

On the Question of Revisionism

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Comrade Browder's "notorious revisionism" (to use the words of Duclos) stems directly from the present aggressive program of American imperialism. In order to understand this, it is helpful to review briefly the Communist Party's struggle against right opportunism in its ranks during the 1920's. For the revisionism of that time was also a definite reflection in our party of American imperialism.

Following World War I, American imperialism experienced a big upswing. The United States became the most powerful capitalist country in the world. It passed from the status of debtor to a creditor nation, exporting capital from 1920 to 1929 to the then unheard-of total of 20 billion dollars. All over the world it conducted an active campaign to capture markets, as against other big countries which were weakened by the war. With its "Young" and "Dawes" Plans, it practically dictated the economic terms to a defeated Germany. Toward Latin America its attitude was one of arrogant domination and military oppression. Meanwhile, at home the capitalists, in an orgy of profit-making, went ahead developing their new methods of mass production, to the admiration and envy of the whole capitalist world.

As usual, in the optimistic atmosphere of the upward phase of the economic cycle, super-heated soothsayers appeared to sing the glories of the American capitalist system. And this time to an extent never known before. The United States, they said, had finally overcome the contradictions of capitalism. There would be no more economic crises or mass unemployment. Mass production and high wages were the magic formula. Not Marx, but Ford, was their slogan. The "New Capitalism" was here, and engineers and economists came from all over Europe to study the American miracle.

Not strangely, this intoxicating capitalist propaganda had profound repercussions in the ranks of the workers, especially the trade unions. Labor officialdom, including the progressives, listened open-mouthed when Professor Carver explained how the workers through their savings were buying control of the great industries. And the labor "theoreticians" did a little utopia-building of their own. They declared that the path of progress for labor lay through cooperation with the employers to increase production. The class struggle was ended, strikes were a thing of the past, Socialism was an outworn dogma. The big thing was the "Higher Strategy of Labor" (no-strike, speedup policy), labor banks, and class collaboration on every front.

This capitalist nonsense became the official policy of the A. F. of L. and railroad unions, beginning in 1923. The result was that these labor organizations, already weakened by serious strike defeats during the big postwar antiunion drive, became little better than speed-up agencies for the employers, grievously neglecting the interests of the workers. Consequently trade union morale sank to zero and for the first time in history, the labor movement failed to increase its membership during a period of "prosperity."

It is one of the brightest pages in the history of our Party that we fought militantly (even though often on a too narrow basis) against this whole drunken orgy of class collaboration, many of our best fighters being expelled from the unions, deprived of their jobs, arrested, and otherwise persecuted for doing so. In spite of this policy of struggle, however, the poison of American imperialist propaganda managed to seep into our Party's ranks.

Its chief voice was Jay Lovestone, who later became a renegade. Reflecting the propaganda of the great trusts, Lovestone added his voice to the chorus of praise of American capitalists. In our Party Lovestone developed his theory of "American exceptionalism," the substance of which was that capitalism in this country had become so strong and progressive that it was no longer subject to the general economic laws governing the recurring capitalist crises. The practical effects of Lovestone's revisionism were to tend to disarm our Party's militancy, to sow false prosperity illusions

among the masses, and to subordinate the workers to the capitalists' profit-making orgy in this country and their imperialist program abroad. After a bitter struggle Lovestone's revisionism was exposed and he was expelled from the Party, whereupon he proceeded to develop into a Soviet-hater and a tool of the notorious Matthew Woll.

As for the American "New Capitalism," which was to regenerate the capitalist system of the world, it blew up with a loud report in October, 1929. And the United States, which was supposed to have overcome the economic contradictions of capitalism, according to Carver, Chase, Tugwell, Lovestone and many other bourgeois theorists, actually suffered more devastatingly from the unprecedented economic crisis during 1929-1934 than any other country in the world.

AMERICAN IMPERIALIST DRIVE FOR DOMINATION

Comrade Browder's revisionism has, like Lovestone's, also developed in a period of American imperialist illusions and upswing. Even before World War II began there were powerful voices among the big capitalists clamoring for American world domination, a notorious case in point being Henry Luce, with his "American Century" theories. And since the war has been under way, this striving for American imperialistic dominance has grown, until now it is manifestly the basic determination of American big capital.

