

# WAR AND POSTWAR

*Planning for the era after victory. William Z. Foster sets forth the major points for consideration now. The decisive effects of today's war strategy on tomorrow's world.*

**I**N VIEW of the tremendous successes of the Red Army on the Eastern Front, the intensified bombing of German cities, the successful invasion of Italy, the checkmating of the submarine campaign, and the prospect of an early opening of an Anglo-American front in Western Europe, the unity of the three great powers at the Moscow Conference and Teheran, plus optimistic predictions by Allied military and political leaders, the peoples of Great Britain and the United States have become convinced that not only are they going to win the war, but will do so in the not-too-distant future. Their strong belief in victory especially began after the great German defeat at Stalingrad and it has intensified ever since. It is not surprising, therefore, that, together with this victory perspective, the American and British peoples are also interesting themselves deeply in the probable shape-up of the postwar world. They feel that the war is being won and they want to make certain that the peace also will be won.

When the United States was plunged into the war by Japan's treacherous attack at Pearl Harbor the people of this country, fighting for their very existence, were content with the slogan, "A war of survival"; but now, as they see the enemy being beaten, they have raised the sights of their postwar aims. The great democratic mass of the American people are now fighting to make this a better country and world than it was before the present holocaust began. They definitely want to establish a lasting world peace, to abolish political tyranny and to provide a much higher level of mass prosperity. President Roosevelt and Vice-President Wallace, in stressing the "Four Freedoms" and the "Century of the Common Man," are expressing the hope and will of untold millions in this and other countries. As for the great business interests, however, their postwar aims are something else again, and certainly in most cases do not contribute either to world peace or security.

At the present time the American people, all sections of them, are displaying a natural and keen interest in so-called postwar plans, especially those of a domestic character relating to economic reconstruction. There is a widespread fear of an economic collapse upon the conclusion of the war and the various classes are striving as best they can to guard their interests against it. The workers and soldiers are worrying where they will get jobs when the war is finished; the farmers and business men are also wondering what their

economic fate will be. Consequently there is "postwar planning" on all sides. The Roosevelt administration has evolved a whole postwar program, and almost every state and important city has its plan of reconstruction. The AFL, CIO, and Railroad Brotherhoods also have their own more or less well defined programs, and so have all the business men's organizations. Likewise, the churches, fraternal orders, and almost all other types of social organization are displaying a similar interest, while the newspapers and the radio are full of the subject.

**T**HE general matter of postwar economic reconstruction has already grown into a major political question, and its importance is bound to increase during the developing presidential election campaign. The reactionaries, whose isolationist, anti-Russian, defeat-Japan-first policies have been bankrupted by the course of the war, are unable to attack President Roosevelt's foreign policy effectively; so they have made a tongue-in-cheek acceptance of it and are centering their main attack against the President's domestic policies. Shouting the slogan of the restoration of "Free Enterprise" and challenging the whole record of the Roosevelt administration, they are aiming to curb the trade unions, to whittle away our federal social legislation, and to abolish government "interference" in business, whether in the shape of wartime controls or otherwise. The win-the-war forces, while raising the whole question of the war as the central

election issue, cannot possibly ignore the domestic postwar implications.

The reactionaries are now driving hard in Congress to achieve as much as they can of their program while the war is still going on, but obviously what they have in mind chiefly is the long term economic situation in the postwar period. Should the Nazis be knocked out of the war before the election, which is very possible, although Japan may still be fighting, the present day postwar reconstruction programs would therefore inevitably be of most fundamental importance to the elections. But even if Germany were not yet completely defeated by next November, our victory perspective would be so much more immediate by that time as to sharpen up very greatly the political significance of the so-called postwar plans of the administration and its big business opposition.

In dealing at the present time with the general question of postwar plans there must always be borne in mind the close interrelation between the war itself and postwar reconstruction. That is to say, on the one hand, the whole shape-up of the postwar world depends upon the outcome of the war, and, on the other hand, postwar problems, by affecting national unity and morale, have profound effects upon the course of the war. Two dangers must, therefore, be guarded against. One, the tendency of Social Democrats and others to focus the people's main attention upon postwar blueprints, and thus cause them to neglect the prosecution of the war; and the other, the tendency to neglect the



Dear Herbert: Thank you so much for what you did for Oswald. Now what about Rudolf?

postwar issues altogether in the name of more effective concentration upon the winning of the war. The second tendency, hardly less than the first, is detrimental to the war. It also leaves the people unprepared for the postwar period.

After these introductory remarks, let us proceed to a general evaluation of the so-called postwar problems and their relation to the war at the present stage of the struggle.

