

# An Open Letter to Earl Browder

By George Padmore

Dear Earl Browder:

Since my resignation the American Party, the *Daily Worker* and other Party organs have been carrying on a vicious campaign of lies and slanders against me. In order to put an end to these calumnies once and for all I am forced to address this open letter to you, for as general secretary of the Party, I hold you responsible for these libelous statements.

As you know, the Communist International liquidated the Negro Trade Union Committee, of which I was secretary, in August, 1933, without giving me one word of explanation, simply in order not to offend the British Foreign Office which has been bringing pressure to bear on Soviet diplomacy because of the tremendous indignation which our work has aroused among the Negro masses in Africa, the West Indies and other colonies against British imperialism. As a protest against this base betrayal of my people I gave my resignation to the Party as the only honorable and decent thing a self-respecting man could do. A few months later, the C. I. (Communist International) came out with a cock and bull story that I had been "expelled" for a number of imaginary offenses, the chief of which is that I supported the bourgeoisie of Liberia in oppressing and exploiting the workers and peasants of that country. I say that this is a monstrous lie, and the C. I. knows it. Earl Browder, permit me to put a few questions to you:

Why did not the C. I. accuse me of this years ago, for the last article I wrote on the Liberian question was in January, 1932, when I was still *persona grata*?

Why has the C. I. never yet written an article or issued a statement criticizing me until now?

Why did the C. I. refuse to discuss the liquidation of the Negro Committee and the suppression of *The Negro Worker*, of which I was also editor-in-chief?

Why did the C. I. wait from August 13, 1933 to April 16, 1934—nearly 10 months after they had closed down my work—to publish this frame-up story?

Why did it take the C. I. months after my resignation to discover my "villainy?"

Earl Browder, Negroes are not grown up children, as many whites still think; although we are still in chains we can nevertheless do a little thinking for ourselves. We want you to answer the above questions.

**Mr. Browder is secretary and chief executive of the American Communist Party. In view of his assertions in August before the sessions of the Comintern in Moscow, that the American Communists had made great gains among American Negroes, Mr. Padmore's accusation of failure in this effort is interesting. Interesting, also, is Mr. Padmore's indictment of methods which he declares "we can expect when the Comintern has the power to decide the fate of the Negroes of the world"**

## Comintern Bluffing

Our opinion is that the C. I. is politically bankrupt. It can no longer carry on an ordinary political discussion with its own leading members, but has to resort to lies, slanders, calumnies, the frame-up method, the weapon of political assassination, in order to cover up its own treachery, duplicity, rascality and perfidy in dealing with a representative of the most oppressed and exploited section of humanity. Can the C. I. fall any lower? All this talk about "championing" and defending the Negro race is a bluff, and because I have torn away the mask, the C. I. is desperate. That is why the C. I. was not able to extend me the ordinary courtesy, the elementary democratic right which its own statutes provide, of defending myself against these false accusations. I must frankly say that this is outdoing the Nazis and the lynchocrats of Alabama. Hitler, Goering and the other hangmen of the German working class, having accused Dimitrov and his comrades of an alleged crime, nevertheless gave them a chance of exonerating themselves and of vindicating their honor before the world. The American lynchers, having decided on framing up nine innocent Negroes, have at least resorted to the gesture of a court trial. But my accusers dare not look me in the face. The C. I. dare not give me a hearing before its own supreme tribunal, the International Communist Control Commission in Moscow. But I intend nevertheless to take my day in court. The Negroes of America, of Africa, of the West Indies, of the world, will be my judges. They will know who are the liars.

I therefore challenge you, Earl Browder, general secretary of the American Communist Party, to tell them *when and*

*where* I, George Padmore, have ever supported the bourgeoisie in oppressing and exploiting the Negro masses of Liberia. Produce *one sentence, one word*, in support of your accusations. After which I will have my say.

Now in order that you will have no excuse in taking up this challenge, permit me to put all of the available evidence at your disposal, for the Negro peoples of the world want to know the truth. This is no personal matter of the Comintern versus George Padmore; this is a fundamental political issue. For the C. I.'s treatment of me, after eight years of loyally serving the cause of the liberation of my race, is indicative of what we can expect when it has the power to decide the fate of the Negroes of the world. Earl Browder, we want you, and we demand of you, to speak out. We demand you to produce evidence in support of your accusations, for even capitalist laws protect Negroes from being slandered with impunity.

Here is the data—look it up. (1) My first article on Liberia appeared in the American Communist Review, *The Communist*, the theoretical organ of your Party, in April, 1931, entitled "American Imperialism Enslaves Liberia;" it was also published as a pamphlet by the Communist Academy of Russia. (2) *The Negro Worker*, Vol. I, November-December, 1931, page 5, "Hands Off Liberia." (3) *The Negro Worker*, January-February, 1932, page 3, "Workers Defend Liberia," and (4) the chapter on Liberia in my book, "The Lives and Struggles of Negro Toilers." A complete set of *The Negro Worker*, as well as my book can be found at the 42nd Street Public Library, New York. Go to it; we await your reply.

While we are on this issue, permit me to put to you one or two more questions: Please tell us *where* and *when* the Communist International, in the fifteen years of its existence, has ever written one article on Liberia? As you know, Liberia is an economic colony of American imperialism, and as such it is the duty of American Communists to defend Liberia. Please tell us *where* and *when* your Party has ever organized a meeting or demonstration in defense of Liberia? Please tell us *where* you, as secretary of the Party, have ever written an article about Liberia? Nevertheless, you and others, have the vile impudence to slander me and every decent Negro who

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drawn by enthusiasts from one of utopian existence to one of increased impoverishment of Valley dwellers.

