

CPA Discussion Page

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Browder on Revisionism

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

In Comrade Browder's article in yesterday's Daily Worker, entitled *On the Question of Revisionism*, we have another restatement of his thesis that the "intelligent" and "progressive" big capitalists of the United States will lead our country and the world to a safe haven of peace, democracy and prosperity. Browder has learned nothing from the profound discussion that our Party has been carrying on for the past several weeks, except to hide his bourgeois reformist line under more skillful phrases. Thus, his article is replete with an extra dose of Browderite misrepresentations, misquotations, evasions and factional distortions.

Monopolies

On the question of our attitude toward the monopolies, Comrade Browder assails the National Committee's proposals to curb the monopolies as virtually a plan to establish socialism now in this country. He implies that the Party's immediate line is to "break" the power of monopoly capital, which he declares could only mean socialism. This, of course, is a direct misrepresentation of the Party's policy. Our National Committee has not made any such proposition, nor has any member of it. Browder's urgent solicitude for the monopolies is not due to any fear that we are all set to "break" their power, but because of his belief that they are progressive and must not be seriously interfered with. This is why he so vociferously denounced Henry Wallace's anti-monopoly speeches as crass leftism, and why he glanced disapprovingly down his nose at Roosevelt's election-time attacks upon the trusts. For, certainly, Browder did not base his disapproval of these liberals upon a belief that they were out to "break" the trusts and thereby to establish socialism. He just does not want the trusts attacked, for fear of offending big capital. Browder, on the question of curbing the monopolies, holds a position far to the right not only of William Green, but also of the platforms of both the Democratic and Republican parties. Indeed, not even the monopolists themselves have ever dared openly to ask for the free hand that Browder in his book on Teheran and in his policies willingly concedes them.

Comrade Browder pins his whole case about what he alleges to be our plan to "break the trusts" as a task of today upon an article of mine that appeared in the *New Masses* on Dec. 14, 1943. Purportedly directly quoting me, he says that I "insisted" that we base our 1944 election program upon "drastic curbs on monopoly capital, leading toward the breaking of its power."

This is a deliberate falsification of my position, as well as a misquotation from my article. Never did I propose any such formulation for our election program, much less "insist" upon it, as Comrade Browder knows quite well. Nor did I write it in my article and the words he ascribes to me are not to be found there. The article in question dealt with postwar perspectives in general, embracing many questions as well as the elections, such as organizing the unorganized, trade union unity, working class political organization, etc. It was in discussing, not an election program, but the long-run perspectives of the workers, that I wrote:

"Upon the war's end organized labor will also have to begin to pay real attention to correcting the fundamental evils that have produced these two great wars, plus the long economic crisis in one generation. Fascism must be defeated eco-

nomically and politically in this country, as well as militarily on the battlefields abroad. This means that the power of monopoly capital, the poison source of fascism all over the world, will have to be drastically curbed and eventually broken. To do this the nationalization of the banks and of such industries as the railroads, coal and steel is imperative. Nor can the danger of war, fascism and mass pauperization be finally liquidated in our country until the American people establish socialism."

This was an ultimate program, not an election platform, as Browder falsely asserts. As such, I stand upon it squarely. But, of course, there is much in this statement of an ultimate program that offends Comrade Browder, who has elected himself the champion to keep everybody, including Mr. Wallace and the late President Roosevelt, from curbing the trusts, or even speaking ill of them. With his visions of a capitalist utopia now in the making, he has a great distaste for any idea of breaking his "progressive" monopolies, however "eventual" the breaking may be. He has also discarded socialism completely, both for now and the future, and the thought that mass poverty can be finally curbed only by the introduction of socialism goes contrary to his whole thesis of an expanding, progressive capitalism.

But Browder does not attack my article as an ultimate program, which it is; he dishonestly twists it into an immediate election program and then, on the basis of this hocus pocus, he tries to make the Party membership believe that our Party now has as its immediate program the breaking of the power of finance capital: i.e., the establishment of Socialism. Such intellectual trash he hands us in the name of Marxism.

Not satisfied with this complete distortion of the Party's position, as well as my own, on monopolies, Comrade Browder, who was at great pains to establish his argument that the Party is fighting for Socialism as an immediate issue, suddenly turns a handspring and, because the Party correctly demands the enforcement of the anti-trust laws, says the opposite to his earlier argument, namely, that "all the furious outcry against the monopolies in the course of our current discussion comes to the climax of—a return to the Sherman anti-trust law!!!"

