

II. A YEAR IN REVIEW

ANOTHER year is over. It was a momentous year, in which history was speeded-up as never before. So many things happened that we may not be able to see the forest for the trees, may overlook the most important things. Therefore the value of a review at the moment when 1940 changes over to 1941.

Outstanding development of the year is that the imperialist war has spread to involve practically the entire world—except the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The capitalist and the colonial or semi-colonial countries are, with a few unimportant exceptions, fully in the storm of the most destructive, most catastrophic struggle of all history. This is clearly the deepest crisis of the capitalist world system.

The most important net result of the year, on a world scale, has been the shift in the relation of forces as between the capitalist world, on the one hand, and the new socialist world of the U.S.S.R., on the other hand, a shift in favor of the Soviet Union of great magnitude as yet immeasurable. This is irrefutably established by the addition of six new Soviet republics comprising some twenty-three million inhabitants to the Soviet Union, and by the removal of the Mannerheim Line from the neck of Leningrad. The capitalist world has a net loss which includes further the gigantic destruction of its war.

The United States has, during 1940, been deeply involved in the imperialist war. At the beginning of the year, the U.S.A. could still be described as a neutral (though that neutrality was already being undermined), outside the orbit of the war. But in the very

midst of the national elections, fought between two parties which both protested their firmest intention of keeping out of the war, our Government was irretrievably committed to the deepest involvement, in flagrant violation of even the pretense of democratic forms. Upon this judgment, the Communists find themselves in agreement with the most sober and realistic spokesmen of the ruling class (when the latter are talking among themselves, and not to the masses).

The President of the National Industrial Conference Board, Virgil Jordan, speaking to the Convention of the Investment Bankers' Association on December 10 revealed the true mind of America's rulers, in a speech which merits repeated quotation. He said:

Whatever the facts about this war may have been or are now, it must be unmistakably clear to any intelligent person that we are engaged in it.

This decisive fact is still concealed from the masses of the people. Mr. Jordan explained the reason for this to the bankers in words that fully confirm Lenin's exposure of imperialism in the last war. He said:

In peace time it is the accepted custom and normal manners of modern government to conceal all important facts from the public, or to lie about them; in war it is a political vice which becomes a public necessity. . . . People in every country, including our own . . . [are] treated as though they were helpless wards or incompetent inmates of some vast institution for the indigent and feeble-minded. It is in much this spirit and atmosphere that the chatter and prattle about our national defense program proceeds in this country today.

Only one correction is needed to this description. It applies to capitalist, imperialist governments. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has spoken to its own people and to the world in the most frank and realistic terms, has told the naked truth.

The reactionary imperialistic character of the war has been revealed, in 1940, to all but dunces, ignoramuses, and those who refuse to see. Mr. Jordan described it for the bankers in terms which every worker should study again and again. He said:

Even the job of winning the war, with England or alone, is only part of the task to which America has committed herself for the future. Whatever the outcome of the war, America has embarked upon a career of imperialism, both in world affairs and in every other aspect of her life. . . . Even though, by our aid, England should emerge from this struggle without defeat, she will be so impoverished economically and crippled in prestige that it is improbable she will be able to resume or maintain the dominant position in world affairs which she has occupied so long. At best, England will become a junior partner in a new Anglo-Saxon imperialism, in which the economic resources and the military and naval strength of the United States will be the center of gravity. Southward in our hemisphere and westward in the Pacific the path of empire takes its way, and in modern terms of economic power as well as political prestige, the sceptre passes to the United States.

All this is what lies beneath the phrase "national defense"—some of it deeply hidden, some of it very near the surface and soon to emerge to challenge us.

And what does all this mean for 1941? Impoverishment of the American people, for the enrichment of American bankers on a scale unprecedented in history. We Communists have predicted and described this imperialism in our own terms, but again I prefer to turn to Mr. Jordan, the expert adviser of the bankers. After noting "the suffering and destruction involved in war, and the economic depression and political disturbance which almost invariably follow it," Mr. Jordan warns the bankers to stop thinking of the war "as a vast wasteful expenditure and a grinding burden on the community," for it will be "most helpful" he says, to "conceive of this commitment in the most constructive terms, as a kind of vast investment."

Vast indeed is to be this "investment" in empire. Mr. Jordan describes the most probable sources from which will be drawn this investment:

Recent studies by the Conference Board indicate that, even if we were to be spending or investing as much as fifteen billion a year on armaments, as we did during a full year of the last World War, we could squeeze that much or more out of the consumption and savings of the

community at the current national income level. . . . However it is made, everyone in the community must consciously or unconsciously participate in this investment . . . even the unemployed, whether they know it or not.

That is the conception that guides the American ruling class, the bourgeoisie and its government in Washington. The collapse and disintegration of the world capitalist system, the carnage and catastrophe of the imperialist war—all this they see chiefly as a “golden opportunity” for American monopoly capital, American imperialism, to come into its inheritance, a sort of glorified “fire sale” in which they will seize and buy up the world cheaply.

But they make their plans without sufficient consideration of the American working class, the American people. The American masses have different aspirations and ideas, not represented by a Sidney Hillman. The ruling class has taken the nation on the “path of empire” only by the most brazen and cynical deception.

As they awaken to the truth the American masses will brush those plans aside.

Let 1941 be the year of the great awakening!

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