

VICTORY—AND AFTER

Foregoing the pastime of blueprinting the postwar world, Earl Browder indicates what can be said with a "reasonable degree of certainty." Key problems and their solution.

VICTORY for the United Nations over the Axis will bring us face to face with the problems of the postwar 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 postwar world.

A few things about that postwar 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 postwar 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 postwar 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 or 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 postwar 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 postwar 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 postwar world.

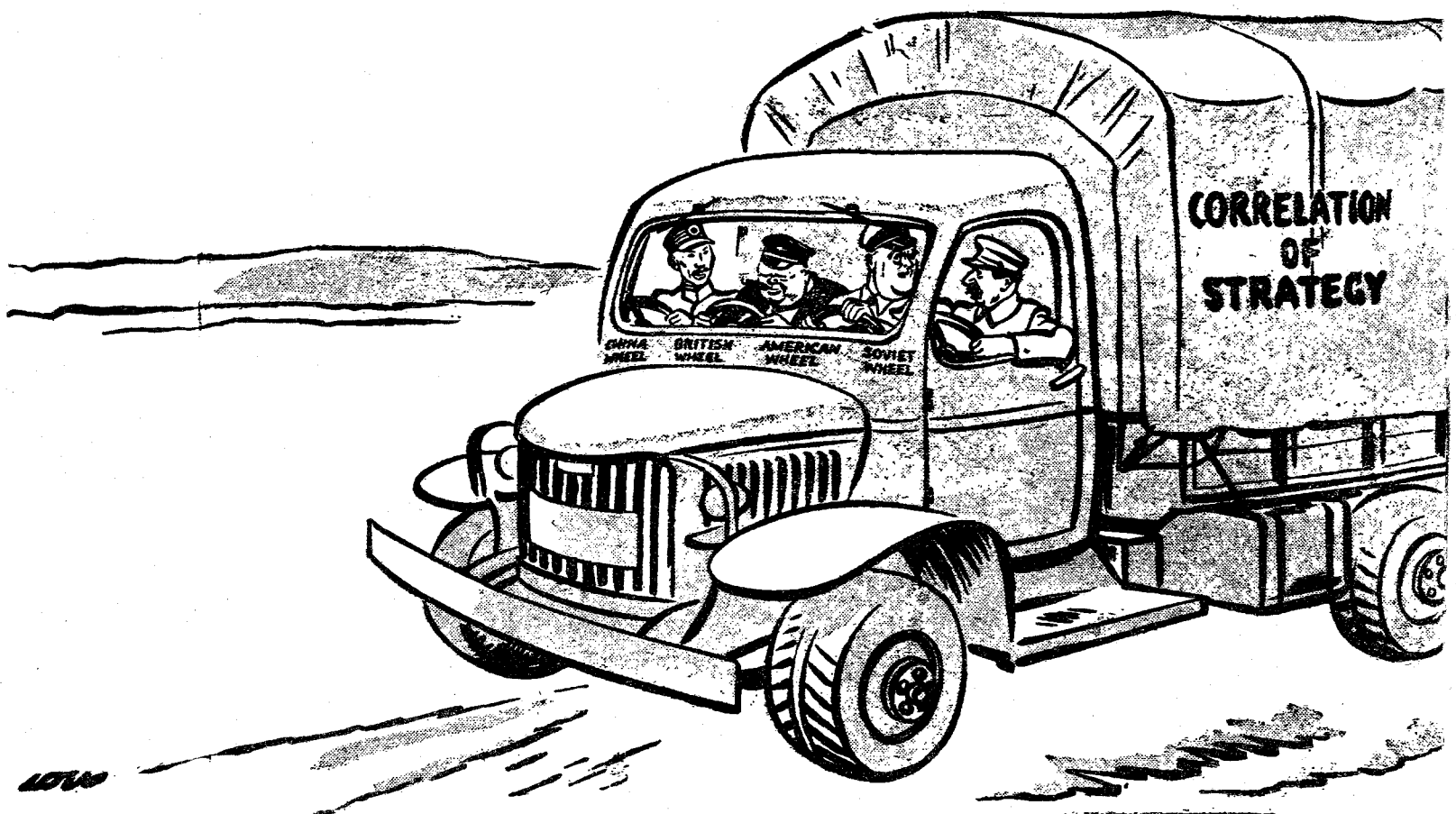
If the United Nations as a center of world collaboration can be continued and extended it is possible to hold out the realistic perspec-

tive 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 postwar problems, if we are to avoid the grave danger that preconceived 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 postwar 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 postwar period after victory has been won.

If this is achieved it will be an unprece-



"Now supposing we all try to go somewhere together. . . ."

Low in the British press

dented 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 as an aim as that of the United Nations in war and peace, but on the contrary is of the greatest assistance; we Communists have been long habituated to planning for the unprecedented, and our theory is no dogma or 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 postwar 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 pro-

gressive mankind.

The main domestic problem of the postwar 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 the United States' full commitment to the war. Here is the picture of United States postwar 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." (*Annals of the American Academy*, Philadelphia, Pa., March 1942, page viii.)

IT is impossible for me to agree with this defeatist approach to our postwar economic problems. One 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 un-

reason 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 materiel 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 postwar 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 of solving "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. 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 postwar 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 scrap heap 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.

EARL BROWDER.



