

Browder's 'Progressive' Imperialism

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(Third of a Series)

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Earl Browder stubbornly defends his main thesis which is the basis for his whole revisionist line. It is that American imperialism is capable of playing a "progressive role," if only it has "intelligent" leadership to express and champion its self-interest. He considers that the main task of the Marxists in the U. S. today is to reassure the imperialists and encourage the more "intelligent" among them in order not to drive them into the arms of the "most reactionary fellows" among them. Browder stands by what he wrote in "Teheran—Our Path to War and Peace," when he said:

"There is a growing volume of evidence that there are such men of vision and understanding in the ranks of big capital . . . We must learn to welcome their appearance and prove in practical life that such cooperative effort in the spirit of national unity is both possible and profitable."

The people Browder had in mind at that time were the Eric Johnstons, the Harrimans, the Thomas Lamonts. The role that these representatives of big capital are playing today in furthering the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, in the attack on civil rights, and in opposing genuine measures to bring to the people relief from the growing inflation, is comment enough on the real meaning of Browder's line.

As for the kind of cooperation Browder wants the labor movement to display toward these representatives of big capital, this is also clear. It is, in effect, to accept their program of attack on the people's welfare without resistance. This cooperative effort Browder speaks about would at its best be the worst kind of class collaboration—collaboration to advance Wall Street's program of reaction at home and abroad, collaboration in support of the Marshall Plan and preparation for World War III.

According to Browder, because Roosevelt believed in capitalism and championed the general interests of the capitalists, and since many reform measures were enacted under the Roosevelt Administration, and because the U. S. joined in the war against the Axis on the side of the Soviet Union, this proves that American imperialism played a "progressive" role.

He then says that if American imperialism does not today play a "progressive" role, this is so because Truman does not possess the "intelligence" of Roosevelt. To get the imperialists to return to a progressive course, requires that the dominant capitalists use "intelligence" to help them understand their self-interest, and secure "intelligent" leadership to act in their interests.

BROWDER GOES FURTHER than that. He finds in "intelligence" the answer as to why out of the same world crisis of capitalism a Roosevelt came to the helm in the U.S.A. and a Hitler in Germany. He also tries to explain the difference between Roosevelt and Churchill in that

they were representatives of a stronger and weaker imperialism, not in differences of material forces and contradictions and in class relations, but solely on the basis of a difference in "intelligence." This is how he resolves and answers the questions as to why fascism came to power in Germany and the New Deal in the U.S.A., as well as the differences between Roosevelt and Churchill:

"The apparent paradox, that the strongest imperialism played the more progressive role, is fully to be explained within the terms of the Marxist-Leninist analysis of imperialism, which by no means excludes the influence of intelligence upon the course of history. Roosevelt's greater progressivism, in comparison with Churchill arose from his more intelligent understanding of the realities of the war, and not from a less single-minded devotion to the preservation of capitalism."

According to Browder's idealistic conception, imperialism can be either reactionary or progressive. Thus we have it that in Germany the imperialists were "stupid" and brought Hitler and fascism to power. In the U.S.A. the dominant monopolists were "intelligent" and brought Roosevelt to power. Now again these same capitalists who brought Roosevelt to power have lost their "intelligence" and are, through Truman, carrying out a reactionary policy. If they can regain their "intelligence," then Wall Street can again pursue a progressive policy.

BROWDER QUOTES LENIN'S attack on Kautsky's definition of imperialism as a policy, a policy preferred by finance capital, to justify his position. But actually Browder accepts Kautsky's definition. If imperialism can pursue either a "progressive" or reactionary course determined by its "intelligence," then what is this if not a "policy preferred by finance capital?"

Lenin shows in opposition to Kautsky that imperialism is a stage in the development of capitalism and not just a policy of finance capital. But it is not just a neutral economic category into which can be poured in either a reactionary or "progressive" policy as Browder believes. It is a stage of capitalism which also has its political counterpart.

Here is what Lenin says on this question:

"The political superstructure over the new economics, over monopoly capitalism (imperialism is monopoly capitalism) — is a change from democracy to reaction. To free competition corresponds democracy. To monopoly corresponds political reaction." (A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism.)

(Tomorrow: "Roosevelt's Role in History")