In the main the great capitalists of this country have supported the war in their own way. But it would be silly to think that in doing so they have had the same democratic aspirations as the American people, or even of the Roosevelt government. For the most part they have seen a good chance to knock out a couple of very dangerous imperialist rivals and thereby to lay the basis for American imperialist advancement. All through the war they would have been happy to make a negotiated peace with Hitler to their own advantage and at the expense of the Soviet Union and the democratic forces of the world. And now that Hitler is smashed, their imperialist designs become all the more apparent, as witness their behavior at the San Francisco conference of the United Nations. Such elements see the weakened position of other capitalist states, as contrasted with the great strength of the United States, and they want to capitalize on this situation in such wise that they can dictate to the rest of the world, including the U.S.S.R.

As the National Committee's resolution points out, American finance capital, fearful of democratic developments in Europe and desirous of world control for itself, is now embarking upon a policy of imperialistic aggrandizement which, if it is not checked by the democratic forces of the world, can have the most disastrous consequences, not only to big capital itself, but also to the great objectives laid down in the conferences of Moscow, Teheran, and Yalta.

Although American finance capital strives to conceal its imperialistic ambitions under pretenses of the United States using its world power for altruistic ends, nevertheless these ambitions are clear, not only from big capital's practical policies, but also from the writings of many of its spokesmen - conservative, liberal and labor. Thus, Thomas E. Dewey's spectacular demand of the Mackinac Republican conference for a United States-Great Britain alliance was obviously an attempt to set up a domination over the U.S.S.R., and with it the rest of the world. Eric Johnston's book, *America Unlimited*, is an essay on how to capture the trade of the world and to paralyze ideologically the American people in the face of the power drive of finance capital. Walter Lippmann's volume, *United States War Aims*, with its conception of a great "Atlantic Community," consisting of the allied American and British empires, plus all the countries of central and Western Europe is manifestly a program for American world domination. The Soviet trade union journal, *The War and the Working Class*, March 1, 1945, correctly designates the imperialist character not only of Senator Vandenberg, but also of his associates, the Hoovers, Tafts, Deweys, Landons, McCormicks, Pattersons, Hearsts, and other spokesmen of big capital when it says:

"The whole content of Vandenberg's speech ... is a mask to conceal his pretentious claims for the establishment of the dictatorship of one Great Power over all the other powers, great, medium and small."

As in the 1920's but under different forms, the present actively expansionist policies of American imperialism evoke a

response in the labor movement, as is evidenced by the attitude of such figures as Matthew Woll and by many policies of the A. F. of L. Executive Council. Also, the wild attacks of Norman Thomas, David Dubinsky and other Social-Democrats against the Soviet Union have their roots in the expansionist program of American imperialism.

BROWDER AND AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

Our Party does not live in a political vacuum. It is exposed to all the illusions and pressures of capitalism; hence it should surprise no Marxist that the present drive of American imperialism for world power should find certain echoes within the ranks of the Party. The tragedy of the situation is that it is precisely Comrade Browder who is giving voice to these imperialist illusions in our Party, especially with regard to the postwar situation. And he is doing this under elaborate pretenses of a discerning and flexible Marxism-Leninism.

In the postwar world, which will face gigantic problems of industrial reconstruction and development, the United States, with its tremendous economic resources, is bound to play a very important role. What Comrade Browder does not see, however, is that if the role of the United States is to help in the realization of the programs of Moscow, Teheran and Yalta, this can only be accomplished if the broad masses of this country, especially the trade union movement, are very much on the alert to see to it that imperialist trends upon the part of our Government and the great capitalists are curbed and democratic policies imposed. The great goals of victory over fascism and the achievement of a lasting peace, laid down at Moscow, Teheran and Yalta, can be realized, but only upon the basis of eternal vigilance by the combined democratic forces of the world. Browder, contrary to this, is quite willing to leave the whole matter to the "intelligence" and "enlightened" self-interest of the big capitalists.

The imperialists could hardly ask for anything better than the free hand that Browder would so readily grant them. It is hard to conceive of a situation more favorable to American imperialism than the belief, such as Browder has expressed many times that we can rely upon these capitalists' "enlightenment" to follow a constructive and democratic world policy. The general result of such a reliance would be that American imperialism, without any popular checks upon it, would run hogwild and would soon have the whole world in a worse mess than it now is. Of course, Comrade Browder does not want any such situation, but Lenin has long since taught us that the objective results of political policies bear no necessary relation to the subjective desires of their initiators.

