

Opportunism—The Destructive Germ

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Nature provides living bodies with substances called antibodies. Antibodies are sentinels on guard against destructive bacteria and viruses which cause illness. Without this counterforce of resistance the human species—or, for that matter, any living species—could not survive. The sentinels can not stop the bacteria and viruses from entering, but as soon as they do the antibodies go into action. As a rule, they isolate and destroy the alien invaders. However, there are times when the invaders overwhelm the protectors and sickness follows.

The working class and the revolutionary movement face a somewhat similar conflict in the struggle against opportunism.

Opportunism is an old bug. It was around during history's first skirmishes of the class struggle. And it will be present until the last battle of the class struggle has been won. There is no automatic immunity against viruses of opportunism. They both have to be fought and resisted.

Like viruses, opportunism changes in order to adapt to the environment it inhabits.

Like viruses, opportunism can become resistant to old remedies. Therefore, the struggle against opportunistic pressures must be continuous. Viruses strike when the body resistance is low. Opportunism surfaces when the ideological defenses are down.

There are a number of varieties and degrees of opportunistic influences. Lenin spoke about “frank, crude, cynical” varieties which today are represented by the Right social democratic-George Meany-Maoist varieties. Engels wrote about an “honest type, which permeates with “stealth and subtlety.” A differentiation between the two varieties is important only because the method of struggle against each must be on different levels. The resistance, the method of struggle against the “honest” type must be on the level of discussions and explanations. The approach against the “crude, cynical” kind must include the elements of exposé and sharp polemics. One requires medical care, the other calls for surgery.

The varieties are different, but if not resisted the “honest” type rather quickly develops into the “crude, cynical” conscious variety. It is one of those sticky truisms of the class struggle that opportunism is not self-liquidating. Its influences do not disappear without a struggle.

In a basic sense, all varieties of opportunism have one root and a single purpose. It is an unnecessary and unprincipled accommodation and, in the end, a capitulation to the pressures of the enemy. It is a sacrificing of the longer-term and more basic interests of the working class and the people behind the guise of getting concessions on some immediate questions. “It is the preachment of class peace.” Opportunism is the product of political and ideological corruption. In many cases the interest of the class is exchanged for some personal gain or bouquet for the opportunist. Opportunism is an evasion of principle. It spins a soft silken web over the basic contradiction between working-class interests and capitalist class interests. It works to place the working class and people's interests into the shadow of capitalist class interests. With

opportunism, the unnecessary and unprincipled compromises and accommodations are always at the expense of the exploited.

In the world arena, the unnecessary and unprincipled accommodations and capitulations are always at the expense of world socialism and national liberation and the working-class movement. Opportunism prepares the political and ideological soil that leads to co-option by the enemy.

Birds of a Feather

Opportunism often becomes a force that links different ideological currents, which then feed on each other. Birds with opportunistic feathers tend to flock together. Lenin wrote about one such linkage:

Opportunism and social chauvinism have the same political content, namely, class collaboration, repudiation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of revolutionary action, unconditional acceptance of legality, confidence in the bourgeoisie and lack of confidence in the proletariat.

(V.1. Lenin, *Against Revisionism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, pp. 275-6.)

And,

Social chauvinism is opportunism in its finished forms. It is quite ripe for an open, frequently vulgar alliance with the bourgeoisie and the general staff. (Ibid.)

The linkage between opportunism and social chauvinism continues to this very day. The "vulgar alliance" between the Maoist social chauvinists and U.S. imperialism is "opportunism in its finished form."

There is a similar linkage between opportunism and racism. Whenever there is an evasive approach to the issues of the class struggle, there is also an opportunistic silence or evasion of the struggle against racism. They are birds of a feather. They feed on each other and both are an accommodation to the pressures of monopoly capital.

Maoism: Two Sides of One Coin

If the political and ideological antibodies are not on the job, opportunism takes qualitative leaps and very quickly reaches the point where it turns into complete capitulation and betrayal of working-class interests. However, even when opportunism reaches the level of betrayal, because it is unprincipled it still tries to operate behind a smokescreen of radical and even revolutionary cliches. Maoism is a most clear-cut showcase of opportunism, including its ugly, final decaying stage, in which opportunism and social chauvinism have become fully developed

and have formed an alliance with imperialism. Maoism has become “overripe for its open, vulgar alliance with the bourgeoisie and the general staff.”