Prize winners in the United Hemisphere Poster contest. The first prize (left) in the Latin American group went to Jose Renau of Mexico. The second prize (center) in the US-Canadian group was taken by John A. Gaydos of New York. Fourth prize winner (right), also in the Latin American group, was awarded to Demetrio Urruchua of Buenos Aires. The posters are now on exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.

NO PLACE TO LIVE

The sad picture of war housing. Confusion over the type of dwellings to be built—and where and how many. Effects on manpower, production. Labor has a job to do.

THE old nursery school rhyme which told the pointed little story that “for want of a nail, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the battle was lost,” can be paraphrased to describe the present housing situation: “for want of a home, the worker was lost; for want of the worker, the tank was lost; for want of the tank, the battle was lost.” Another destroyer a month could be built at the Charleston, S. C., Navy Yard if more housing were available for needed workers.

Confusion and delay—two words which often come up in discussions of our production setup—certainly apply to the housing situation. There has been confusion in the type of dwelling units to be built, the number required, the areas where they should be located. There has been delay in appropriations, in priorities, and in construction. The underlying purpose of the government’s housing program has not been to provide the houses required by an all-out war economy. It has been to maintain peacetime conditions in the building industry as far as possible and fit war housing into that pattern, filling up the worst gaps in acutely overcrowded areas. The chaotic system of priorities allocation in the past, the failure to develop new sources of critical materials, the slow rate of conversion, the heavy concentration of war contracts in a few areas, and the absence of a planned manpower program—these things also account for the fact that the housing program is just about a year behind the necessary requirements.

IT IS almost impossible to secure an accurate picture of housing needs throughout the country. We know, however, that in at least twenty vital production areas, scheduling and output have been curtailed by lack of housing facilities for workers. The high quit rate in the shipbuilding and aircraft industries is traced mainly to the fact that thousands upon thousands of workers have no place to sleep in comfort; they must use beds in eight-hour shifts, the so-called “hot-beds” prevalent in all overcrowded areas. The War Manpower Commission reports that “in a number of localities, it appears necessary to defer further recruitment until housing for workers is made available.” At the Richmond, Calif., shipyards it was necessary to hire 15,000 men in order to add 9,000 employees and replace 6,000 who had left because of no housing accommodations.

Since the start of the public housing program in October 1940, a total of 424,000 units has been projected. Only 141,000—one-third—have been completed. While 168,000 are under construction, the major part of the housing program is still in the blueprint stage—and this at a time when we are racing toward the peak of war production. The high-water mark in the completion of new war plants was expected this month. But the housing program, at the present rate of construction, will probably reach the proposed goals in about four years! Which offers the happy prospect of munitions plants standing idle because men and women cannot be recruited to

work in them while no provisions are made for even minimum shelter.

The various reorganizations and consolidations of housing agencies have scarcely improved the situation. There are now three main housing agencies, instead of sixteen, under the National Housing Agency, and John B. Blandford replaces the former real estate operator Charles F. Palmer as national housing administrator. But there’s the same lack of direction and planning. Even if the NHA were anxious to do a good job, it would be completely hampered by the “business-as-usual” framework set up by the House of Representatives’ Public Buildings and Grounds Committee, which has embodied that framework in the Lanham act, the law that determines public housing policy. In addition, NHA has been held back by the War Production Board’s failure to recognize the necessity of war housing and to grant adequate priorities. The third obstruction is the absence of a clear-cut manpower program, which means in turn an absence of information as to just how many workers are required in each production area and how many will be migrants who need new homes.

The framework that Congress has established simply means that the private housing industry must build as much of the war housing as it possibly can; whatever it cannot take care of, the government may construct. But private builders who attempt to operate by traditional peacetime methods cannot provide the type of housing war workers require, and government construction has been kept to a minimum. Hence the present acute situation.

MOST of the housing policies have in effect been written by real estate interests. Congress has declared that dormitories for single men come first, since private building has no interest in this field, and NHA has been carrying out this dictum. But employment of single workers is decreasing as they are drawn into the army, whereas more and more married men with families are hired. Pressure from builders who wanted the government to erect only temporary houses that could easily be torn down, resulted in the big program for demountable houses announced last fall, projecting 112,000 prefabricated units. To date only a little over 8,000 have been constructed—it was found that the prefabricated industry had a limited capacity, that the parts would have to be shipped, placing additional loads on strained transportation facilities, and that actually little would be saved in terms of speed and money. You don’t hear much about demountable houses any more!

A shortage of 6,000,000,000 board feet of lumber is expected this year because of heavy lend-lease and Army and Navy requirements. WPB issued a lumber freeze order in June which actually halted all public and private construction. Public housing is able to obtain some lumber now, but private construction is still stalled. Behind the shortage is the lumber industry’s refusal to pay overtime rates and the failure to utilize the full resources of thousands of small sawmills throughout the South. You’d think that housing officials, faced with a lumber shortage, would be only too eager to look for new sources of material. Very durable houses can be made out of brick and tile—and there are more than 800 of these structural clay products plants throughout the country. The only trouble is that brick and tile are used in permanent-type dwellings, and private industry does not want the government to build permanent houses. As a result, even though the structural clay industry has pointed out that there is sufficient material on hand to build 2,000,000 homes, little attention has been paid to this substitute for lumber.

Most responsible for the present housing delay has been the chaotic priorities situation. Public and private building units have been projected, contracts let out, workers ready to begin, and NHA has sent to WPB the list of materials needed—but then WPB would not grant the priorities to obtain the materials. It was estimated that project orders for close to 100,000 units