That the practical effects of Comrade Browder's revisionist ideas are to facilitate the policies of American imperialism is beyond question. Let me show this by indicating briefly a few of his major proposals and their imperialistic implications:

1. When Comrade Browder proposes that the United States in the postwar period should set out to build up a \$40,000,000,000 yearly export trade, as he did in his book, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace*, he is in fact calling upon American imperialism to make a drive virtually to monopolize the markets of the world.

2. When Browder says (page 79 of his book, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace*), "I am entirely willing to help the free enterprisers realize the \$40,000,000,000 foreign market that is required entirely and completely by their own chosen methods," he is tailing the workers after the bourgeoisie and surrendering the American people into the hands of the imperialists.

3. When Browder proposes that the great capitalists of the United States have a free hand to carry through a postwar program of "Industrialization of all the devastated and undeveloped areas of the world," he is in fact proposing American economic and political world hegemony.

4. When Browder says that "Britain and the United States have closed the books finally and forever upon their old expectation that the Soviet Union is going to disappear some day," he is blinding the people of this and other countries to the dangerous machinations of American and British imperialists against the U.S.S.R. — "a consummation devoutly to be wished" by these sharks.

5. When Browder fails to signalize the danger of American imperialism (and he denies, incredible though it may seem, that there is any such imperialist menace), he is hiding from the American people the greatest danger to future world peace and progress. The imperialists could hardly ask for anything more convenient to their schemes of exploitation and domination.

6. When Browder fights against the American people curbing the monopolies, as he does, actually he is freeing from restraint the worst enemies of democracy, the generators of economic chaos, imperialist aggression, fascism and war.

7. When Browder spreads illusions among the workers to the effect that there will be a long period of class peace after the war during which they can safely bind themselves with a no-strike pledge, and that the employers will voluntarily radically improve the workers' real wages, he is tending to paralyze the working class in the face of the provocative attacks of big capitalists upon the trade unions and the workers' living standards.

8. When Browder (Daily Worker, April 8, 1944) hails the Labor-Management Charter without a word of criticism and deplores only that it is "unfortunate" the NAM is not a partner to the Charter, and when (Daily Worker, April 14, 1944), he proposes that the incentive wage be adopted generally in American industry in the postwar period, he is opening wide the doors for the speeding up and more intensified exploitation of the workers of this country.

9. When Browder dissolves the C.P. into the C.P.A., he is weakening the most dynamic force that the workers possess to counteract the reactionary activities of the great trusts at home and abroad.

One would have to be blind politically not to recognize that all these revisionist theories and proposals of Browder's dovetail with the interests of the great capitalists and that they are, in fact, a reflection of the aggressive program of American imperialism. Contrary to Browder's faith in the big bourgeoisie, the democratic forces of the country and the world will have to use all their united political strength to achieve complete victory, to establish a democratic peace, to

win full employment and a better life generally.

BROWDER'S REVISIONISM IN THEORY

Bedazzled by the United States' great power in this war, by its enormous industrial expansion and output, by its gigantic political prestige, by the many concessions the capitalists made (under compulsion) to the workers during the Roosevelt regime — Comrade Browder in his present writings and policies leaps to the revisionist conclusion, especially after the Teheran agreement, that American capitalism and its capitalist class, including reactionary finance capital, has in some mysterious way become progressive.

Upon this false basis, Comrade Browder proceeds to build up a capitalist utopia in his book, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace*, in which he sees the “enlightened” great capitalists of this country, acting in “their true class interest,” leading our country and the world into an era of unprecedented democracy, industrial expansion and mass well-being. With this rosy picture in mind, he calls upon the workers to join hands harmoniously with the capitalist class in realizing it. He tries to stretch postwar national unity to include reactionary finance capital. All of which fantasy, of course, would boll down in reality to the workers in this country subordinating themselves to a more intensified exploitation at home, to the world being soon dragged into a fresh growth of fascism and a new world war.