This is an insult to the Party's intelligence. Comrade Browder would have our Party ignore the elementary fact that its whole fight on every front is in some way or another centered against the monopolies and has the effect of curbing their power. This is true when we are struggling to defeat reactionaries in the elections, when we are working to strengthen the unions in the basic industries, when we are fighting against Jimcrowsism and anti-Semitism, when we are battling against profiteering and unjust tax laws, when we are fighting for the full production program, etc., etc. And, above all, is it true when we are fighting for a democratic outcome of this war and the realization of the Teheran objectives. Everywhere and always, the success of these struggles depends upon the clearness with which we see the real enemy we are fighting on the home front, reactionary monopoly capital. Browderism, seeking constantly to shield the monopolists from conscious attack, tends to compromise and weaken this whole struggle.

The U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

Comrade Browder, after "straightening us out" on the monopoly question, proceeds to "correct" the Party line also on the matter of

Anglo-Soviet relations. Here he presents us with a restatement of his shocking speech in the National Board on June 2, which opened the eyes of many members to the danger of his general political line. That is to say, once again he summons us to rely upon the big bourgeoisie to maintain good relations with the USSR.

But this time Comrade Browder is compelled to use a few new phrases. His old clichés about the "intelligence" and "progressivism" of the big capitalists being the decisive factors in determining their policy towards the USSR have been so completely discredited in the Party discussion that he does not venture to use them again. The same thing is true of his idealistic, non-Marxist nonsense about the "true class interests" of the big capitalists being the thing that will hold them to a line of friendly cooperation with the USSR. So he, therefore, has had to dig up a new and more plausible term. This time it is "the profit motive" of the big bourgeoisie that we must rely upon to guard and promote good American-Soviet relations.

But this "profit motive" is only Browder's former capitalist "intelligence," "progressivism" and "true class interests" dressed up in a new garb. Here again, we must say, "No, Comrade Browder, we cannot rely upon 'the profit motive' either, no more than we could upon the capitalists' 'intelligence,' 'progressivism,' and 'true class interests' to guarantee sound USA-USSR relations." It is, of course, very important in these relations that the capitalists want to trade with the USSR, and it is also important that the more farsighted among the capitalists realize the folly of a collision with the USSR. But these factors are not decisive, in the sense that they can be depended upon, as Browder says, to cement relations between the two great countries. They can readily be outweighed by other factors not immediately related to profits in trading with the USSR, such as the big bourgeoisie's dread of the spread of democracy throughout the world, their hatred of Socialism as typified by the USSR, their basic trend towards fascism, and their urge for imperialist expansion. Therefore, the only guarantee of continued and close collaboration between the USA and the USSR, which is the key to world peace and economic development, is that the democratic forces of the world, and particularly those in the United States, remain keenly on the alert to defeat the main enemies of such collaboration, namely, monopoly capital. This, Browder utterly fails to see. The more he writes about Soviet-American relations, the clearer he exposes the dangerous character of his revisionism.

Socialism

Comrade Browder, in his article, also speaks of Socialism. He argues to the effect that his position on this basic question has been justified because the Communist Parties of Europe, like our own, have not put Socialism upon the order of business as a question of immediate struggle after the war. But we did not need Browder to tell us that Socialism is not the issue at this time; we ourselves know that, and it was already a matter of public knowledge from the published programs of European underground movements.

What Browder is being criticized for regarding Socialism is not because he told us that Socialism is not an immediate issue, but because he abandoned the whole historical perspective of Socialism, even in the most remote sense. This, of course, the European Communist Parties emphatically did not do. Browder cast Socialism aside altogether, sub-

stituting for it a capitalist utopia. In his book *Teheran*, he developed a perspective of an expanding and developing capitalist system, which not only contradicted Lenin's theory of the decay of capitalism under imperialism, but also abolished the basic Marxist perspective of Socialism itself.

When Comrade Duclos said that "Earl Browder made himself the protagonist of a false concept of the ways of social evolution in general, and in the first place, the social evolution in the United States," he obviously had in mind the fact that Browder has abandoned the concept of a social evolution that culminates eventually in the establishment of Socialism, and instead, believes in a social development leading to a rejuvenated, progressive capitalism that liquidates the need and possibility of Socialism.