The military aggression against the people of Vietnam by China is a classic example of the end result of bourgeois nationalism and opportunism when they go unchallenged.

From the day it took root in the Communist Party of China, Maoism has been, in its basic essence, anti-working class. Maoism is a mixture of petty-bourgeois radical empty-headedness, the backward mentality of the feudal warlords, the arrogant nationalism of the capitalist class—all wrapped up and held together with the glue of opportunism. It has trained a leading cadre of imperialist-oriented, unprincipled opportunists.

China's military aggression is anti-working class, anti-socialist and anti-national liberation. This criminal attack should provoke second thoughts among many forces within the world revolutionary process. The leaders, including Communist leaders, who have for opportunistic reasons encouraged and fed Maoism must in all honesty take a second, hard look at what they have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the present criminal acts of Maoism. Without the opportunistic encouragement by forces within the world revolutionary process Maoism would most likely not have reached its present ugly stage.

The opportunistic fig leaves that "Maoism is China's internal affair," or "We should not criticize other parties," or "We treat each Party equally, in the same manner" have been blown away. If we are to learn anything we must draw the lesson that not to fight opportunism within the ranks of the forces of the world revolutionary process is itself opportunism and can only lead to serious setbacks.

Maoism is also proof of how the Right and “Left” varieties of opportunism are, in fact, two sides of one coin. Until a few years ago Maoism covered itself with the most Left radical and revolutionary words and phrases of any in the world. They accused everybody of being soft and prettifying U.S. imperialism. Trade with the U.S. was “betrayal.” Agreement to stop atmospheric A-bomb testing was “being a dupe of U.S. imperialism.” Calling for a coalition against the monopolies was “reformism”, etc. It was always obvious that this was a phony cover for opportunism. So without stopping to take a breath Maoism switched and became the real prettifier of U.S. imperialism. The switch was easy because it was only a change of covers.

U.S. Soil for Opportunism

The specific, historical features of U.S. capitalist development have provided a fertile soil for the growth of opportunism.

Because of some unique developments, U.S. capitalism has enjoyed special profit margins from profitable colonial-imperialist operations, from the racial and national oppression and special exploitation of 40 million U.S. citizens, from an abundance of natural resources, an early development of technology and, as a result, a high rate of exploitation of the working class. Some of these extra profits have been passed on to a small section of the working class as special concessions. This has provided the economic basis that has fed opportunism, especially in the trade union movement.

As a result of a conscious policy by monopoly capital of feeding the roots of opportunism, for a long period it fed and nurtured opportunistic trends in top trade union leaders.

Feeding the roots of opportunism has given rise to concepts of class collaboration and business trade unionism. This has hindered the development of class and socialist consciousness.

Opportunism and Tactics

The “honest” or the unconscious varieties are sometimes difficult to detect and to separate from real tactics because the line between tactics of mass struggle, which are a correct reflection of the level of mass currents, and the opportunistic reactions to the same movements and forces, is not always clearly discernible.

Correct tactics seek for ways to stimulate struggles, to energize and to guide the spontaneous mass currents that objective developments give rise to into channels of mass action and movements. Opportunism uses the weakness of the same mass currents as an excuse for policies of accommodation and avoidance of struggle. Opportunism serves to stifle, suffocate and suppress the potential power that is inherent in all mass currents.

Because of the similarities, at least in appearance, between the “honest” varieties of opportunism and tactics of mass struggle, it is necessary to guard against a number of pitfalls.

The struggle against opportunism of the Right variety must not be permitted to become an excuse and a hiding place for the Left-sectarian variety. There are always some who theorize that if *some* emphasis in a Left direction is effective in the struggle against Right opportunism, then *more* “Left rhetoric” can be even more effective. Such logic leads to extremes, and is out of touch with reality.

It is easy to stand on a dogmatic pedestal, in sectarian isolation from mass currents and movements, and declare to the winds: “I am not an opportunist. I am against all compromises and reforms. All tactical approaches are opportunistic.” Such concepts only become food for the further development of Right opportunism.

