
AMERICA'S ELECTIONS AND THE TEHERAN CONCORD

BY EARL BROWDER

ON November 7, 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt was re-elected President of the United States for the fourth consecutive term. At the same time Congressional elections changed the composition of both House and Senate in the direction of strengthening support for the President's policies.

This simple news, flashed around the world in the early hours of November 8, brought joy to all peoples in all lands fighting for freedom and democracy. For this was victory in one of the greatest, most fateful, political struggles of history. It was America's confirmation of the Teheran Concord, established eleven months earlier, by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, the program for victory in the war and a durable, prosperous peace.

The outcome of this battle was determined through a complicated and bitter struggle, in which the camp of reaction, enemies of Teheran, threw in all their resources, and employed every political strategem in the book. The reactionary camp was defeated by the aroused intelligence of the masses, by the unity brought about among the most advanced sectors of all classes in sup-

port of Roosevelt, and by the superb leadership of the President himself at the head of the camp of national unity.

The Strategy of the Hoover-Dewey Reactionary Camp

Plans of the reactionary camp for this campaign began to shape up immediately after the 1940 election. The strategy that gave coherence to all these plans had the following main points:

1. Secure command of the Republican Party as the main base of operations. For this purpose the main task was to eliminate Willkie; and for the elimination of Willkie it was necessary to put forth a candidate without a well-defined isolationist record. That is why Dewey became the front man for Hoover, Vandenberg, Taft & Co., the real power in the old Republican machine.

2. Penetrate the Democratic Party and either capture it for the reactionaries, in which case the election is won without a battle, no matter which candidate is elected; or disintegrate and split that party.

For this purpose Hoover and Company found a host of powerful agents at hand ready made: Jim Farley, for eight years the head of the Democratic National Committee, was ripe for treason to his party; the Garner-Dies-Byrd-Reynolds-O'Daniels sector of the Southern Democratic Party leadership, part of the anti-Roosevelt coalition in Congress with the Republicans, were ready for a coup to split the solid South away from the President; Governor Edison in New Jersey had made a coalition with the Republicans under the false banner of "reform," and was leading the "liberals" of the nation by the nose on this issue; and a hundred other footholds had been secured within the Democratic Party by Hoover and Co. In New York State, Jim Farley delivered the governorship to Dewey, by forcing his own handpicked reactionary candidate Bennett upon his party against the wishes of Roosevelt and of the labor movement. All in all, the Hoover camp figured on capturing or splitting the Democratic Party in 1944.

3. Keep the total national vote as low as possible by obstructing the ballot of the armed forces and hampering registration.

4. Divide and demoralize the labor movement, and thus prevent it from rallying to Roosevelt as in the past. To this end, the Republicans joined with their Democratic allies in Congress, in passing over the President's veto the Smith-Connally bill which places restrictions on labor political action, and encourages strikes; and then savagely attacking the labor movement and the ad-

ministration for the strikes that resulted. The Republicans took John L. Lewis under their protection, while blaming Roosevelt for the strikes Lewis instigated, not only among the miners but throughout industry. The Republicans gathered evidence of malpractices among A. F. of L. labor leaders, not in order to bring about reforms among them, but in order to blackmail them into coming out in support of the Republican candidate. They further stimulated by all means the jealousies and suspicions between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O., and all other potential differences within labor.

5. Bring back the Negro people to their traditional allegiance to the Republicans. To this end an elaborate provocation was carried out: The Republicans supported the poll-tax Democrats of the South in blocking the repeal of the poll-tax, defeating the anti-lynching bill, and sabotaging the Fair Employment Practices Committee; then they turned around and adopted in their own Convention a beautiful platform in favor of these things they had helped to defeat. They blamed Roosevelt for all the grievances of the Negro people, which Roosevelt had been moving to remedy against the united opposition of his own reactionary colleagues and the Republicans. This exceedingly "clever" maneuver was depended upon to take the Negro vote away from the President.

6. Mobilize every discontent and grievance existing in the country, and combine them all into a movement against Roosevelt; promise everything to everybody, regardless

of how contradictory the promises may be; promise economy and greater spending, lower taxes and higher governmental income, the abolition of all government controls but the preservation of the results of control, the continuation of all Roosevelt's policies but the reversal of those policies at the same time; promise to continue the war to victory, but give the wink to all the anti-war forces and sentiments; speak for continuation of our war alliances, but insult our allies and gather up all the anti-ally sentiments; speak for post-war international collaboration but slyly inject policies which would make that impossible to realize; combine the *Chicago Tribune* with the *New York Herald Tribune*.