National Unity

In dealing with the question of national unity in the postwar period, Comrade Browder exposes again his revisionism. His theory is that monopoly capital, or the decisive sections of it, must be a part of the postwar national unity, and he pictures a situation practically devoid of struggle, and in which labor and capital will agree upon basic national policy. To get big capital into this national unity it must be appeased, according to Browder's harmony of interest of labor and capital ideas. Consequently, in the postwar period there must be no attempts to curb the trusts generally, there must be no "dictation" by the unions to the monopolists, there must be a labor's postwar no-strike pledge (see Browder's formulation of this in his article), there must be an incentive wage generally in the industries (Daily Worker, April 14, 1944), and (judging by the way leading comrades have advocated this idea throughout the Party unchecked by Browder) there must also be guaranteed profits for the employers.

Such a national unity in the postwar period, based on class peace with the monopolists, would be a first-class disaster to the workers and the people generally (as well as to our Party). It would paralyze the unions by robbing them of their strike weapon in the face of the employers' offensive; it would turn the unions, with their incentive wage plans, into speed-up instruments of the bosses; it would put the employers on "Easy Street" as regards profits; it would exempt the trusts from public criticism and give them a free hand to carry out their exploitation and reactionary politics. In short, it would be a nation under the complete domination of finance capital; that is, a paradise for the employers and a menace to the peace and prosperity of the world.

Obviously, therefore, Browder's conception of postwar national unity is absurd. The national unity of the postwar period must be made, not with the participation of the great finance capitalists, but with the truly democratic masses against these big capitalists. That a few big capitalists may go along with the national democratic coalition does not alter the rule. All the democratic forces of every class must join ranks against the common enemy of labor and the people, the trusts. Comrade Duclos gives a clear picture of the kind of national unity we must strive for when he says:

"We, too, in France, are resolute partisans of national unity, and we show that in our daily activity, but our anxiety for unity does not make us lose sight for a single moment of the necessity of arraying ourselves against the men of the trusts."

Duclos' proposition to organize national unity not with, but against,

"the men of the trusts" is doubly correct for the United States, where the big capitalists are the richest, most powerful, most reactionary, and most rabidly imperialist of any in all the United Nations.

Browder's oft-repeated argument, which he uses to buttress his false conception of national unity, namely, that it was finance capital that guaranteed the election of Roosevelt, is ridiculous. In reality, never did any President stand for re-election with so few big capitalists supporting him as Roosevelt had, which, of course, did not mean that the Roosevelt Administration was not a capitalist government. One of the most pronounced aspects of the campaign, indeed, was the intense effort made by the great bulk of the biggest capitalists in the country to defeat Roosevelt—a fact known to everybody, and which flatly contradicts Browder's theory that "the decisive sections of finance capital" were and are in the progressive camp. In his article, to justify his wrong notion of national unity, Browder repeats this absurd theory by stating: "It was that section of the big bourgeoisie represented by the *New York Times*, which swung over to Roosevelt in the final fortnight of the election campaign, together with the mass following which it commands, that furnished the narrow margin of victory." This is supremely absurd. It is quite certain that the deathbed switch of the *Times* in the last days of the campaign did not bring as many as 100,000 votes to Roosevelt. Indeed, the figure was probably very much less. The belated, wavering stand of the *Times* was completely indecisive in carrying New York State, much less the United States.

The Labor-Management Charter

Curiously, Comrade Browder complains of the slowness of the National Board, and particularly of myself, in rejecting the Labor-Management Charter. I say "curiously" because Browder himself accepted this charter entirely without criticism (Daily Worker, April 8, 1945), and he still does, his only complaint being that the notoriously reactionary National Association of Manufacturers was not a party to the charter.

Speaking for myself, I may say that when the report on this charter was first made in the National Board, three months ago, I replied to the report with such an emphatic set of warnings of the dangers involved in this form of class collaboration that Browder declared that I was rejecting the charter outright. I did not so reject it, however, believing for a while that it could be used as an instrument to advance the unity of labor and to help split the bourgeoisie. But I am now convinced that the charter cannot do these things. This conclusion is emphasized by the fact that both the AFL and the Chamber of Commerce are now sabotaging the charter. Organized labor cannot afford to feed itself with illusions, such as the charter and Browder cultivate, that it can harmonize its interests with big capital in an over-all postwar economic program. This is clear from the charter itself, which repudiates the intervention of the government in production, does not accept the new Economic Bill of Rights, and does not endorse the principle of full employment. In order to achieve the economic aims of labor and the people, the trade unions, together with the rest of the democratic forces of the nation, in the postwar period, will have to conduct a long and complicated economic and political struggle against the big capitalists. These aims cannot be achieved in advance by a harmoni-

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ous agreement between labor and capital.