Different varieties of opportunism use different cliches, but the results are the same. One variety becomes isolated up front, the other in the rear of mass currents. Because the two varieties are related and feed each other it is necessary to conduct a two-front struggle against them.

Militancy is also a necessary ingredient of struggle. However, militancy that is not related to the level of movements often becomes either Left or Right opportunism. Tactics that tail the level of mass struggle are no cure for Left opportunism. Working-class revolutionary militancy must have a direction and a mass purpose. It must be related to and directed toward getting the maximum movement, on the part of the greatest number of people, from every new objective development.

For an effective struggle against both the Right end Left-sectarian varieties it is necessary to see the dialectical relationship between the objective processes, the spontaneous upheavals they give rise to, the subjective element and the tactics of the conscious force.

Correct tactics must be based on and related to a correct assessment of objective developments, an accurate measure of the level of mass currents and the relationship between them. The choice is not between opportunism and sectarianism. The real choice is a mass policy of struggle, without the opportunistic hangups.

Our History and Opportunism

As a rule, political parties, like individuals, would like to forget that which is unpleasant in their past. In this sense, the Communist Party is different. It is not that we enjoy going over past errors. However, we believe it is necessary for two reasons: to be serious about the present requires honesty about the past, and it is a way of learning from history. Any serious football team, preparing for their next game, spends hours reviewing and studying the films of past games in order to avoid repeating their errors.

It is easier for political parties to review past errors after they have been corrected and time has eased the pain. After the passing of time it is also easier, in retrospect, to be more objective about one's mistakes. Hindsight is always more objective. The passing of time erases the subjective and the elements of "extenuating circumstances" that surround all events.

Reviews by political opponents are not honest or truthful because they concentrate on and exaggerate the weaknesses and errors. This has been the case with the errors in our Party's history which are identified with "Browderism." Most so-called histories of Browderism are one-sided, slanted and out of context. The truth is that even during the period of the errors the Communist Party continued to make important contributions to the struggles and movements of the people. The erroneous policies of Browderism are attached to his name because he was their leading advocate and spokesman. He was their initiator and he never gave them up. He followed the path into the very bottom of the swamp.

In a sense this year is an anniversary. Forty years ago was the beginning of a period of the influence of opportunism. It went through the stages of the planting of the seeds, incubation, maturation and the end, which came very suddenly.

However, the main feature of the Party's work in this period was not negative. The Party continued to initiate and lead struggles in many important arenas. In their everyday activities most of the Party members paid little attention to Browder's pronouncements. Their activities can not be characterized as opportunistic.

Initial Stages of Browderism

During the initial stages Browder's ideas, in their mild form, intermingled with correct and successful efforts by the Party to deal with serious new problems. The Party worked to give leadership to rising, broad, spontaneous mass waves. The situation called for new tactics, new approaches. There was a need for the Party to break out of isolation. In fact, the Party gave leadership to important mass struggles because it did creatively develop new tactics for movements that involved millions. These policies and tactics of the Party were not opportunistic. The mistakes appeared when Browder started to give these very correct and necessary tactics an opportunistic twist. He deleted the class essence from the correct policies. And he did it with "stealth and subtlety."

Our Party has a history to be proud of. It has made contributions to the struggles of the working class and the people of our country. It is making important contributions today. If it were possible to weigh the history and contributions of our Party, including the Browder period, in

relation to the errors made, we would estimate it as 95 per cent positive and 5 per cent negative. However, that 5 per cent should not be swept under the political rug.

Opportunism is not a newcomer on the U.S. political and ideological scene. It has always been the unwelcome, unwanted camp follower in and around the working-class and revolutionary movements. The “crude, cynical” class collaborationist variety has been the official policy of the top trade union leadership most of the time.

Opportunism is a most insidious virus. And, like a virus, it penetrates a healthy, living cell unnoticed. Throughout each of the phases of its growth the change is ever so slight. There is always a logical-sounding defense for each new step.

Because a serious working-class revolutionary party must always look for better ways of carrying out its tasks, opportunism also picks this as a convenient vehicle. That is why for periods it goes undetected.

Tactics are a necessary feature in any struggle. They are a way of dealing with the constantly changing conditions of the forces involved. Without tactics the working class and the progressive forces in general would become sitting ducks. Hence, for as long as possible opportunism presents itself as a “tactical” variation.

