

We Were Guilty of "Trailing"

I agree entirely with the line of the National Board resolution.

As Comrade Foster said in his letter to the National Committee members: "Trailing after the big bourgeoisie is the historic error of social democracy, and we must be vigilantly on guard against it."

When Browder's boasted new contribution to theory is examined in comparison with the revisions of the past, it can be seen at once to be a revision itself, in the same direction as two famous ones: Bernstein's about half a century ago and the "Right Deviation" of the 1920's. The new things in Browder are that he struck roots much farther back into pre-Marxian soil, and the product was much farther away from Marxism than Bernstein and the "Rights" dared to go, publicly. It does not seem likely that Browder did this consciously; apparently the latest deviation was, like the others, stimulated by shallow observation of "new factors," but that may be considered as merely another resemblance to the two earlier.

Eduard Bernstein worked out a theory which was scathingly assailed by Lenin and others, was defeated in convention in 1903, but which seeped through and poisoned the whole Socialist movement.

Bernstein seized on a "new situation" of his day, a passing phase in which statistics showed little business and small farms increasing more rapidly than big business and big landlordism or capitalist farming, and he declared Marx was wrong in saying that society increasingly splits into the two camps of propertyless wage workers and big business, with revolutionary submergence of the latter as the only way out.

But Bernstein never dared say that we should not fight big capital. He only preached the fight would be less a class war than a popular overcoming of the big capitalists by slow and parliamentary means.

The "Right Deviationists" 20 years ago produced special forms in various countries: Lovestone's "American Exceptionalism" and in the Soviet Union advice to the kulaks, "Enrich Yourselves!" But basically it aped the Austrian social democratic doctrine of "super capitalism," the theory that world finance capital was then so powerful, so able to rule by planned economy, that there would never be another industrial crisis, and no period of wars and revolutions such as Stalin warned would come.

But the "Right Deviation" did not advise us to make friends with this monstrous growth of trusts and cartels even though there were then also "new conditions" and "changes in the world situation," especially the temporary stabilization of capitalism after World War I and the 1921 crisis. Remember the "boom period" of the "Hooverian age?"

The Trotskyite treachery had so little dislike for big capitalism that Trotsky and his chief lieutenants (and some of the more regenerate elements of the recognized right deviation with them) went on Hitler's payroll and became Nazi fifth columnists. But Trotsky sought always to cover up with "left" camouflage this movement to the right, and also never dared openly to propose taking orders from monopoly capital.

We know from many analyses of the Bernstein period that a strata of "Socialists" had become bourgeoisified themselves, did not really want any fundamental change in society but just wished to go on comfortably as workers' leaders. And we know that a variety of timidities and factional corruptions made the right deviators allies of capitalist forces outside their party. But none of them dared advise making friends with capitalism or openly following its lead.

Browder's program does just that. And, as it goes farther in its conclusions, so it started farther back for its point of departure.

There is much in Browder's feeling that the increase in strength of the Soviet Union and of progressive and trade union forces changed the nature of capitalists and their class, that reminds one of the pre-Marxian idea that society is an organism like an animal body in which physiological changes spread through the whole structure. Says Browder's "Teheran" (Page 73), after a discussion of the significance of the agreement of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt in their conferences:

"If, however, in the ranks of big capital there is a sufficient number of men of vision and understanding who recognize the suicidal results to their own system that inevitably flow from a

failure strictly to subordinate its operations to a broadly conceived and definitely planned program of national and international expansion of well-being for all—then such men, integrated in or working with the democratic-progressive camp of the people, can become the decisive leaders of big capital . . . sufficient for it to participate in the national unity in support of the program of Teheran. There is a growing volume of evidence that there are such men of vision and understanding in the ranks of big capital."

This is a typical statement by Browder. Intimately associated with this idea is that of the Utopian Socialists against which the Marxians wrote polemics nearly a century ago, and against which Engels wrote the "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific" chapters. Remember how Engels pointed out: ". . . the French philosophers of the 18th century, the forerunners of the revolution, appealed to reason as the sole judge . . ." and the Utopian Socialists all thought their ideas had only to be known to be adopted by all classes?

The hard facts, as socialism recognized, even in 1880 when Engels wrote the book, were "class antagonisms, existing in the society of today, between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage workers; on the other hand . . . the anarchy existing in production," and policies and philosophies developing out of class interest.

But Browder, in 1944, in "Teheran" (p. 23) says: "The obstacles in the way of achieving this goal (international and class harmony) are almost entirely in the persistence of old prejudices and ways of thinking on both sides of the supposedly controversial questions."

The Browder writings of late have been full of that sort of stuff. In "Victory and After," which he wrote in 1942, this approach had already begun: "We know this problem will be solved because it must be solved" (p. 47); "This is a reasonable universe" (p. 72); "This chapter, which merely sets out to argue that it is foolish to be afraid of communism . . ." (p. 73); "We must depend upon the patriotism of the rich, a patriotism stimulated by their intelligence . . ." (p. 88). There is a great deal more of that.