7. Finally, and keystone to the whole arch of Republican strategy, was the masterpiece of Hitlerite technique, the use of anti-Communism and anti-Semitism to split and splinter the nation, and thus dissolve all effective opposition to Republican seizure of power in the elections.

This is the main outline of the Hoover-Dewey strategy in entering the 1944 election campaign. If all these main attacks registered some results, it was assumed that the cumulative results would guarantee a reactionary victory. If any single one of them gained its maximum results, that alone would bring the reactionaries to power. If several of these attacks scored a breakthrough, then the result would be a landslide for reaction, and the dissolution of progressive power in the U.S. for a long time to come.

How the Hoover-Dewey Strategy Worked Out

As the whole world learned on November 8, to the joy of all progressive and democratic-minded people, the Hoover-Dewey strategy failed to gain its supreme goal, which was to assume power in the United States. The whole world does not realize as yet, however, how critical and close was the battle, how seriously the U.S. stood on the brink of a Nazi-like abyss of reactionary resurgence of power. It is therefore of more than ordinary importance to examine in some detail how the victory for democracy and progress was achieved.

The inter-play of forces on these various strategic fronts outlined above was very complicated, and any over-simplified analysis of the results would falsify the picture of reality. What the Hoover-Dewey attack gained on the swing on one front was usually offset by a lesser or greater loss from the contrary effects of the same factor on another front, and it was never able to bring these contradictions under control. With a warning against the distortions that accompany over-simplification, we may nevertheless venture a simple outline of the main features of this complicated struggle, admitting that many qualifications may be necessary which we have no space to deal with, and that there is room for many variations of judgment on particular questions.

Following the above-stated seven points of the Hoover-Dewey strategy, we get a picture of the battle something like this:

1. On the reactionary control of the Republican Party: This is the front on which superficially the Hoover-Dewey camp scored its greatest gain. It secured complete dominance of the Republican Party machinery, without which it had no base of operations, and completely shut Willkie and his friends out in the cold. But its technical victory was so complete that in the result this operated as a boomerang. For with the development of the fight on other fronts, this factor prepared the preconditions for the Willkie followers going over to Roosevelt in large numbers perhaps exceeding the margin of the Roosevelt majority of the popular vote, and thus played a major role in defeating its own aim. The Hoover-Dewey dominance was so complete that, as the issues of the campaign sharpened, it became obvious to the Willkie followers that they no longer had a place in the Republican Party for this campaign at least.

2. On the reactionary disruption within the Democratic Party: This ambitious scheme collapsed entirely in that phase which had aimed to reduce the electoral vote of the solid South for Roosevelt, and finally produced no result beyond reducing the volume of the President's popular majority. In fact the reactionary camp once more overreached itself, and brought about the defeat of some of their best Democratic allies in Congress, thereby greatly strengthening the President's position in the nation as a whole, and opening the way for fundamental improvements in the South. Farley's treason in New York State was

overcome, so that the President carried the State with a bigger majority than in 1940.

3. On the schemes to reduce the total vote: This was revealed in the Congressional debate on the soldiers' vote bill, when the President's opponents openly declared they would vote for the Federal soldiers' ballot only on condition Roosevelt would promise not to be a candidate. Later Dewey's supporters publicly speculated that a national vote of 40 millions would guarantee his election, a vote of 45 millions would leave the result in doubt, while anything much over 45 millions guaranteed the election of F.D.R. On the basis of this theory the Republican machine tried to keep down the registration by limiting the facilities, by keeping long lines waiting and forcing large numbers to return a second time after long waits, and so on. Also in New York they made spectacular legal investigations, serving subpoenas on first voters during the late hours of the night, announcing wholesale warrants of arrest for fraud, etc., all designed to scare away first voters from the polls. But the more the Republicans tried to keep down the vote, the more they stimulated the mass movement to bring out the vote. A nationwide drive for soldiers' balloting, and for general registration and voting, caught the public imagination and attained a volume never before seen in this country. Over the heads of all the old party machines the people took charge, and rolled up a total vote close to that of 1940, despite the fact that some 8 millions in the armed

services did not cast ballots. The Dewey speculative formula worked out, in the sense that the vote did go over 45 millions, and that Dewey did lose.