**AN ALL-OUT OFFENSIVE TO WIN THE WAR:** The first plank in any platform looking towards the postwar world must be the concentration of every resource upon winning the war. For the whole character of the postwar period will depend directly upon how quickly and how decisively we win the war. Those who are thinking seriously of the postwar period, therefore, must put the question of victory in the forefront of all their considerations. This means that there must be an intensive struggle against the present moods of complacency and expectations of easy victory. It means also that we must support actively the launching of the second front and be prepared to back it up solidly when it comes. It implies, furthermore, that the attempts of the defeatists and profiteers to break down wartime controls and to plunge the country into inflation must be smashed. Price ceilings, rationing, and industry controls must be maintained and strengthened. Production must be speeded up, and all provocation towards strikes, whether by defeatist legislation in Congress, by union-baiting employers, or by the machinations of Lewis elements in the labor movement, must be combated. Every effort must be put forth to stimulate our national war effort and to checkmate the many forces that are seeking to disintegrate it. Unnecessarily prolonging the war would mean more soldier and civilian casualties, and more mass starvation and property destruction; it would also render postwar reconstruction vastly more complicated and difficult. Winning the war, quickly and decisively, therefore, is the first and most important consideration in any postwar program.

**ENFORCE THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE DECISIONS:** It is of profound importance, in determining the character of the postwar world, to strengthen the bonds between the four great powers, as the foundations of the United Nations, and to enforce and develop constructively both the military policies and the reconstruction measures agreed upon in Moscow. This is the way to win the war and the peace, too. There are in the United States many powerful defeatist elements who, although temporarily knocked off their feet by the enthusiastic mass response to the Moscow agreements, are losing no opportunity to sabotage these agreements. They are striving to continue their anti-British, anti-Soviet agitation in new forms. They are

laying every obstacle in the way of establishing democracy in the liberated countries. They will do everything possible to prevent the punishment of the war guilty. And, above all, they will seek, if they see a chance, to arrive at some sort of a negotiated peace with the fascist big business men and army generals of Germany.

If both the war and the peace are to be won and if we are to have a peaceful and democratic postwar world, then it is imperative to develop the strongest possible national unity to overcome all this defeatist sabotage and to enforce the Moscow four-power decisions. All this places a grave responsibility upon organized labor, in the respective capitalist countries and internationally. Labor's power may be decisive. This stresses the enormous importance of the international trade union conference, called for London next June, and the imperative need for all sections of the American labor movement to be represented there.

**CONTINUE AND STRENGTHEN THE ROOSEVELT POLICIES:** In facing up to the great problems of winning the war speedily and decisively and of building a better postwar world, a basic consideration is to continue and elaborate the Roosevelt policies for the war and the postwar period. A realization of this need is shown in the demand of large sections of the labor movement and, according to the Gallup Poll, fifty-six percent of all voters, for a fourth term for President Roosevelt. It is clear that if the present drive of the defeatist reactionaries, whose main instrument is the Republican Party, should succeed in capturing the presidency in 1944, then the people's present-day hopes for a better postwar world, both nationally and internationally, would be in for drastic revision.

The meaning of the "Free Enterprise" slogan now being widely agitated by the powerful group of Republican reactionaries and Democratic poll-taxers and also by most of the capitalist press, implies an unrestricted rule by the monopolies. A success for the Republican Party, or for a reactionary Democrat, for that matter, in 1944 would constitute a victory of the open shoppers and the bearers of fascism in this country. It would endanger our whole democratic structure and it would make every step towards a national postwar régime, both here and abroad, impossible of success short of a determined mass struggle.

A Republican administration would encourage reaction all over the world. Rampant American imperialism again in the saddle would weaken the foundations of the United Nations and sow seeds for World War III. Such an administration would not insist upon the enemy's unconditional surrender; it would not extinguish fascism in Europe or establish democracy; it would not collaborate loyally with the USSR or Great Britain; it would degenerate our Good Neighbor policy with Latin

America. If Hitler were able to prolong the war to that extent he could be practically certain of arriving at some sort of a negotiated peace with a Republican administration and thus save his hide. Nor could a Willkie as president, even if he wanted to, substantially alter this basically reactionary course of the Republican Party.

It is in this sense of extreme urgency, therefore, that the trade unions must work in the developing national election campaign. To make sure that the war is won decisively and a livable postwar period inaugurated, the AFL, CIO, and Railroad Brotherhoods face an imperative need to combine their entire forces in nationwide political activity with other win-the-war elements. Without defeating the reactionary Republican-Democratic poll-taxer offensive, the formulation of progressive postwar plans is only so much idle chatter.

**POSTWAR ECONOMIC MEASURES:** Together with the above-indicated basic tasks there is also the need to prepare a series of economic measures for the postwar period. Labor, like the nation as a whole, must not allow itself to be caught short in this matter by a possible sudden end of the war.

First, there are the emergency measures necessary to facilitate the immediate change from war to peace conditions. This problem will become acute when Germany collapses, even though Japan still remains fighting. Among the most urgent problems demanding answers prepared beforehand are the reconversion of industry to production for civilian needs and providing jobs for all, the granting of emergency wages to millions of displaced workers, the systematic demobilization, financial protection and job placing of members of the armed forces, the maintenance of rationing and price controls until the change-over has been accomplished, the restoration of the forty-hour week, etc.