It is true the Utopians were talking about socialism, while Browder was asking only for some Morgans and Rockefellers who would be intelligent enough to be good and kind to their workers and friendly to the Soviet Union, but the general approach was the same.

How did our party come to accept such a theoretical monstrosity? As more and more discussion articles are pointing out, it was a gradual weakening. At first, in the United Front days before the war, many voices warned along with Dimitroff that in such a period the main danger would be the "right danger." Safely, it was then recognized, lay in careful education and close watch in the party units. But, in fact, instead, everybody was enthused over little victories and began making extraordinary concessions for unity—so much that it became a sin to even speak of the Soviet Union, to say nothing of our hope of eventual socialism here because that sort of talk was "offensive to our new friends."

We could have thought of Marx's warning, so many years ago, in his "Critique of the Gotha Program" (quoted in Lenin, "What Is to Be Done," Intl. Pub., Book II, Vol. IV, p. 109): "If you must combine, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not haggle over principles; do not make concessions in theory."

But the party did make those concessions, at least, tacitly. All these tendencies worsened during the war period. And I think that a large number of leading people whose life had been in the inner party circles only or at least confined to united front organizations, were shocked to numbness when they were flung in war industry and in the armed services into the midst of a great mass of farm boys especially from the South, and even more disheartening, the unorganized proletariat or only newly and half organized groups. These comrades suffered agonies of doubt and disillusion when they met such backward masses. They would have wavered out of it and might then have done their best work because for the first time they had come to real grips with the problem—if the party had been sounder at that time. But then, just then, came Browder's program, giving them a system for wavering, a theory for yielding,

THOUGHTS FROM A SOLDIER

(This letter was received by Steve Nelson, president of the CPA of Alameda County from a member now on leave in the armed forces.)

Dear Steve and Other Friends:

I thought I'd drop you a line and let you know I'm getting along fine in the army. I'm still at Camp— in basic training, but expect to complete that in a few weeks and then ship overseas.

Although I've only had a chance to see the National Board's statement and the Duclos' article, I think the projected correction of our position is 100 percent correct. In fact, I'm very enthusiastic about it. From talking to my wife, I gather that the discussion, at least in ——— county, is very healthy with the people really digging down into Marxist-Leninist classics again. I really think this is swell, especially since I had a few minutes to refresh myself with the "History of the CPSU" over this weekend.

The impression I gather from the people I've had a chance to talk to about it, both within the army and in ———, is a real desire to build the CPA and particularly to recruit and re-recruit.

I know for myself during the past two years I have incorrectly devoted too much of my thought to union work with the tendency to let "others work out the party line." It is easy now to see that there was too much reliance on national leaders without a real effort to study and analyze as we used to do in the 1939-1942 period. Besides the correction of the line, I feel that the most important thing we can do is really develop an educational program which will introduce the basic material to our new members and re-introduce it to the rest of us.

I must close now, except I thought you might be interested to know that I was refused admission to Officers' Candidate School by the final board here after passing all other boards with flying colors. I didn't really expect to make it, but I thought I'd like to see just how far I could go. Also to see if the position of the army had changed much.

The reason for rejection by the board was fairly obvious since they spent an hour asking me questions about what I thought of the USSR, what about Mao Tse-tung's position in China and whether there were Communists in the ——— Union, etc.

With warmest regards, Soldier—.

FROM A SEAMAN

Due to the thoughtfulness of a friend, I just received a copy of the June 2 resolution of the National Board, and the article by Duclos.

I only regret that I am not there that I might participate in the discussions of these questions. However, I would like to say that the resolution has my unconditional support and approval. It is one of the healthiest examples of self-criticism I have seen in a long time.

The program outlined in the resolution commands my support by being constructive and based on a sound Marxist analysis. The criticism of past work is more than justified, both on the grounds of unrealistic social analysis, and especially on the manner in which the membership was not consulted.

This resolution fills me with enthusiasm to work and with confidence that our organization will continue to be the Marxist-Leninist vanguard.

I hope that I will soon be back where I can do more to help fulfill this program.

Robert New Jr.

Even this does not entirely explain why all the party officials—apparently with the exception of Comrade Foster only, fell for the Browder line. I think these people can best explain it themselves, and should. As for the average good party member, he saw everybody he trusted proposing this Browder program. He could only conclude they had some reason not stated, and must know what they were doing. So he went and broke his heart and perhaps his political neck in his union trying to put over this latest and grossest of revisionisms. The postwar phase was unacceptable to even the most politically uneducated of the working masses, who just didn't and do not today believe the boss means well by them.

Vern Smith, San Francisco