Opportunists always attach themselves to the correct idea that life constantly produces new phenomena. Therefore, they say, all they are doing is “reflecting on the new developments.” Again, this is a convenient cover because a Marxist-Leninist party, basing itself on a science, must keep abreast of what is new and must reflect on and respond to all new questions.

The science of Marxism-Leninism makes it possible not only to see what is new; it is also a guide that tells us how to look at what is new. Here opportunism and Marxism-Leninism part company. Capitalism gives rise to new factors. But the new never replaces the basic essence of classes, class exploitation and the class struggle. Within capitalism these are constants.

For the opportunist, the “new” starts by minimizing, downgrading and finally replacing the class essence of capitalism. Their “new,” as a rule, is an attempt to conjure up an image in which the class struggle disappears, the class contradiction fades into a maze of contradictions and the working class blends into and becomes “the people” or “the poor.”

Life gives rise to new situations. But as long as there is capitalism the “new” situations will never be able to develop outside of the class reality. The “new” will not be able to exist alone or ignore the system of class exploitation and the irreconcilable class antagonisms. The “new” will always develop within the general confines of the class struggle. Opportunism maneuvers to take the “new” outside of this class framework.

In its basic essence, opportunism is an accommodation to the pressures of the enemy. The accommodation is always at the expense of the working class.

Browder's “New World”

This was the shell from which Browder opportunism hatched. Browder 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.” “We must be ready, also, to sacrifice our prejudices, our ideologies and our special interests.” “Class divisions or political groupings have no significance now.”

In the beginning, Browder projected these concepts as a feature of an all-class alliance to defeat Hitler fascism. But it was not long before these concepts replaced the class struggle and became guides to a fantasyland where classes and the class struggle became a thing of the past.

What Browder did not reveal, in the incubation period of the opportunism he was hatching, was that the "old formulas" he wanted to discard were the concepts that the very essence of capitalism is the exploitation of the working class; the "ideology" he was ready to sacrifice was the working-class ideology; the "prejudices" he wanted to discard was the anger of the people against monopoly capital; and the "special interests" he wanted to give up were the class self-interests of the workers. The "old formulas" he wanted to set aside were the science of Marxism-Leninism and working-class internationalism. Browder developed these formulas some 40 years ago, but, in one way or another, the same kind of opportunism has been repeated on the world scene many times since. Many of the so-called new formulas, "revisions" and cliches sound very Browder-like.

The "new" world Browder used as a cover was, in reality, the old word, with many new features. There was the unprecedented, worldwide democratic front, and the alliance of socialist and bourgeois-democratic countries against fascism, against the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Without question, this was a significant and unprecedented new development.

In this struggle, the self-interests of world socialism, the interests of national liberation and the interests of the world working class temporarily coincided with the self-interests of monopoly capital of some major capitalist countries. This was new and important. It was a development the working-class movement had to take into consideration. However, the new world development did not replace the old, basic essence of capitalism—the class division, the class struggle, the exploitation of the working class. For Browderism, the new became a cover for the old virus of opportunism and the excuse for "sacrificing the old formulas and prejudices."

Opportunism's Laws of Development

Of necessity, opportunism deals with and thrives on falsehoods. It manufactures and rests on false premises. It conjures up false images of Marxism-Leninism and then proceeds to do battle against non-existing windmills.

Opportunists always keep repeating the cliches: "We are original"; "We are democratic"; "We are creative and innovative"; "We are autonomous." They frame these cliches in a manner that would induce people to draw the conclusion that other Marxist-Leninist parties are *not* "autonomous," "creative," "democratic". It is opportunism to keep repeating such cliches when it is common knowledge that there are no threats or dangers to any Party's "autonomy" or "creativity."

Opportunism has its own inner laws of development. Each defense of an old, wrong position becomes a further step on the path toward the swamp of opportunism.

Beginning insidiously and unnoticed, opportunism very quickly goes for the jugular vein of the revolutionary body politic. It very quickly attacks the question of class, the class struggle and the class approach to problems.

The main contention of capitalist ideology has always been that capitalism and the capitalist class represent the interests of all the people, that there are no classes or separate class interests and therefore no need for a class struggle.