Comrade Browder's revisionist ideas violate the most fundamental principle of Marxism-Leninism. They are more akin to the bourgeois notions of Eric Johnston than to the scientific principles of Marx and Lenin. As I said in my letter of January 20, 1944, to the National Committee, “In this (Browder's) picture, American imperialism virtually disappears, there remains hardly a trace of the class struggle, and Socialism plays practically no role whatever.” Browder's revisionism, while it goes in the general Social-Democratic direction of subordinating the workers to capitalist domination, is actually not Social-Democratic, but bourgeois liberal.

Browder attempts to liquidate the class struggle by preaching an illusory harmony of interest between the workers and their class enemies, the big capitalists, in the postwar period. For, if what Browder says were true, that the capitalists would, of their own volition, radically improve the workers' real wages, there would remain little or no basis for the class struggle. Browder's idea, too, that the American big capitalists, in their “true class interests” virtually must make them hot only raise the workers' living standards but live in friendly harmony with the U.S.S.R., has nothing in common with the Marxist conception of classes and their roles. There is no Marxian principle which holds that social classes “must” follow “their true class interests.” Indeed, history is replete with examples of classes which, under immediate economic, political or ideological pressures, have violated their “true class interests,” with disastrous consequences to themselves. A striking case in point was the way in which the British ruling class tended to follow the policy of appeasing Hitler to the point where its world position would have been irretrievably shattered had not the U.S.S.R. become involved in the war. To appease the big capitalists and thus to make sure that they would follow their “true class interests,” Comrade Browder not only dissolved the Communist Party, but he was also prepared, if he could do so, to liquidate the Communist Political Association and to give up even our Communist ideology.

Browder also tries to by-pass American imperialism theoretically. In fact, his book, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace*, is an attempt to prove that the epoch of imperialism has passed and that we are now in a period of inevitable friendly collaboration between the capitalist and socialist sectors of the world; a collaboration, which Browder would not base upon the strength of the U.S.S.R., the colonial countries, the new war-born democracies, and the labor movement of the world (as it must be if it is to exist), but upon the good will of the great capitalists, particularly the Americans, whose “enlightenment,” “high moral sense” and “true class interests” will dictate to them this collaborationist course. Browder, indeed, undertakes to wipe out American imperialism regarding its relations with the U.S.S.R., and he also draws idyllic pictures of how American big capital will, under our Government's auspices, inaugurate great campaigns of industrialization and democratization throughout the world. According to him, our capitalists would make the rest of the world free and prosperous whether it wanted to be so or not. For, says Browder (on page 79):

"There is not a government in the capitalist or colonial world that would dare refuse or withdraw from such a partnership, once the United States made clear the benefits that would accrue to all concerned."

Browder also seeks to do away with Lenin's theory of the decay of capitalism in the imperialist stage, and therewith, he would even shelve the whole Marxian concept of the necessity for socialism. There can be no other conclusions from his argumentation; for if it is possible for world capitalism under the leadership of the United States and especially under the tutelage of "enlightened" American finance capital to overcome its general crisis and to embark upon a new period of exuberant and long continued economic expansion, then there would be no possibility to establish socialism in any thinkable perspective. Thus, Marx and Lenin would be wrong and Browder right. There is serious reason to conclude that when Comrade Browder cast aside the slogan of socialism (as an educational issue) in January, 1944, he did not merely put it in mothballs, to be taken out again when its advocacy would be more convenient; but very probably he thought he was done with it for good. In his theory of a capitalist system capable of overcoming its basic contradictions there is no room for socialism, even in the most remote sense.

That Comrade Browder was attempting to have our Party discard basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and to adopt a bourgeois-liberal program is incontestable. In his Bridgeport speech eighteen months ago, he gave a clear indication of this when he said: "Old formulas and old prejudices are going to be of no use whatever to us as guides to find our way in the new world." What are the "old formulas and old prejudices" that Browder warns us are useless? These are none other than our Marxist-Leninist analysis of the class struggle, of imperialism, of socialism. All these Browder himself had already abandoned, and he was trying to get our Party to do likewise.

