the C.I.O., A. F. of L. and Railroad Brotherhoods to work together harmoniously to help solve the life and death questions that are being thrust upon our nation by the war. Strengthen the trade unions, organize the unorganized, tighten labor's ranks. In every city and state there should be get-together movements between the rival groups of unions, such as we have seen developing lately in so many communities. Nationally the time is now ripe for organized cooperation between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. The two big federations of labor have demanded, in somewhat different forms, that labor, capital and Government should come together in a national conference to work out joint war policies. Such a conference has now become indispensable, and the workers everywhere should speak out for it.

In the matter of protecting the living standards of the workers—

against profiteering employers and against reactionary forces who are trying to load all the economic burdens of the war upon the social classes and groups least able to stand them—our basic line of policy was already worked out before this plenum. Healthy, well-fed and well-cared-for workers are vitally essential for national defense and our aim must be to see that these conditions obtain. Arbitration and mediation of labor disputes are now indispensable. To protect their interests the workers must be fully represented in the Cabinet and in all Government boards. Organized labor should unitedly demand this representation. United political action is the key to all of labor's activities in this national crisis.

By the same token, the trade unions should insist upon the defeat of such reactionary measures as the Smith Bill. Labor must not allow itself to be shackled by open-shop elements in the war emergency. Democracy must be preserved at home while we are fighting abroad to defend it. Labor should demand that such ultra-reactionary organizations as the America First Committee and the Dies Committee be dissolved, and that the Hoover F.B.I. be reorganized.

Now let me conclude these remarks on Party policy in this war by saying that we are going to witness in the period now opening a unity of spirit and action by our nation that will amaze us. The American people, despite all attempts of appeasers and fascists to confuse them and to make it appear that we were a disunited nation, have all along been strongly anti-Hitler. The attack by Japan upon will touch off a tremendous demonstration of the anti-Hitler spirit of the American people. Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito will be astounded to observe the solidarity with which our people will take up arms against them.

The great test of our Party from now on will be to step up its work to fit in with the intensified war struggle of the American people in defense of their national existence. We must realize the necessity for vastly increased activity on our part in all directions in support of the war effort. Our policy is correct, our Party is united. Our line expresses the patriotic interests of the whole American people. Let us resolve to apply it with a militant spirit as never before. I am sure that our Party will prove worthy of the great task which history has now placed upon it.