Foreign Trade

When Browder comes to the question of foreign markets as a means of building up full employment he gives full vent, not only to the imperialist content of his revisionism, but also the spirit of irresponsibility with which his article is shot through. Browder's idea of increasing American exports, as he made abundantly clear in his book on Teheran, would be for the big capitalists of this country to launch a drive to develop an export trade of 40 to 50 billion dollars per year. The only way that even an approach to achieving this fantastic total could be made would be for American big business virtually to monopolize the export trade of the whole world. Not even the most blatant exponents of American imperialism have hitherto hazarded such a grandiose plan for realizing American world domination.

As against Browder's imperialist nonsense regarding exports, the National Committee, as part of its program for realizing minimum employment, or an approximation of it, definitely proposes that every effort be extended to develop American export trade, without reactionary interference in the life of other countries. To emphasize the importance of American foreign loans as a means of thus building up our export trade and to help bring about the economic rehabilitation of the world, I stated at the recent National Convention meeting that "The United States must, on pain of economic disaster to itself and the world, make available its great economic resources as a major factor in rebuilding the ravaged countries and to begin the industrialization of the more backward lands."

In spite of all this, however, we have Comrade Browder, in his article, making such irresponsible statements as that the National Committee believes "that a program for markets would only be an effort to help capitalism solve its inner contradictions, and this is not permissible," that "anyone who expects full employment is a damned fool," that "semi-Trotskyist formulations on this question have been granted full freedom of circulation in our ranks and among our leadership," and more of the like. Browder's purpose with such demagoguery is, of course, to hide the reactionary character of his own proposals and to blind the party membership to the constructive nature of the National Committee's resolution.

Doubling the Workers' Wages

In his article, Comrade Browder, dealing with the question of the expansion of the domestic market, has, at long last, come to repudiate his proposition that his "intelligent" capitalists in the postwar period would voluntarily double the wages of their workers. This is news, indeed! From the storm signals upon the present political horizon, even Browder, it appears, has been forced to see the nonsense of so ridiculous a proposal. His "intelligent" capitalists seem to have let him down. But in a true Browder spirit, instead of admitting that he made a serious error in expecting such huge voluntary wage increases from the employers, Browder tries to wiggle out of the whole position and to blame it upon some one else. He says I caricatured his proposition.

But I am afraid he will not succeed in dodging this stupid error of his. The record is too clear on the matter. One of the most deplorable things in the history of our party was the agitation that Browder made to convince the workers that the bosses would hugely increase their wages voluntarily in the postwar period. It made us ridiculous amongst the workers, and certainly the capitalists, whose goodwill Browder was so servilely cultivating, must have guffawed at the silly idea. Never will I forget the sense of shame and indignation that I felt sitting at the Madison Square Garden meeting on Dec. 31, 1944, listening to the head of the American Communist Party shouting the

following drivelt to the workers:

"Some extraordinary means must be found to double the capacity of the domestic market, and there seems no other way but approximately to double the buying power of the average individual consumer. How that shall be done we will not suggest at this time. We look forward to practical suggestions from the capitalists who must find the solution in order to keep their plants operating." (Emphasis mine, W. Z. F.)

No wonder that large numbers of workers, hearing this stuff, left the Garden in disgust.

The above quotation is only one example of the flood of such nonsense with which Browder filled our press at the time. Again, for example, in the Daily Worker of April 14, 1944, Browder tells us that the real wages of the workers must be doubled twice over; the first time in order to absorb half of the 90-billion-dollar shortage in purchasing power to reach wartime levels (the other half, he said, would come from exports), and the second time that the real wages of the workers would be doubled after foreign countries began to repay us in goods for their loans. And how was this "double-doubling" of the workers' wages to be accomplished? Well, as usual, it was the "intelligent" capitalists, following their "true class interests," who would do it. "We need to welcome every such sign of intelligence from the capitalists," Browder is quoted as saying. Then the Daily Worker goes on in its account of Browder's speech:

"Browder insisted that there must be no cynicism toward the capitalists in connection with the program he outlined."

Has Browder finally rid his mind of this incredible nonsense about the capitalists voluntarily doubling and redoubling the workers' wages? I doubt it very much, for the idea is part and parcel of his whole absurd scheme of the "intelligent" American capitalists, in pursuing their "true class interests," leading our country and the world into a capitalist Utopia.