BROWDER'S REVISIONISM IN PRACTICE

Comrade Browder especially began to develop his opportunistic ideas shortly after his return from Atlanta (although roots of them can be found earlier). At that time the Party had a sound war policy, worked out during his incarceration; including all-out support of the war, support of the Roosevelt Administration with criticism, national unity of all pro-war elements, including pro-Roosevelt capitalists, the achievements of maximum war production, the labor no-strike pledge, and an active defense of the masses' economic and political rights as a war necessity. Browder almost immediately started to project his opportunism into this essentially correct wartime policy. One of the first signs of this was his utopian handling of the question of a centralized war economy. He developed his opportunistic position further in his book, *Victory and After*. And his revisionist point of view finally came to full expression in his volume, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace*.

The revisionistic ideas contained in these works and in Comrade Browder's other writings and policies, not only introduced confusion into our political thinking, but also hindered our practical work in support of the war. In my article in the *Daily Worker* of June 10, I listed a number of the more important of our shortcomings and mistakes during the war, bred of Browder's opportunism, a list which, besides those noted above, included inadequate criticism of the Roosevelt Administration; failure to demand a coalition government with labor as a full partner; rejection of the demand that international labor should be represented in all wartime conferences of the great powers; proposals for a joint Republican-Democratic ticket in the national elections, which, if adopted, would have eliminated Roosevelt as a candidate, etc. To this list could be added many others, in almost all branches of our Party work. Such, for example, as the tendency, in the earlier stages of the war, to neglect to press militantly for Negro rights; the underestimation, for a time, of the necessity for increased wage rates for the workers in our eagerness to have the incentive wage established; and the failure to make a major issue in the ranks of labor and among the public generally of the vital matter of the Government and the trade union movement giving our armed forces a thoroughly democratic education regarding the causes and purposes of the war.

Through all of Comrade Browder's theoretical and practical errors runs the ever-present thread of a tendency to rely upon the big bourgeoisie for national leadership, to appease reactionary finance capital, to underestimate the independent, democratic role of labor and other democratic forces, and especially of our Party, in the national antifascist front. It is true that the Communists stood second to none in their war effort and made a record of which the Party may well be proud. But we must admit that in the light of the existing opportunities and the responsibilities we fell short in

many respects precisely because of these opportunist errors.

Harmful during the war, Comrade Browder's false policies would have been disastrous if they had been carried over into the postwar period. Once their German and Japanese imperialist rivals are both disposed of, the American finance capitalists will feel freer to maneuver, in all probability within the framework of the United Nations, against the U.S.S.R., Great Britain, and the new democracies being born out of the war; they will also intensify their attacks upon the trade unions in this country. This is obvious from the course of events since the end of the European phase of the war. In such a situation the democratic forces will have to unite firmly in order to put into reality the objectives of Teheran and Yalta. Browder's illusions about a long-term of class peace in the United States and of a smooth working together of American big capital with our wartime allies would be a brake upon this needful struggle of the democratic masses and peoples and would play right into the hands of American imperialism.

Very probably, even if Duclos' letter had never arrived, our Party, under the pressure of postwar tensions, would of itself have thrown off Browder's revisionism and found its way to a correct policy. Indeed, there were already many tendencies in this direction. This correction of our Party's policy, however, could have come only in a struggle against Browder, as is quite evident from his present resistance to such a change. One of the basic reasons why the Duclos letter was so quickly endorsed by our Party is precisely because the end of the European stage of the war threw into the spotlight the bankruptcy of Browder's opportunistic policies.

HOW DID WE DEVELOP OUR REVISIONISM?

How did it happen that Comrade Browder could have our Party adopt as policy his crude revisionism, his apology for American imperialism, which has confused our Party's thinking, weakened its practical work, checked its growth, and injured its prestige among the broad masses?

First, I should say, it was because of an inadequate Marxist-Leninist training on the part of our leadership. Although in the Party many comrades opposed Browder's line and there was much uncertainty and uneasiness generally, the leadership was not able to penetrate his bourgeois sophistries and to expose their anti-Marxist character. The fact that our Party, throughout the war and even for some years earlier, had been in collaboration with the pro-Roosevelt minority section of the bourgeoisie, gave Comrade Browder a convenient jumping-off place for his attempt to have us cooperate with the whole bourgeoisie, including its decisive, reactionary sections. That our Party was not able to see through this opportunistic maneuver is proof positive that we are badly in need of strengthening our basic theoretical training, of refreshing our understanding from those "old (Marxist-Leninist) books" and "old formulas" that Browder wants us to discard as obsolete.