Uncontrolled decentralization under present conditions must necessarily lead to low wage levels completely nullifying the stated social objectives of TVA. The natural backwardness of rural population, the difficulties in the way of any meaningful labor organization, the large surplus of rural labor are factors which while offering a new utopia to the sweatshop employer do little to encourage the hope that the working population, especially Negro workers, will be benefitted by such industrialization of the Valley area. In the final analysis, the industrialists and not TVA officials will control the conditions of labor and wage scale of workers in the area.

### Future is Dark

In an interesting interview with Chairman Arthur Morgan last February, he took Charles Houston and me to task for what he termed was "an improper selection of facts" in the article written in the *Crisis Magazine* following our first survey of TVA in July of 1934. He expressed the feeling that much more of lasting accomplishment for Negroes could be secured by a policy of "inching along," a policy of cautious procedure so as not to raise to its highest pitch the anti-Negro sentiment in the Tennessee Valley. In publicly criticising the exclusion of Negroes from Norris, in complaining about the absence of skilled workers, in attacking the lack of training facilities, Chairman Morgan accused Mr. Houston and me of being unrealistic and, what was more serious, of possibly provoking such anti-Negro sentiment to a more determined attack against Negro advancement under the TVA program.

One must confess now that after a more thorough investigation of TVA, it seems that Chairman Morgan and not Mr. Houston and the writer, is suffering from myopia. What is the picture of TVA for the Negro? Between ten and 11 per cent have variously been employed on the Valley projects instead of the much larger percentage that are represented in the Valley relief population. This small force of between 1,000 and 2,000 men has been given work of from one to two years. Their salaries have been much lower than those paid white workers. They have been denied in almost all cases opportunities for skilled work. The payroll percentage shows a flagrant inequity between Negroes and whites. While their wages have been higher than wages outside of TVA, costs of living (\$29 a month for room and board on TVA projects for single men, for example) have nullified much of the wage increase. Their standards of living have not even tem-

porarily been much increased. They know as well that there is joblessness in the Valley for them, once the dams are through.

These men are used to segregation and to prejudice. But they are not used to it at the hands of the federal government. They are not used to having federal funds used to extend a policy of race discrimination. Nor can they appreciate it as a friendly act that not only are they herded into Negro ghettos by Chairman Morgan and his colleagues, but as well that these ghettos—like most—are inferior in every respect to the accommodations accorded his fellow white worker. Are the 20 squalid cottages at Wilson Dam a reasonable excuse for asking citizens not to protest "Jim-Crow" tactics of TVA?

Finally there is no glimmer of hope for the Negro population in the Valley in terms of long-run social planning. Millions of kilowatt hours of electric current will be generated at a price so high that for Negroes it might just as well be lightning in the sky. For them it means no end of drudgery, no chance for social and economic advancement. Will there be industry in the Valley? If so on what terms? What sweatshop jobs will open up for Negro serfs?

TVA must be dealt many crushing blows if Negroes are to secure any benefits under its program. We must battle in the courts relentlessly against "Jim-Crow" segregation. We must bring mass pressure to bear on the government to secure the employment of Negro skilled labor, particularly at Pickwick. We must demand a program of socialized electrification which will enable Negro workers to have some benefits from the power program. These are immediate tasks of Negroes everywhere. They offer partial solution of the problems of the Negro worker in the Valley area. They are a beginning. But at the same time we must work for the organization of labor, both Negro and white, in the area as the only sure means of gaining better economic existence for Valley dwellers.

## Open Letter

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is trying to do something, right or wrong, to save Liberia from being annexed and declared a protectorate of American and European imperialist powers.

I say that your campaign is nothing else but political blackmail, for which you are getting the fullest support from petty little Negroes who I know are envious and jealous of my capacities. But the world is there for them to conquer; surely I am not standing in their way.

## No Progress Among Negroes

The Comintern, having got rid of me, and the American Party, faced with the tremendous upsurge and unrest among the Negro masses of the U. S., among whom it is unable to make any headway after fifteen years of its existence, are now trying to make me the scapegoat, with the hope of isolating me from the masses, by spreading all these lies and slanders about me. But thanks to the Negro press I have found a medium whereby it is possible to bring before the Negro comrades in the Party who have been misled by you, and the Negro masses of America, the real facts of the situation.

To show the villainy of you fellows, Otto Huiswood has published an article in the June issue of *The Negro Worker* saying that I have given names and addresses of Negro seamen to the police. *What seamen? What police?* Here is this little sycophant and lackey trying to outdo his Communist masters in slandering me, the one who built up an international organization of over 4,000 adherents, who made *The Negro Worker* feared by the rulers of the mighty British Empire. But Huiswood will not get away with this; I intend to take legal action against him, and if justice is not done I will know the way to avenge my honor. Earl Browder, I am through with you fellows. After the Party made me give up my legal studies at Howard university five years ago, so that I could render in a fuller way some aid to my Negro brothers in Africa, you now dare accuse me of being a police spy. I demand you and Huiswood to substantiate these charges. I have my future before me; you cannot slander me in this manner and get away with it. It grieves me to see men like James Ford and Patterson silently condoning this thing; how can these men be the leaders of my people? I can understand political differences between us, but when you accuse me of being a police agent this is going beyond all sense of decency and fair play. But I leave you in the hands of the Negro masses. From now on there can be no compromises; even the imperialists have never dared to slander me in this way. You can afford to ignore my youthful indignation; I am just thirty. After all, I may have my shortcomings—I am human—but no one has ever dared to question my honesty and integrity. Are there no decent people left in the Communist Party? You must answer the charges that you have made against me, for I shall broadcast this statement throughout the length and breadth of the black world.

Yours in defence of Justice, Truth and Honor.

GEORGE PADMORE