An old General Motors president put it crudely: "What is good for GM is good for America." In 1976, the new head man of GM, Thomas Murphy, said: "Free enterprise is a cooperative system, not a class struggle." And he added, "One man's gain is not another man's loss. They both gain." This is the central focal point of corporate ideological pressure on the working class and working-class organizations. Opportunism is an accommodation to just such ideological pressures.

Retreat from the Class Question

The development of Browderism was also a process of softening and backing away from the class question. The "people's front" was interpreted as a substitute for the class struggle. The "united front" and the "Communist Association" replaced the Communist Party. The "people's movements" replaced the working class. Opportunism took correct concepts of "people's front," "united front" and "people's movements" and injected into them an opportunistic content.

"Communism is 20th century Americanism" was a classless, utopian slogan advanced by Browderism. As a slogan, it sounded good, but it had nothing to do with either communism or "Americanism". The "Americanism" in the slogan was attached to an opportunistic concept of a smooth, endless extension of a "Jeffersonian" society, without classes or the class struggle—blissful, without contradiction or strife. It was also an attempt to opportunistically appeal to the more backward sentiments of nationalism. The "communism" in the slogan was attached to a brand of "socialism" which monopoly capital—or at least sections of big business— could accept without struggle because it was socialism in name only.

Browder diluted socialism to the point where he thought it would be accepted by big business, or at least by the ideologues and politicians of monopoly capital. Of course, like all opportunists, he was setting up a fantasy world. Once one waters down socialism until it is acceptable to capitalist politicians, to the Democrats and Republicans, it follows that the transition to that kind of fantasyworld socialism would be not only "peaceful," but would take place without any kind of struggle. And it also follows that because this "new" socialism would be supported by all classes there would be no need for the working class to exercise its advanced role— politically or ideologically. Browder shifted his appeals to the "good sense" of the capitalist class, to "intelligent men."

Following in the footsteps of other opportunists, Browder tried to sidestep scientific thinking, especially Marxist-Leninist concepts. This is understandable since Marxism-Leninism has its very roots in the class struggle, the very idea Browder worked so hard to bypass and cover up.

Browder concentrated on the pragmatic approach:

National unity must be built on the foundation of an economic program which does not contradict the prevailing ideology, in which conflicting class and national interests can be reconciled.

It is clear Browder was for a "national unity" in which the interests of the working class were "reconciled" and buried. The corporations are always for "national unity," for "reconciling" class interests, as long as they can continue exploiting the workers, as long as the "unity" does not interfere with their profit-making process.

Thus, working-class interests were placed in the shadow of ruling-class interests. This was an accommodation to the "prevailing ideology," the ideology that upholds and apologizes for capitalism, and to which Jacques Duclos, a leading Marxist-Leninist and long-time leader of the Communist Party of France, responded:

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.

Everyone understands that the Communists of the United States want to work to achieve unity in their country. But it is less understandable that they envisage the solution of the problem of national unity with the good will of the men of the trusts, and under quasi-idyllic conditions, as if the capitalist regime had been able to change its nature by some unknown miracle. ("On the Dissolution of the Communist Party of the United States," *Political Affairs*, July 1945. Reprinted from *Cahiers du Communisme*, April 1945.)

For Duclos, the "new" developments did not mean that the corporate trusts had gone through some kind of metamorphosis. He did not see them as some new force for progress, nor as a passive force. The contradiction between the trusts and the working class remained. The capitalist class, the working class and the class struggle between them remained a central feature of reality. The observation by Karl Marx that the history of all past societies has been a history of class struggle is especially applicable to history being made under state monopoly capitalism.

In a fantasy world, one can come up with ideas that "do not contradict the prevailing ideology, in which conflicting class and national interests can be reconciled."

However, in the real world such ideas are dangerous illusions. It is sowing seeds of dangerous illusions to promise or to formulate policies based on the concept that, without any question, monopoly capital is going to passively go along with the transition to socialism and, therefore, the class struggle loses its significance and the working class its historic role. In the real world there are no such "historic compromises" with monopoly capitalism. It is a false promise because it is a promise no working class revolutionary party can fulfill.