4. On the scheme to divide the labor movement: This hinged on the exploitation of the rivalry between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O., by Republican demonstrations of warm sympathy for the former and sharp attacks against the latter; by solemn warnings to the A. F. of L. that a victory for Roosevelt would put the C.I.O. in a privileged position; by protection to John L. Lewis, promising him immunity for any and all kinds of strikes and disruptions of the war effort, striving thereby, with vast provocations by employers, to create a mass strike movement during the election period, etc. Huge efforts were made through corruption and intimidation to bring labor leaders into open support of Dewey and other reactionary candidates; venal labor papers were paid to publish Dewey's divisive propaganda. The daily press was literally full of it for weeks, screaming its message to the rank and file of the labor movement. But, while this scheme had some success among a few top leaders of the A. F. of L., so that among the Executive Council of that body only Daniel Tobin, and to a lesser extent Brown of the machinists, Flore of the food workers and Harrison of the railroad clerks, made a real campaign for the President, while the others remained shamefully silent and gave indirect aid to Dewey, it was quite different among the millions of members and most of the lower leaders; far from

dividing the A. F. of L. from the C.I.O., the Dewey campaign as it developed brought an unexampled unity between the two great divisions of the labor movement; their rivalry became transformed into a struggle to see which could do the most for the re-election of President Roosevelt. And aside from the role of the top leadership, where the difference was almost as day from night, it would be difficult to say whether A. F. of L. or C.I.O. really contributed the most votes to Roosevelt's majority, so completely were the masses of membership united in that common cause. To climax this sweep of labor for the President, the mine workers disregarded the advice of John L. Lewis and voted for F.D.R. almost as unanimously as in previous elections. The labor movement demonstrated its political maturity. The Hoover-Dewey strategy toward labor was a flop.

5. On the plan to swing the Negro vote: For a few weeks after the national party conventions, it looked as though the Hoover-Dewey strategy had registered deeply. But as the campaign developed the realities broke through the demagogy, and the Negro voters came through their period of hesitation and swung overwhelmingly to Roosevelt on election day. The turning point came with the Philadelphia traction upheaval, in which Republicans had incited a "strike" to drive Negroes out of employment, and which the Roosevelt Administration promptly suppressed with a strong hand, upholding the authority of the Fair Employment Practices Committee without hesitation. The Transport

Workers Union leadership played the key role in smashing this provocation, and thereby also consolidated its authority among the very workers who had been misled into following the Republican provocation, and who were thoroughly ashamed of themselves when they realized how they had been victimized. The Negro voters rejected the G.O.P. demagoguery in overwhelming majority, and went with the organized labor movement for Roosevelt.

6. The double-talk scheme of Dewey: Perhaps the modern radio should be given some of the credit for the breakdown of Dewey's little scheme for working both sides of the street and gathering support from both sides of every controversial question. At any rate, the fact that Dewey was talking out of both sides of his mouth soon became so widely recognized that hard-boiled Republicans were blushing for him. There were large backward masses who were influenced toward Dewey by his special appeals, there is no doubt; but it is equally certain that this was approximately offset by the numbers of intelligent men who were driven away from Dewey by his cynical demagoguery, and who were inevitably attracted by the dignified and serious level of Roosevelt's dealing with the campaign issues. On this front also the Hoover-Dewey strategy went on the rocks.

7. The anti-Communist and anti-Semitic incitements: It was in this phase of the Hoover-Dewey strategy that its full Hitlerite inspiration and purpose was revealed most fully. Never outside of Nazi Germany has anything like it been witnessed in

modern political life. An unprecedented flood of political poison was loosed upon the country. It would be blindness to underestimate the damage to America's social and political life, not only in influencing voters in the election, but in poisoning social and political relations after the election is over. This phase of the Dewey campaign was most damaging because it was only half met and half answered for the great majority of the country. It was not clearly branded with its real character, as a reversion to barbarism, as a renunciation of all civilized culture, as the negation of human reason, but was merely dealt with as an example of the "gigantic lie." The basic assumption of this gigantic lie, that Communists and Jews are somehow outside the pale of American national life, was not met head-on and challenged, except by the Communists. The democratic camp contented itself with refusing to join in this huge lie, and in declaring that "the danger is being grossly exaggerated." Inside the democratic camp, groups were tolerated and given respected positions who not only joined fully in the gigantic lie, but who had originated the special form in which the lie was put forward by the Hoover-Dewey camp; it was David Dubinsky and his clique who had coined the slogan about a "Hillman-Browder Communist conspiracy against America," and presented it ready made for Dewey's use, whether with or without fee is not known. So badly armed is American democracy against this poison that responsible leaders were still willing publicly to

associate with Dubinsky at the end of the campaign when he was mouthing the same main slogans as Dewey, while still unwilling or unable to acknowledge that American Communists have won their citizenship by their devoted services in our nation's greatest common effort. Such is the still remaining potency of this, the chief of Hitler's political poisons.

