

SPEECH BY SAMUEL DONCHIN

THE TEST OF AGREEMENT with the program of action of the Draft Resolution is a full comprehension of the theoretical source of Comrade Browder's revisionist line.

But merely to deal with Browder's opportunism as it affected our post-war estimate and tasks is not sufficient. We must also show concretely how it distorted our correct line during the German phase of the war.

To cite three basic facts:

(a) In a number of cases we have objectively contributed to the growth of Trotskyism and Social-Democratism in the ranks of the organized labor movement. This was caused by not taking up more energetically the economic struggles of the workers against the trusts within the limits of our no-strike pledge; by quelling the justified fears of the workers regarding the postwar economic tension and difficulties. Because of that we have not sufficiently prepared ourselves for the human aspects of reconversion. Thus, it became more difficult for us to rally the workers for a more resolute struggle against the open appeasement sections of American monopoly capitalism and their Trotskyite, Social-Democratic allies.

In many cases we handed over the initiative in the fight against the monopolies to the petty-bourgeois radicals. Thus we have strengthened

political petty-bourgeois influences in the ranks of labor and made it more difficult to carry through our general education of Marxism and the ideas of Socialism.

(b) In an article in *The Communist* on the Negro question, Comrade Browder correctly stressed the need of struggling for Negro rights on the basis of equality. However, he made an error which has had the effect of weakening our struggle for Negro rights during the people's war. He has eliminated the national aspect of the Negro question. (Here it was not a question of raising the slogan of self-determination.) The Negro people in the U. S. feel a strong kinship with the colonial peoples. And it is in this spirit that they so joyously greeted Molotov's amendment to the San Francisco Trusteeship Charter for full independence and the right to self-determination.

We must say that by our underestimation of the national aspect of the Negro question and by our theoretical revisionism on the colonial question and the right of self-determination, we have objectively contributed to the growth of petty-bourgeois national reformism in the ranks of the Negro people.

The fact that the two main camps which constitute the basis of the Communist movement in the United States, labor and the Negro people,

experienced tension in their relationship with us, should have been a danger signal to us.

I suggest that the Draft Resolution deal more specifically and directly with the distortions of our correct line with reference to labor and the Negro people as caused by our post-war opportunist line.

(c) Another ill effect of Browder's opportunist line during our war activities were the reports and discussions on municipal elections at our last National Committee meeting. Public utilities and real estate interests, as a rule, shape the taxation policies for the municipalities. We do not accept an attitude of indifference to municipal finances. But in my judgment the taxation program presented at our last National Committee meeting showed the impact of reconciliation with the tax program of the public utilities tied up with monopoly finance capital.

What is the source of Comrade Browder's revisionism? It is his revisionism of the Marxist-Leninist laws pertaining to the character of American monopoly capitalism as a *class* and that of American imperialism. To emphasize a few of the theoretical mistakes which led to revisionism:

It is correct to reject counter-revolutionary Trotskyite ideas of the impossibility of the peaceful co-existence of Socialist and Capitalist states. But Stalin more than once warned against its over-simplifica-

tion. Stalin took more than one comrade to task for forgetting the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union. He warned against those who would interpret the irrevocable victory of Socialism in the Soviet Union as removing the danger of war caused by capitalist encirclement. I think this is one of the main reasons why we were caught off guard with respect to the San Francisco conference.

* * *

A second basic error was the separation of the pressure of the contradictions of American monopoly capitalism upon the whole system of capitalist world economy. As we know, the world economic crisis of 1929 was ushered in by our own economic crisis of that year.

American monopoly capitalism presents in an accentuated form all the inherent contradictions of capitalist monopolist economy. Not as Trotsky preached, that America would put the whole world on the ration system, but America, by virtue of monopoly capitalist contradictions and inherent imperialist aggressiveness, *adds* to the *instability* of world capitalism.

Monopoly capitalism dominates the American scene. The workers instinctively feel it, and to use an old expression, so do all other toiling sections of the population, including the middle class. Though we may enjoy a higher standard of living, the sense of insecurity, the

fear of losing a job in the United States is at times even greater than in any other capitalist country. This comes from the fact that the inherent contradictions of capitalist economy are most accentuated in this most developed monopoly capitalist country of the world. This contradiction is dramatically expressed in the spectre of mass unemployment.

Does this mean that we should overlook the specific features of the historically favorable development of American capitalism? Not at all. But these specific features are subordinate to the main features and as time goes on, the effect of the specific features on class relationships becomes less and less.

It is with pain and anguish that the membership in the present discussion asks itself—how could it happen? I would say that the critical mood of our membership should be welcomed. If our membership was numbed, then there would be very little hope for self-criticism and true theoretical discussions leading to self-correction. Of course there is a danger that defeatist moods may develop. That is why it is so essential to discuss the source of our errors.

* * *

In addition to what has already been said on the source of our errors, let me emphasize a few points: Our mistake did not consist in not utilizing the contradictions and conflicts in the capitalist class itself. We

failed to utilize them, however, in a Marxian way—that is, to be on guard against the whole monopoly capitalist class, and through our strategy to weaken the position of the bourgeoisie. Browder's theories, however, his idolization of Roosevelt, tended to have the opposite effect.