Negating the Role of the Working Class

In his opportunism, Browder tried to bypass the concept that the inner workings of capitalism designate the working class as the only revolutionary class, the class which life under capitalism compels to take the lead in the struggle for social progress. Browder, in his

opportunism, put on the shelf the unavoidable truth that the working class must of historic necessity take the lead in the struggle for and the building of socialism.

Therefore, in his fantasy world the question of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" also becomes a moot question. If the "intelligent men" would go along without resistance, there was no need for the working class to express its class will. The concept became "useless" because the concept of the advanced role of the working class was "an old, useless formula."

For Browder, the dropping of the words "dictatorship of the proletariat" was not a matter of semantics. No one has ever insisted that the exact words must always be used. If an idea can be expressed with words in more current usage, of words that express the concept more precisely, that is how the idea should be presented.

However, for Browder, the dropping of the words reflected the discarding of the concept ---the discarding of the concept reflected the repudiation of the concept of class struggle and the role of the working class. They were all concessions and accommodations to the pressures of the corporate trusts. It was an effort to become "respectable" and acceptable in the eyes of those who did not accept the concept of the class struggle.

Later it became clear that the discarding of the class concepts were related to the more basic, unstated capitulation flowing from a deep lack of confidence in the working class. It was related to a later-stated idea that socialism will never become a reality in the United States and, therefore, advances can be made only within the "framework of the present system." Interestingly, Mao said: "It may take a hundred years to build socialism in China." Later, Browder openly declared, "Socialism is not for the United States."

Browder insisted that it is the obligation of the Communists to remove "the fear of socialist revolution from the minds of U.S. monopoly capital." And the first step in avoiding a socialist revolution was to give the people false hope of being able to remedy the evils and eliminate the greed of the monopolies.

Opportunistic Capitulation

To make absolutely sure everyone understood the meaning of opportunistic capitulation, Browder stated:

We want to guarantee that the achievements of well being and democracy for all within our country shall not proceed through crisis after crisis and struggle after struggle, but will be the product of intelligent collaboration of intelligent men in America.

Browder was for an all class alliance of "intelligent men."

This echo sounds familiar today. Browder's pledge was to work for capitalism without crises; a pledge to work for a life without struggle; a pledge to work for stability, for the policy of not rocking the boat and not trying to change the balance of forces that would destabilize the situation. In today's world such concepts are even more ridiculous because the world revolutionary process is a process of continually and inevitably changing the balance of world forces and rocking the boat of world imperialism.

At different stages of history and in different countries opportunism uses different words. However, capitulation in any language is still capitulation. Opportunism speaks with the same political and ideological tongue. The seeds, the roots of opportunism remain basically the same, as the following examples strikingly demonstrate:

Earl Browder:

The decisive sections of American capitalists have abandoned the old policy of hard-boiled reaction and imperialism.

In working to win over the bourgeoisie Mao Tse Tung proposed:

To achieve this aim we should be prudent in dealing with the economic position of this class and, in principle, should adopt a blanket policy of protecting them.

And not long after, Roger Garaudy:

What can be done here and now is to press the United States for a form of capitalism that has human goals—for a purposeful capitalism. It is the only way to bring about a regeneration, and to open up the prospect of a creative future for the United States and the world.

Such are the words of capitulation, in any language. They are all advocates of the alliance of “intelligent men.”

One step followed another. Once the class approach, the class struggle and the role of the working class is repudiated it follows logically that there is no real need for a revolutionary working class party that represents the working class in all its struggles.

The Process of Liquidating the Party

Thus, the Browder-led process of liquidating the Communist Party set in.

This process of liquidation did not start with organizational or physical liquidation. The process was one of first liquidating the role, the functions, of the Party. Slowly, the Party gave up taking independent positions. Less and less, it spoke in its own name. More and more, it became only the supporter of movements led by other forces. There was an acceptance of the cockeyed idea that the Party “narrowed down” mass movements, and that anything that was non-Party was “broad.” Even a unity with small “Left” sects who influenced no one became a “broader” movement. Finally, the Party became an obstacle to Browder’s opportunism.

Browder kept denying that he was liquidating the Communist Party. Each new opportunistic step was presented as a necessary, as a way of giving the Party a “broad,” a “mass” base. But it became an obstacle to the alliance of “intelligent men.”