The effects of Dewey's anti-Communist and anti-Semitic campaign were mixed and very complicated. There can be no doubt it failed in its first aim, which was to rally propertied, business and financial circles into a fanatical drive to elect Dewey at all costs, although it may have had effect in slowing and limiting the shift of such circles to open support of Roosevelt; when the *New York Times* and Walter Lippmann, two of the most conservative and responsible spokesmen of the propertied classes, came out against Dewey in the last phase of the campaign, this was registration of the failure of the first aim of the Red-scare. It failed even more completely in its second aim of splitting the labor movement, despite Dubinsky's frantic efforts to assist; never before had a great national Red-scare effort found so little response within organized labor.

Where the anti-Communist and anti-Semitic campaign scored heavily, however, was in the small towns and rural areas, among the less thoroughly informed and less politically alert sections of the population. Here Dewey more than made up for his numerical losses of support among the Willkie Republicans

who were nauseated by his Red-scare, who remembered Willkie's dramatic appearances before the Supreme Court to argue the case in behalf of William Schneiderman, the California Communist leader, and to win the decision establishing the right to citizenship of Communists, and who remembered Willkie's fearless call for China's unity to include the Communists. In the small towns and rural areas they have learned little or nothing of such modern political developments in America and the world, and when a great political party they had long respected even when they had not voted for it frantically shouted in their ears that a foreign conspiracy was seizing control of America, there is not the slightest doubt that millions were influenced by it. There is reason to believe that while Dewey weakened himself in the cities and among all intelligent and informed people by his irresponsible use of anti-Communism and anti-Semitism, he more than compensated himself in the number of votes even though not in the quality of his support, in the small towns, rural areas, and among the less informed voters generally.

It is certainly not a pleasure for me to regard the judgment that Dewey made some profit in votes out of the Red-scare. I would be much happier if I could honestly declare that his crime did not pay substantially among any large part of the population or in any form. But this issue is too threatening of future troubles for our country and the world to justify any wishful thinking or complacency in regard

to the realities. The harsh truth is that a considerable part of America can be influenced by unprincipled political leadership which appeals to fear and hatred of Communists and Jews, by precisely the chief means whereby Hitler rose to power in Germany.

A tremendous task of mass political education is required by this fact, before our country can be considered immune to Hitlerism.

International Consequences of American Elections

The re-election of Roosevelt, with a Congress purged of many of the worst isolationists and reactionaries, is having and will continue to have profound repercussions throughout the world.

It is an American national referendum confirming the Teheran Concord, the world leadership given by Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt. It makes possible a new meeting of the "Big Three" further to extend and build on the foundations of Teheran.

It gives American support to the movement for national unity in the liberated countries of Europe, extending from Catholics to Communists, and the beginning of an orderly and peaceful reconstruction of their life upon new foundations.

It is the stamp of approval upon the counsel Roosevelt has been giving to China, to unite against the Japanese common enemy, to settle inner conflicts and throw all forces into the war, to take boldly the path of democracy, to rehabilitate Chi-

nese economy and put checks upon the speculators, usurers, and landlords who are now sucking the blood of the nation.

It opens the way for the Soviet Union eventually to join in the common task of the creation of a peaceful and progressing Asia, as the larger half of a peaceful and progressing world.

It consolidates the preconditions, established at Teheran, for the world to begin to face and work out peaceful paths toward the liberation of the colonial world from its bondage, and the inclusion of those areas within the domain of democracy and increasing well-being.

It hastens the final crushing of the Hitlerite beast in his lair and the defeat of the Japanese bandit regime, and the return of the whole world to the ways of peace.

It clears the way to a new era of full employment and expanding economic well-being, to be extended systematically to more and more of the world, through the united leadership of Britain, the Soviet Union, and America in an organized world family of nations.

Only in such a world can America solve her domestic problems and find the road to inner peace and prosperity.

We have turned the corner on the historic path to that bright future. What Stalingrad was to the Soviet Union, the definite turning of the tide against fascism, so was the November 7th election for the United States.