
MARXISM ARMS COMMUNISTS TO MEET AND SOLVE ISSUES TODAY *

BY EARL BROWDER

FOR the first time we are meeting and solving problems for which there are no precedents in history and no formulas from the classics which give us the answer. Perhaps we could say that our party is fully standing on its own feet for the first time. We are seeking the answers to this new period in what, I think, we are all convinced is the right direction; and we are confident that we are really getting our fingers into these problems and beginning to control them. It seems to me that at this Plenum we have demonstrated the highest stage of maturity that our party has ever reached.

I was especially pleased with Bob Minor's contribution to the discussion because it was a living example of how to make use of the classics of Marxism for the new period, without falling into formulas and the searching for formulas.

I think we must emphasize more than ever the tremendous value of the classics of Marxism in arming ourselves to meet and solve the

new and unprecedented problems. Marxism never was a series of dogmas and formulas; it never was a catalogue of prohibitions listing the things we must not do irrespective of new developments and new situations; it does not tell us that things cannot be done; it tells us how to do the things that have to be done, the things that history has posed as necessary and indispensable tasks. Marxism is a theory of deeds, not of don'ts. Marxism is therefore a positive, dynamic, creative force, and it is such a great social power precisely because, as a scientific outlook and method, it takes living realities as its starting point. It has always regarded the scientific knowledge of the past as a basis for meeting the new and unprecedented problems of the present and the future. And the largest problems today are new in a very basic sense.

We have more than ever the task to refresh ourselves in the great tradition of Marxism, completely freeing ourselves from the last remnants of the dogmatic and schematic approach. Marxism is the science of the transition to socialism.

It was Marx and Engels who

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transformed socialism from a utopia into a science, from an inspiring dream—grounded only in the desire for a better life—into a mighty movement powered by the material and objective necessities of social development. That transformation from utopianism has a lesson we have to relearn today in the light of the new world situation. Basically, that lesson is that socialism arises out of the development of existing society which creates certain necessities that ultimately press the great masses of people to take the path of socialism. These necessities exist independently of our thinking, but when we understand how the process works we can greatly facilitate and speed it up. In fact, our understanding and our thinking become a great and decisive factor in turning what history has made objectively possible into actual reality, but our thinking is never an independent factor; and by thinking alone we cannot change the course of history. We can guide the course of history only if we understand the basic forces of history that exist outside of our own minds.

We have to be humble and learn from history; we have to learn from facts and never try to impose our preconceptions upon history. That is one of the first lessons of Marxism, which we have to relearn afresh if we are to make the fullest possible use of this tremendous intellectual arsenal that has been given to us by the great thinkers and leaders of the Socialist-Communist movement. We cannot rise to the heights that are necessary to master

this historical moment through intellectual arrogance. We must be prepared to refresh ourselves according to the necessities of the period into which history has brought us, and, above all, we must understand that history never yet has been known to follow anyone's private blueprint. The great turning points of history are in this sense always unexpected; there is always something new, something fresh in them that has to be fundamentally evaluated. We are in such a period today.

This requires from everyone who aspires to leading functions a deep feeling of responsibility, personal responsibility for the successful conduct of the smallest tasks of the daily work such as the successful conclusion of our recruiting drive, for example, but above all, it requires intellectual responsibility, the responsibility for each one of us individually to think through and master these problems.

Fortunately even these new things in history do not present themselves unannounced; almost always they knock on the door before they come in. That is why we were not entirely unprepared in this Plenum for the decisions that we are making, unprecedented as these decisions are. True, according to all of the text books of the past, we are departing from orthodoxy, because none of our text books foresaw or predicted a long period of peaceful relations in the world before the general advent of socialism. But now we are setting our course to realize the possibilities inherent in the present situation of what would

have been described in the past as an evolutionary development of the transition period—provided, of course, that we can successfully meet our responsibilities.

This is possible because the price in blood and struggle has been paid in advance in this terrific war, and because we already have a firm bastion and fortress of socialism established in the Soviet Union during twenty-six years of the most heroic and intelligent construction which the history of humanity has ever recorded.

We are not prepared to give any broad theoretical generalizations for this period. But we know, as we go into it boldly, without the slightest hesitation, that we are firmly guided by the theoretical heritage of Marxism and that the Teheran Declaration which was signed by Churchill, Roosevelt and the great Marxist Stalin represents the only program in the interest of the toiling masses of the whole world in the next period. We could not do more than give general intimations of the possibilities of such a period. We could not unconditionally throw our forces into this new period while it was still merely a possibility, but now that this possibility has been confirmed by the agreement of Teheran, we know we can feel absolutely certain that we have crossed the border-line from the past and have definitely entered the present.