Opportunism reduced the Party and warped its policies so they would be “acceptable” to the most backward sectors of the people. However, as the Party’s base moved toward the less politically developed section of the population it also began to lose its influence with the more

politically and ideologically advanced sectors of the people. This is always the result of opportunistic policies.

There was a softening up of the Party's position against our own imperialism. It was easier to talk about "imperialism in general" or against the "imperialist oppression" of some other country.

Step by step the imperialist essence and the struggle against U.S. capitalism was shifted to the back burner. Browder even objected to any discussion that would have updated the study of imperialism. He opposed all efforts to examine imperialism concretely. In the final stages, Browder denied its very existence. This was a concession to monopoly capital because any scientific examination would have exposed the inherent and continuing rapacious nature of the U.S. imperialist monster.

Browder worked out and presented extensive plans for long-range economic, Common Market-like arrangements between U.S. imperialism and other capitalist countries, especially between the United States and the countries of Latin America. What was obviously missing in these plans was any mention of the struggle for the interests of the working class. It was argued and "assumed" that some of the benefits of these plans would "trickle down" to the workers of each country. This was an opportunistic concession to influences of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism.

Opportunists always back away from taking a forthright stand against the imperialism of their own country because they do not believe it is possible to convince workers that it is in their self-interest to oppose the imperialist policies of their own country. This backing away is an accommodation and a concession to bourgeois nationalism. Opportunism and bourgeois nationalism invariably become inseparable.

The Party also softened its position in the struggle against racism. This was in line with opportunist capitulation to pressures of the enemy.

When one understands racism as a special instrument of exploitation and extra corporate profits, then it becomes clear why opportunism always accommodates and retreats from the struggle against racism, as it does from the class struggle.

Racism has always been a central pillar of the ideology of imperialism. For U.S. capitalism, racism has always been and remains an instrument of both its foreign and domestic operations. This explains why the weaknesses in the struggle against racism have always been so closely tied in with all expressions of opportunism.

Browder's way of accommodating racism was to say the question had been resolved: "The Negro people in the United States have found it possible to make their decision once and for all."

Browder declared that Black Americans were convinced of the possibility of immediate achievement of "complete equality" in this period under the present system. It opportunistically followed that if the question of "complete equality" was resolved, "in this period, under the present system," there was no problem. This was a forerunner of the current idea that society is "deracialized." Instead of seeing that the new situation presented more favorable conditions under which to struggle against racism, Browder used it to propagate a policy of capitulation.

Browder became preoccupied with looking for "progressive traits" in U.S. monopoly capital. Because of the war-time alliance with the Soviet Union, Browder said, U.S. capitalism

would “give up its aggressive traits” and go along with socialism and national liberation, not because of struggle but because it is “intelligent.”

The line was not to refute anti-Communist falsehoods, but to water down the Party's program to the point where it was no longer antimonopoly. Browderism gave up the struggle for working-class power. In the name of “common sense” Browder asked the monopoly circles to accept the projection of a broad “people's outlook” of “intelligent men.”

Browder's blueprint for a peaceful path of no struggle was an opportunistic illusion in which there was no struggle for socialism. It was an illusion because no matter how influential a working-class party becomes it can not, in advance, promise that the capitalist class will bow to the desires of the majority. Even a majority vote does not guarantee such a development. The majority must always be prepared for counterattacks, for counterrevolution.

A working-class revolutionary party can promise to seek for the most peaceful path that is possible. But it can not make promises or give guarantees, because it can not speak for monopoly capital.

Forty years ago, it was all done in the name of applying Marxism-Leninism to the “new, unique” situation in the United States. Browder argued that this was a further development of the science within the “new realities” in the United States.

Browder tried to overcome and bypass Marxism-Leninism by proclaiming:

It does not apply. 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

And,

Here we are, in the United States—we, who are proud to consider ourselves disciples of Lenin, are, in practice, collaborating with capital, and firmly denouncing those who advocate a class war against capital in the United States.

That was a rejection of Marxism-Leninism. It was also a rejection of the concept of the class struggle and the class realities of capitalism.

