

THE POST-WAR WORLD

VICTORY for the United Nations over the Axis will bring us face to face with the problems of the post-war reorganization of the world. Many persons and organizations are busily preparing blueprints in anticipation of that day. That is a pastime in which I cannot join. I have no blueprints for the post-war world.

A few things about that post-war world we can say with a reasonable degree of certainty.

With the Axis crushed, all mankind will face the problems of reconstruction of the world in a condition of freedom to develop its capacities beyond that of any previous generation. There will be a flowering of the genius of the human mind such as has always followed the removal of great repressive forces.

There will be freedom for national development of the hitherto oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and of the submerged nations of Europe. These peoples will achieve a measure of self-determined existence which will be a new high mark in history. No conceivable reactionary post-war trends among the great powers can cancel out this gain. And it will be a gain for freedom for all the world.

Many nations which have long been socialistic in their dominant trend of political thought will finally be free

to translate their thought into action. It is quite probable that the immediate post-war world will produce at least one more Socialist Republic besides the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics now existing. Others may adopt some new intermediate type of social and economic organization which is not socialism nor the capitalism hitherto known.

The United States, if it successfully meets the cruel tests of this war and contributes its share to the victory, will almost certainly enter the post-war world as the strongest capitalist country and the political center of gravity of the capitalist sector of the world. It will have an enormously important role to play, therefore, in the family of nations.

The central problem of this post-war world will be that of whether or not the collaboration set up for the war, in the United Nations, can be continued and extended after the war to deal collectively with the problems of economic and political reconstruction of the world. Upon the answer to this question depends all further determination of the character of the post-war world.

If the United Nations as a center of world collaboration can be continued and extended it is possible to hold out the realistic perspective of a rapid healing of the terrible wounds of the war, and great strides forward in attaining for all peoples those goals of cultural and economic advancement indicated in outline in the Atlantic Charter. It will then be possible to minimize those upheavals and civil wars which are generated in the course of the international war and which tend to break out on its termination; it will be possible to find a maximum degree of peaceful and orderly development for all nations.

This, it seems to me, is the central issue which must be kept to the forefront in all thinking about post-war problems, if we are to avoid the grave danger that precon-

ceived schemes and blueprints may become obstacles instead of aids to world reconstruction. It is even more immediately called for as a means through which consideration of post-war problems helps now, during the war, toward victory for the United Nations and does not act as a divisive influence undermining the war effort.

It is the policy of the Communist Party to aid in every way possible, in collaboration with all like-minded persons and groups, to secure the fullest integration of the United Nations for the war and equally for the post-war period after victory has been won.

If this is achieved it will be an unprecedented step forward in history. And it is clear that the unprecedented cannot be achieved by following old doctrines based upon precedent.

That is not to say that the aim is utopian or unreasonable. The very heart of historical development lies in the constant achievement of unprecedented things. If nothing happened except according to precedent there would be no history at all. The Communist understanding of history, which is the school of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, presents no obstacle to setting such an aim as that of the United Nations in war and peace, but on the contrary is the greatest assistance; we Communists have been long habituated to planning for the unprecedented, and our theory is no dogma nor rigid doctrine but rather a guide to action in the real world. Men make history, even if they must make it from the materials they find at hand, and if in war we weld together a powerful entity in the United Nations, that will also be material for building the peace.

The kind of peace that will follow the war depends upon what kind of war we make. To the degree that we conduct

and win this war as a war of the United Nations, to that same degree we are preparing the United Nations as the instrument for ordering the post-war world.

Victory over the Axis will remove that greatest of all threats to civilization; it will at the same time remove the force primarily responsible for welding together the United Nations. With the threat of Nazi enslavement removed, all the divisive tendencies within the United Nations will reassert themselves with new vigor. That will be a new testing time for the United Nations, one which will measure how fundamentally the fires of war have welded the international solidarity of progressive mankind.

The main domestic problem of the post-war period will be that of transition from a war economy to a peace economy. This will bring us suddenly face to face again with the problem that had thrown the whole capitalist world into crisis from 1929 until the present war engulfed the world, namely, the problem of a strictly limited demand for commodities far below the productive capacity of the national economy. The war will have accentuated this contradiction manifold through plant expansion.

Will the United States and the rest of the capitalist world relapse into the chronic economic crisis we experienced since 1929? Will we admit that we can achieve maximum production for war, but that it is impossible to produce for peace on a similar scale?

That is the answer that is already given by our most authoritative economic thinkers in the first days of United States' full commitment to the war. Here is the picture of United States post-war economy given by the American Academy of Political and Social Science:

"The national income will drop almost overnight to one-third or one-half its war peak. . . . There will be corresponding unemployment still further increased by . . . economies of production methods. . . . Any plan for the future that fails to accept these facts is unrealistic and futile."\*

It is impossible for me to agree with this defeatist approach to our post-war economic problems. On the contrary it seems to me that it is this approach which is "unrealistic and futile," and that the American people will never accept it. It is the extreme of unreason to assume that only the unlimited demand of war can bring forth the maximum production of our economy, while peace must necessarily be accompanied by idleness and stagnation. This perspective is entirely unacceptable to the common sense of the people. If we can produce battleships, tanks, planes, and all the matériel of war in such quantities, in war time, there is no valid reason why we cannot produce an equal amount of values in the peacetime needs of the population when the war is over. Economists who refuse to face this problem and give a reasonable answer to it will find all their post-war plans rejected by the people when the time comes to decide such questions.

It is true precedent shows us no way in which this can be done without fundamental changes in our economy. Just as the war has shown the possibility to solve "impossible" problems, so will the coming peace. Unprecedented accomplishments in the war will teach us to do the unprecedented things that will be necessary in peace.

\* *Annals of the American Academy*, p. viii, Philadelphia, March, 1942.

Theories which "prove" that necessary things are "impossible" will have to be thrown into the discard.

Any further ventures into the "unexplored territory" of the post-war world would serve no useful purpose at this time. This far it is necessary to go now in order to strengthen our war effort; the people must have a practical program offered them which holds out a realistic perspective of an orderly world emerging out of the present war, and this is given us in the United Nations for peace as for war; the people rebel against the thought that when the war is over they will be thrown into the scrapheap of the unemployed, and they must be given the assurance that it will not happen, that our national economy will serve them in peace with something of the efficiency with which it now serves the war.

#### POSTSCRIPT

As I finish the somewhat hasty writing of this book I am keenly conscious of its literary shortcomings. But in this wartime there is no leisure for polishing and pruning, and the book must go to the printer much as it came from the first typing. I find consolation in the thought so well expressed by Goethe:

*Sound understanding, judgment true  
Find utterance without art or rule;  
And when in earnest you are moved to speak  
Then is it needful cunning words to seek?  
Your fine harangues so polished in their kind  
Wherein the shreds of human thought you twist  
Are unrefreshing as the empty wind  
Whistling through withered leaves and autumn mist.*



Despite the fact that this book is quite unorthodox and follows the lines of war needs rather than theory, it is my belief that it is consistent with the political principles to which I have long adhered and which guide my party. Our theory is no dogma, but a guide to action. In war, a war which must be carried through to victory, it would be indeed bad theory which failed to support that which is requisite to victory. Our theory is valid because it is close to life, it comes directly out of living experience, and its purpose is to serve life and guide it to higher levels. It was in the writings of a pre-eminent theorist, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, that I first found these words of Goethe:

*Grey, my young friend, is all theory,  
And green alone Life's golden tree.*