The resolution correctly calls attention to our obscuring of the class character of bourgeois democracy. The source of our idolization of Roosevelt must be traced to our opportunistic interpretation of the class character of bourgeois democracy as we correctly fought to defend it from the attacks of fascism and reaction. But I would like to call attention to another source which is responsible for the idolization of Roosevelt, and that is our overlooking the danger of bourgeois nationalism.

We correctly took the cue from George Dimitrov in fighting national nihilism. We were guilty of national nihilism, and there is still room to fight it. However, we have also been warned against bourgeois nationalism. This we completely overlooked.

Comrade Browder, a long time ago, raised the slogan of "Communism is 20th Century Americanism." That slogan is the source of many of our mistakes with regard to bourgeois nationalism. It was a slogan which tore Americanism out of its 20th Century context, which is also American imperialism, American monopoly capitalism.

We correctly paid attention to re-discovering our democratic revolutionary traditions. But we completely overlooked the traditions and the study of the history of the American labor movement. This is not accidental. It is related to our underestimation of the independent role of the American working class.

As we speak of the pressure of bourgeois influences upon our movement, as the source of our revisionist line, we must also add its expression in the form of *American chauvinism*. I would, therefore, suggest as a concrete amendment, that the Draft Resolution should refer to *American chauvinism* and its pressure upon our movement as a source for minimizing the aggressive role of American imperialism and its ideological pressure upon our organization. This would also help us to correct our obscuring of the class character of bourgeois democracy.

We could contribute so much to the victory in the war because in the main, an opportunist line did not dominate our activities. We could shape correct policy because we did look for allies in the fight against fascism; because we did not hold all imperialist powers equally responsible for the war. However, we made a fatal error. We forgot Lenin's admonition: "*From this logically follows the provisional character of our tactics to 'strike together' with the bourgeoisie and the duty to carefully watch our ally, as if he were an enemy.*" Yes, we

forgot to watch our bourgeois ally as if he were an enemy.

No one denies the historic significance of Teheran. However, we tore Teheran out of the historic context of the imperialist epoch and shamelessly tortured Leninist teaching of imperialism to suit our revisionist line.

Our revisionist interpretation of Teheran has weakened us in utilizing the Teheran agreement in the fight for *jobs* and *peace*.

Another source of our errors is the fact that we completely forgot the struggle on two fronts: against leftist sectarianism and right opportunism. We should remember that as a principal reason for our mistakes in the past, as well as a warning now not to over-correct ourselves. In fact, we should be on guard against a happy release of all old sectarian frustrations and inhibitions. We must be on guard against "revolutionary" phrase-mongering, and as our Resolution warns, against a relapse into the tactic of "class against class."

* * *

The pre-Duclos line of the National Board and that of individual members cannot be separated from Browder's revisionist line. Browder's line was the line of the National Board, with the single militant exception of Comrade Foster. (And Comrade Foster does not expect us to agree with every proposal he made in the past.)

What is true of the National Board

is also true of the National Committee. I do not in my own conscience absolve myself from individual responsibility for the revisionist line. When I look back on individual issues that I may have fought on, such as the liquidatory tendencies, the self-abnegation of labor and the Communist organization in our vital and necessary practical relationships with progressive groupings, the over-emphasis of centralism at the expense of inner Party democracy, however, I have at no time traced them to a wrong revisionist line.

Can we in all honesty say that any member of the Board (with the exception of Foster) at any time tried to check Browder's revisionist line? Unfortunately the answer is that this was not the case.

The sources of our errors are not only of an objective nature but also of a *subjective* character. Among the basic subjective errors one must enumerate: (a) lack of collective thinking; (b) bureaucratic practices. Just as on the theoretical source of our errors so on the subjective source of errors we must in the first place hold Browder responsible. But here again, on the subjective side of the errors, we cannot just confine bureaucratic practices to Browder alone. *The individual members of the National Board and the individual members of the National*

Committee have also been guilty of contributing to a stifling atmosphere and to bureaucratic practices.

I would therefore also suggest that we strengthen the self-critical part of the Resolution, extending more to the entire Board and the National Committee. *This would strengthen the guarantee of self-criticism leading to self-correction.* It would also aid in overcoming anti-leadership tendencies as an evil punishment for the lack of leadership self-criticism.

We must be on guard against factionalism and intrigue. We must not be guilty of the indecencies of self-righteousness and breast beating. The membership will resent it and reject it as lacking in genuine self-criticism.

As I see it: Why is it that the National Board could so readily accept the Duclos article? Some of the reasons are:

(a) Life has challenged Browder's revisionist line; (b) the richly accumulated Marxist fund, the history of the struggles in our own movement on the character of American imperialism; (c) the mass experiences for the past period have made our organization uneasy and now it became obvious many things did not click because of our revisionism; (d) last, but not least, the role, I would say the principal role, of Comrade Foster.