Step by step, Browder gave up the position of proletarian internationalism. Browder talked about the broad, new scope of the movements developing in the world, and declared that there was no need for any special emphasis on the working-class approach to internationalism.

The logic of Browder opportunism was that in its fantasy-world the class contradictions, the class struggle, the working class, were all losing their identity and were all blending into the general, all-class people's movements on a world scale.

The undoing of Browder opportunism was the hard realities of life itself. The class struggle would not go away. Monopoly capital continued to exploit the working class. It refused to be guided by Browder's “common sense.” U.S. imperialism did not give up its drive for world domination. Its class policies had nothing to do with being intelligent or not being intelligent. They were dictated by the inner laws of capitalism.

The leadership and membership of the Communist Party who had, to one extent or another, gone along with the more “honest” varieties of Browder opportunism resoundingly

rejected the “crude, cynical” varieties. The Party resolutely returned to the policies of class struggle, the path of socialism, and to seeing the science of Marxism-Leninism as its compass, its guiding light.

By drawing necessary lessons from the errors, the Communist Party, USA has continued to lead and make contributions to the struggles of the working class and the people of the United State. The “crude, cynical” stage of Browderism forced our Party to take a hard, deep look as to where Browder’s opportunism was leading the Party.

New Hard Look

The criminal, counterrevolutionary actions and policies of the Maoists compel the leaders in all sectors of the world revolutionary process to take a new hard look at a number of basic questions.

For some time, there has been a recognition that because the world revolutionary process takes in a wide spectrum, including the movements for national liberation and revolutionary movements in countries that are mainly involved in agriculture and lands where the remnants of feudalism are still strong, there is a massive influx into the revolutionary movements of people who have not had working-class experience. This is an overall positive historic development. However, what has not been given enough attention is that these non-working-class forces also bring with them non-working-class ideas. They are not familiar with the class struggle from their own experience. They must get this from the experiences of other struggles.

In the struggle for national liberation and in the anti-imperialist movements, nationalist sentiments have played a positive role. As a result of the victories of the forces of the world revolutionary process, the balance of world forces has shifted against imperialism. Imperialism has been forced to retreat.

The new hard look should include examining whether the influx of non-working-class ideas and concepts, including the influences of nationalism, is being accepted, passively, without an ideological struggle, in the hope that the experiences within the revolutionary process will give these non-working-class masses the understanding of the class struggle.

While recognizing the positive aspects of petty bourgeois nationalism in some phases of the struggle against imperialism and for national liberation, the new hard look should include an examination of whether there has been the necessary struggle against its negative side and against its use by reactionary forces, and whether the historic period of its maximum positive effects has not passed. The new hard look should include an examination of the damage that results from replacing working-class ideas, working-class solidarity, working-class internationalism, with appeals to nationalism, even when it is for a good cause.

The assessment that the balance of world forces has shifted is correct. However, the new hard look should include whether some forces and parties have not drawn wrong conclusions from this correct assessment. Some seem to have concluded that because of the shift the world revolutionary process will continue without a struggle. This leads to accommodation and capitulation to imperialism.

The new hard look must include a study of wrong conclusions and erroneous ideas about the very correct and necessary concepts of detente and co-existence. Some conclusions

are based on the illusion that because imperialism is forced to retreat and accept detente, it also gives up its aggressive intentions. This leads to opportunistic agreement with imperialism.

It is necessary to take a new hard look at the ideological long-range effects of anti-Sovietism, a new look at the responsibility of the forces within the world revolution process who have, for opportunistic reasons, encouraged others or have themselves participated in spreading anti-Soviet slanders and, therefore, the contribution they have made to the development of Maoism to its present stage.

It is necessary to take a new hard look at these developments because they are at the root of some of the opportunistic developments.

There is a need for a process of continuous exchange among Marxist-Leninist parties, among leaders of all the forces propelling the world revolutionary process. There is a critical need to strengthen the working-class, Marxist-Leninist antibodies in the world revolutionary movement.

The recent actions of the Maoists, including the despicable, monstrous aggression against Socialist Vietnam is a setback for the forces of the world revolutionary process. However, it can also be the historic turning point in the struggle against opportunism. Like a football team, we should rerun the tapes, examine the errors, correct them and go on to new victories.