When we speak of the Teheran agreement we must understand that it was an agreement among the ruling classes of three great powerful countries who today hold an almost

complete monopoly of military power in the world and an overwhelming preponderance of economic power. The power behind that combination comes from its permanence, because if it would not be permanent it would not be powerful. The power of that combination can only be fully realized when we begin to study what are the alternatives to it. Many estimable gentlemen today are lightheartedly taking potshots at the Teheran agreement. But I venture to predict that they will be changing their tune, because they will begin to face the alternative to Teheran; and if they don't face it, history will begin to rub their noses into the problem and make them face it.

Imagine the problems facing the United States without the Teheran agreement. American economy has been expanded to a scale beyond the wildest dreams of any American capitalist. The American bourgeoisie today is in possession of the effective control and direction of such enormous productive powers that their imaginations cannot encompass it. Some of them have had their minds turned as a result of this power and the product is the fantasies of the "Luce-thinking" school. But what are all the fantasies of this "Luce-thinking" school worth unless they are brought down to earth and harnessed to the Teheran agreement? They will all explode from their own internal contradictions unless they are harnessed to serve the cause of world progress, harnessed in the combination of Teheran. And without Teheran the catastrophe that would

come upon us and the rest of the world would be all the more certain and complete. These hard facts are the material guarantee behind the Teheran pact.

Our confidence in this Agreement is buttressed not only in our high opinion of each of the three great men who brought this pact into being, but first of all in an understanding and knowledge, that there is no other way for the world and that there is still intelligence enough left in America, despite our newspapers, to guarantee that our country will not rush headlong and blindly over the precipice of disaster that is the only alternative to Teheran. With that confidence, we can be completely sure of our course.

Our course is not easy and it will require political struggles for which we will have to find ever new means and forms; but these must be struggles for unity in the nation, not struggles which will break that unity; struggles against the enemies of unity and for uniting everyone who recognizes even indistinctly, but enough to take the first steps, the need of going along the road of the Teheran Conference.

We are not in our new course entering any other party. The Communists are not joining the Democratic Party; the Communists are not joining the Republican Party. We are not endorsing either of the major parties, and we are not condemning either of the major parties. We are taking the line of issues and not of parties and of choosing men as they stand for or

against issues without regard to party labels. This was one of the biggest arguments I developed in my book *Victory—And After*. When I say that we are not entering parties or not endorsing parties, I don't mean we have any objections to our individual members registering in one or the other of the parties when their local community life calls for it and their associates and fellows are following that course. But I mean that the Communist movement and our organization is not committed to any party label or any party organization.

We are independent, in the same way as the great bulk of America's independent voters who make up fully one-third of the total voting strength of the country and who are not committed to either of the major parties, though most of them are registered with one or the other. As a part of this independent voters' group, we may find our members registering wherever they think will best advance the progressive cause. That is one of the rights of citizenship and our organization would not think of denying to any American the full exercise of all his rights as an American citizen. But our organization is not and will not be an organization committed to any party; and that is necessarily the case because of the nature of the two major parties. These two parties are essentially institutionalized channels, semi-governmental in their nature, through which the citizenry groups and regroups itself from election to election according to the leadership that is thrown up

and the issues that are thereby developed.

In the general relationship of forces in the country, for us there can be no commitment to party because that would be to commit ourselves to an institutionalized structure which stands for nothing in particular in the political sense. Therefore we have to concentrate our attention exclusively on issues, and on men who represent issues within the various party structures, and choose freely among them on their merits without regard to party label.

This is the major point that I thought necessary to bring forward in these summary remarks, as a sort of continuation of the discussion, because it seems to me that while there is general acceptance of the course on which we are going, there is perhaps not the same complete and general understanding that this new course is not in any way an identification with any of the old party structures. If we

are identifying ourselves with any general, big political grouping in the country, in the narrower electoral sense, it is with the great body of independent voters of America who in the electoral struggle will choose whom they support on the basis of their judgment of the character of men and of the issues for which they stand, and nothing else.

I have the general feeling that in these three days we have welded together such a common body of opinion so firmly grounded in our own experience, in the objective reality of the world outside, and in our capacity to understand—a collective capacity which is our great strength—that we can go from this meeting of the National Committee with a greater confidence than ever before that we will meet and solve the problems facing us with honor to our great movement, to our organization and with a full meeting of our responsibilities to the nation and to the working class.