A second, and very decisive reason for our Party's falling victim to Comrade Browder's revisionism was the lack of political discussion and democracy in the Party. During the past several years we have allowed ourselves to depart widely from the principles of democratic centralism. Browder has been conceded altogether excessive authority — to such an extent, in fact, that his word virtually became law in the Party. He was in the habit of simply laying down the policy, and few ventured to dispute his arbitrary pronouncements. Under such conditions, democratic discussion, self-criticism and collective leadership became almost extinct in the top committees of our Party. Besides this, the Party leaders and members poured out upon Browder an impermissible deluge of adulation and super-praise which placed him almost beyond the realm of our criticism.

In this situation there was no real political discussion of Comrade Browder's report on Teheran when he unexpectedly produced his whole opportunist line at the January 1944, meeting of the National Committee. The fact that my letter at the time protesting to the National Committee against Browder's revisionism never reached the membership was due to the lack of democracy in the Party. If I had attempted to take my letter to the Party after it was rejected at the enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau on February 8, 1944, it would have resulted in my immediate expulsion and probably a split in the Party. Comrade Browder made this perfectly clear at the meeting in question. Hence, for the sake of Party

unity, I had to confine by opposition to Browder's revisionism to the National Committee.

In assessing the blame for the serious error our Party has made, the whole top leadership, especially the National Board, bears a heavy responsibility. For, despite Browder's excessive authority, if the members of the Board, or even a substantial minority of them, had taken a stand against Browder's opportunism he could have been defeated. Unfortunately, however, no such development took place. Hence the responsibility of the Board is great.

But the overwhelming share of the responsibility of the error rests with Comrade Browder himself. He originated the opportunistic policies, he theoretically developed them, he used all his power and authority in the Party as a long-time international Communist leader to have them adopted. And now, refusing to admit his error, he has voted and written against the National Committee's resolution which corrects his errors. It is not too much to say that had any other leader in the Party than Comrade Browder presented such a distortion of the Teheran Conference to our Party it would have been rejected as rank opportunism. But Browder was able to put it across because of his great prestige and his over-centralized authority.

All this goes to emphasize the basic need for the development of true democratic centralism in our Party. In the new leadership that will grow out of this situation there must be not one-man control, but a genuine collectivity of effort. There must also be a re-establishment of self-criticism and free political discussion. Only upon the basis of these correct Leninist principles can the all-important Communist clarity, unity and discipline be developed.

THE DANGER OF OVER-CORRECTION

When a Communist Party makes a drastic change of policy, either because of previous errors or a profound alteration in the objective situation, there is always the danger of an over-correction of policy — that is, of flying from one extreme to another. Such over-corrections have occurred more than once in the life of our Party, as well as in those of other countries. This is the main danger that we confront now, and it must be most carefully avoided.

That our party will overwhelmingly endorse the National Committee's Resolution, in the branches and in the coming National Convention, is a practical certainty. The vote of the National Committee — 53 to 1 — is a clear signal as to how the Party as a whole is reacting to the Resolution. Comrade Browder stands quite alone, defending his opportunism, in the National Board and the National Committee. And in the Party at large it is almost exclusively the newer and less developed members who are still giving him some small measure of support. As for the trained Marxist-Leninist members and leaders in our Party, they are almost unanimously backing the National Committee's Resolution.

However, there are serious ideological scars still in the party from our experience with Comrade Browder's revisionism. These must be eliminated by a process of Leninist education. But in liquidating such remnants of revisionism, we must be doubly on guard against falling into the pit of sectarian practices. We must not make the deadly error of trying to cure Browder's opportunism with sectarian-leftism.

This means that our Party has to make the closest study and widest use of the National Committee's Resolution. This Resolution, if correctly understood and systematically applied, will provide us with the basis for the broadest mass contacts we have ever known in the history of our Party. Therefore, it will be the great task of our coming convention, after it has further strengthened our line and rebuilt our national leadership, to proceed to mobilize the entire Party for carrying out the broad mass tasks outlined by the National Committee's Resolution, in defeating fascist Japan and in building a free and prosperous postwar world.