Economic Crises

The way Comrade Browder handles the question of a postwar economic crisis is a characteristic piece of Browder double-talk. He starts out by citing Marx on the inevitability of economic crises "so long as capitalism lasts." Then (illustrative of how he has discarded Marxism completely) he proceeds to argue elaborately that an economic crisis after this war "is not inevitable." "It can be avoided," he says, "by wise, energetic, unified leadership which gathers all the available forces for the enforcement of correct policies. If nevertheless the crisis comes, it can be charged directly to the criminal stupidity, greed and irresponsibility of the capitalists who refused to carry out such policies. The responsibility for such a disaster will also be shared by all in the labor movement who insisted upon the doctrine of 'inevitability.'"

It may be stated that Stalin is one of those who thinks that an economic crisis after this war is inevitable in the United States, as he was quoted as saying in his interview with Eric Johnston in Moscow. Stalin, not Browder, is right in his forecast of an American postwar economic crisis. Our task in this respect is not, as Browder wants us to do, to spin capitalist Utopias and to fill the workers with illusions that American capitalism can overcome its most basic contradictions. Our job is to mitigate as far as we can the effects of the inevitable postwar economic crisis by adopting all practical economic measures to maintain the masses' purchasing power, to keep up the maximum of production, private and government-stimulated, to provide social security protection for the workers against the coming economic storms, and to teach the workers that socialism is the way to abolish economic crises.

A Synthetic Danger

Comrade Browder, in his article,

does see some political dangers ahead for us. And what are these dangers? Are they the imperialist plottings abroad of American big capitalists, or are they the growing employers' industrial and political offensive in this country? Of course not. In his article Browder does not apply a single word to American imperialism or to the urgent danger of reaction in this country. For how could his "intelligent" and "progressive" capitalists be a menace in such respect? No. Instead, he has made a great discovery. According to him, our party faces as its big peril the danger of syndicalism in its ranks! Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and myself are the culprits. We are going to liquidate the party into a syndicalist swamp, according to Browder.

As for Elizabeth, she was made a member of our National Board upon the proposal of Comrade Browder. So long as she followed Browder's line she was a great asset, with her big mass following; but now that she rejects Browderism she suddenly looms as a menace to us. In answer to Browder's sneers about Comrade Flynn, I would just like to remark that if he had even two percent of her experience on the firing line leading the workers in struggle, perhaps he would not now be trying to inflict his bourgeois liberalism upon our Party.

Comrade Browder levels his charge of Syndicalism against myself on the grounds that I have as my "supreme guide" and "infallible rule," a saying which he says I often repeat, namely, that "What is good for the boss is bad for the workers." This saying he denounces as "purest anarcho-syndicalism" and highly destructive in its implications.

Now I hate to stick a pin into this balloon which Browder has so carefully blown up; but in the interests of accuracy I must state that I have never used any such saying, now or in the past. The whole business is a typical Browder misrepresentation. The expression which Browder is distorting, and which I have often used in times of strikes and other sharp struggles, is the old maxim, "Find out what your enemy wants you to do and then don't do it." This is a very different proposition, indeed, from the one that Browder tries to put into my mouth. And I think yet, despite his fulminations, that it is a pretty sound point in strike strategy, in military strategy, and also often in political strategy as well. Browder's "Syndicalist scare" shows the lengths to which he is willing to go in order to confuse our membership as to the true character of his revisionism.

In Conclusion

Comrade Browder professes not to know what there is in his writings specifically, that Duclos criticizes. This is a difficulty, however, that the many writers in our Party discussion do not seem to feel very acutely, judging from the way they are tearing the whole Browder thesis to shreds. It seems to me, too, that Comrade Duclos did say something about Browder liquidating the Communist Party. The only way Browder, in his article, discusses liquidation and revisionism, however, is to apply these terms to the National Committee's policies. If the simile may be pardoned, Browder's maneuver on this question is akin to the dodge of the man who, chased by a crowd for lifting a purse, tries to confuse his pursuers by shouting "Stop thief!"

So far as Browder is concerned, our great Party discussion might just as well not have been held. For apparently, it has not dislodged a single major error from his mind. He still clings to his whole wrong political line. It appears to mean nothing whatever to Browder that, after a profound and prolonged discussion, our entire national leadership and the overwhelming majority of our Party have rejected his crass revisionism and endorsed the Marxist-Leninist line of the National Committee's Resolution. In answer to this, Browder multiplies his sophistical, factional and irresponsible arguments, thus showing his contempt for the political intelligence of our whole Party.