There will also be necessary a whole series of measures of a long-range character. Among these, steps must be taken to provide jobs through government works for all those who cannot get employment in private industry, to expand greatly the federal social security system by providing more adequate unemployment, old age, and health insurance for all, to have the government retain the many new wartime plants and to operate them, to work out a broad system of international trade agreements that will encourage world trade upon a new basis, to develop a system of long-term, all-purpose, government foreign loans at low interest rates, etc.

The outlines for many of these measures are already contained in the various proposals made by the administration to Congress, including the postwar plans of the National Resources Planning Board, the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill for social security, Roosevelt's various proposals on behalf of demobilized soldiers, etc. The

three great branches of the labor movement should get together, consider all these propositions, formulate a program, and then, placing it in opposition to the reactionary "Free Enterprise" program of the NAM, develop an all-out campaign in support of it from now on in the election campaign. Such a program would dovetail basically with that of the Roosevelt administration. The trouble now in this whole matter is that organized labor has as yet no unified plan of postwar reconstruction. The CIO has not dealt systematically enough with this whole question, and the sketchy program of the AFL, under the stimulus of Matthew Woll, leans altogether too much in the direction of the so-called "Free Enterprise" policies of the reactionaries.

Upon the war's end organized labor will also have to begin to pay real attention to correcting the fundamental evils that have produced these two great wars, plus the long economic crisis, in one generation. Fascism must be defeated economically and politically in this country, as well as militarily on battlefields abroad. This means that the power of monopoly capital, the poison source of fascism all over the world, will have to be drastically curbed and eventually broken. To do this the nationalization of the banks and of such industries as the railroads, coal, and steel is imperative. Nor can the danger of war, fascism, and mass pauperization be finally liquidated in

our country until the American people establish socialism. These are great lessons that organized labor must and will learn.

**UNITE THE RANKS OF LABOR:** Another vital need of organized labor, in order to speed the national war effort and to face responsibly labor's prospective tasks in the postwar period, is to unite and strengthen the trade union movement. This strengthening is necessary now if labor is to give its full backing to the government in prosecuting the war, in protecting the economic interests of all the workers, and if it is to beat the reactionaries in the presidential elections. It is also imperative for the postwar period; because (a) if the win-the-war forces win the elections, labor will need to encompass far larger numbers of workers in order to be able to speak authoritatively for the whole working class; and (b) if the Republican Party should carry the elections, then labor will require every possible ounce of strength to defend itself from the heavy attacks which would then be sure to come. The following are the three major paths along which labor needs urgently to strengthen itself:

(a) *Political unity:* The situation in the war now and in the postwar perspectives, demands that all labor should unite politically. The plan of political action committees worked out by the CIO offers the most practical means to achieve this solidarity. Political unity by labor is needed not only

to help carry the presidential elections for the progressive forces, urgent though this task may be, but also so that the workers may pull their full weight politically in the postwar period. After the present elections, therefore, the political organization built up in this struggle must not be allowed to fall to pieces. It must be strengthened and extended, until labor has a real political organization. This election must be understood as American labor's first great stride towards independent political action and organization.

(b) *Organization of the unorganized:* Although the trade unions have in the past decade added some 10,000,000 members to their ranks, there are many millions of workers, the majority in fact, who are still unorganized. These workers are without economic protection in these days of rising prices, and their political strength is undeveloped. The time is now ripe to unite these great masses. Organized labor must no longer content itself with embracing only a portion of the body of workers; its aim now must be to unite and speak for the whole working class.

(c) *Organic trade union unity:* The split in the ranks of organized labor must be healed, and promptly. This disunity has greatly handicapped the progress of the trade unions and it has also hindered the development of our national war effort. It can, if it is not overcome by cooperative political action, bring upon the country the disaster of a Republican victory in the presidential elections. And for the postwar period it is no less full of forebodings. There is no reason, save the narrow craft spirit of the AFL leaders, why the AFL and the CIO should not at once combine their forces. Such unity would inaugurate a new era of progress for labor generally. The first great step in this direction is of developing united political action in the presidential elections. The AFL rank and file especially should insist upon this on the part of their leaders. They should also see to it that this political cooperation should culminate in the organic unity of the whole American trade union movement.

**T**HE foregoing constitute the major considerations that should be borne in mind in looking ahead to the postwar world. Summing them up briefly, they are, to keep constantly in the foreground the all-decisive task of winning the war; to strengthen the bonds among the three great powers of the United Nations and to enforce energetically the Moscow decisions; to strengthen and continue the Roosevelt administration's domestic as well as its foreign policies; to prepare labor's program for the necessary change-over and long-range economic policies for a peace-time economy; and to extend and unite the ranks of labor in order to fulfill its wartime role and to prepare it for the great tasks that will confront the nation in the postwar period.

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