

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF
THE PRESENT WAR

ON December 7, 1941, Japanese imperialism struck at the United States base at Pearl Harbor without warning, inflicting heavy losses; simultaneously its forces drove into the South Pacific; while Germany and Italy "declared" the war they had long waged in fact. Within a few days the United States had recognized the state of war existing with the Axis powers. On January 1, 1942, at Washington, the representatives of 26 governments signed the Pact of the United Nations.

Thus the United States became a full belligerent in the war and a full partner of the other nations warring with the Axis. This war embraces all continents. Its outcome will decide the fate of all nations, regardless of whether they are active belligerents or not, for generations to come.

Nazi Germany has conquered and occupied, or reduced to vassalage, every country in Europe except the Soviet Union. Together with fascist Italy, Hitler is striking at Suez in North Africa and Egypt. Japan with amazing speed has overrun the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia, Burma, and a part of the South Pacific Islands, and already has a foothold in the Aleutians, stepping-stones to Alaska, while pressing forward to new positions in China. For the

United Nations the war has been an almost unrelieved succession of military disasters without precedent. The United States and Filipino forces under General MacArthur fought a brilliant but hopeless delaying action on Bataan. The United States Navy has scored some important blows against the Japanese Navy in the Coral Sea and at Midway. China has maintained her long heroic resistance to Japan. But the position of the United Nations in the Pacific remains extremely difficult. Only in the Soviet Union did the Axis meet serious military resistance, which finally brought Hitler's armies to a halt and, passing over to the counter-offensive, inflicted vital wounds on the Nazi monster, ending the myth of invincibility with which it had surrounded itself in previous campaigns.

The Axis bids seriously for world domination. It is not yet beaten.

What a Hitler victory will mean for mankind has already been clearly indicated beyond question by his measures in the conquered countries. In France, the most advanced of the conquered lands, Hitler is proceeding to the systematic destruction of civilization and the de-industrialization of the country, reducing it to a pre-capitalist stage of development, to a medieval culture, to a colonial economy as producer of raw materials and slave labor for the German "master" race. In the occupied districts of the Soviet Union the same enslavement program has been unfolded in its most brutal forms, as in Poland, and throughout the conquered lands. It has been revealed beyond doubt that a *Pax Germanica* under Hitlerism will mean that mankind will be thrown back into the darkness of prehistoric slavery, intensified and maintained by the most modern military technique. Whole peoples will be

exterminated and nations destroyed. Human progress of centuries will be wiped out.

For such a slave system there is no possible stopping point short of complete world domination. Once Hitler's armies had broken through the limits of Western and Central Europe, his war became irrevocably one of universal conquest. Hitler openly proclaimed his intention to conquer the United States also. That was predetermined when he crossed the borders of the Soviet Union, an act which was the "crossing of the Rubicon" in a campaign of world conquest to which there could be no end short of the richest booty of all, the United States. But even if he denied this aim, we would know that he can never abandon it, for when the war became universal, no peace was longer possible between a triumphant Nazism and the United States except the peace of surrender and final destruction of this nation's territorial integrity and its independent existence. Lincoln's formulation of the issue for our nation in 1860: "The nation cannot continue half-slave and half-free," is now fully true of the world. Confronting Nazism we are faced with an "irrepressible conflict." There is no possible outcome for the United States and for any nation but victory or death.

These are the basic facts which fix the nature of the present war. It has been correctly described as a war of survival. It is a Peoples' War for National Liberation.

The character of the war is not determined by the proclamations of statesmen. It arises out of the character of the forces in combat, the policies which they are following, the results which each is struggling to achieve through the war, and the logic of the struggle inevitably arising from this relation of forces. For in judging the character of a war, it is necessary to keep in mind always that truth

which was formulated by Clausewitz in the famous axiom: "War is only the continuation of state policy by other (*i.e.*, military) means."

This war on the Axis side is the continuation of the Hitler policy of universal enslavement. On the side of the United Nations it is a Peoples' War of National Liberation. We do not say that it is *purely* of this character; like all modern wars it sprang from the widest mixture of causes, motives, policies. It has this character *predominantly, decisively*, because victory for the United Nations saves the preconditions for human progress while victory for the Axis destroys those preconditions.

It is easy to point out not one but a thousand undemocratic and imperialistic aspects of the policies, practices, and habits of mind that have long dominated the United States (and Great Britain) in violation of our democratic and anti-imperialist tradition and origin. But these things are no longer decisive as to the character of the war, although their modification and elimination will be decisive for victory in the war. These things are in process of modification and elimination in the policies of the United Nations, because they are *obstacles to victory*. Since the only way to victory is to rouse, organize, and arm *each and every nation in the world* willing to resist Nazi conquest, the undemocratic and imperialistic tendencies and forces within the United Nations are being modified and broken down, while at the same time the enslavement tendency of the Axis becomes absolute. In its drive for world conquest, the Axis is forced by the logic of the struggle to more extreme enslavement of nations and peoples; on the contrary, the United Nations is by the same logic driven onto the path of universal national liberation.

From this understanding of the relation of forces engaged in the war, we know the character of the war independently of any formal and official declaration of war aims.

It is important that the men who direct and shape policy for the United States begin to understand this nature of the war; for it was not always so. It was in 1941 when Mr. Henry R. Luce broadcast his damaging slogan: "This is the American Century," and explained that now the United States was in process of taking over the British Empire (absorbing John Bull as junior partner) and would go forward to "rule the world" for the next hundred years—an "Americanized" version of Hitlerism. And Mr. Luce received high honors at that time; only the "disreputable" Communists dared to repudiate his slogan. It was as late as December 10, 1940, that Virgil Jordan, president of the National Industrial Conference Board, speaking to the Convention of the Investment Bankers' Association, voiced the dominant trend of thought within the American ruling class at that time in the following classic words:

"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."

During 1941, no authoritative voice was raised in the United States to repudiate these conceptions. True, it was on August 14, 1941, that Roosevelt and Churchill announced the epoch-marking Atlantic Charter which starts out with a pledge against aggrandizement and an affirmation of the principle of self-determination of nations. True, these two statesmen had reversed the old policy of hostility toward the Soviet Union and welcomed her as an ally. The Luce and Jordans of the United States, however, explained away all this as only "tactics" and the Charter as only another "Wilsonian 14 points"—to be used to undermine enemy morale but not to direct actual policy—and still they were not rebuked.

It was in May, 1942, that the people of the United States and the world received the first ringing declaration of policy from Washington, which showed that our official leaders had recognized the changed character of the war, and were drawing the conclusions of policy for a Peoples' War of National Liberation. This came in the speech of Vice-President Henry A. Wallace on May 8; and then in the speech of Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles on May 30.

What I consider the most important points of Wallace's speech are:

1. He specifically repudiated the Luce-Jordan conception of a grandiose American imperialism:

"Some have spoken of the 'American Century.' I say that the century on which we are entering—the century which will come of this war—can be and must be the century of the common man. . . . No nation will have the God-given right to exploit other nations. . . . There must be neither military nor economic imperialism. . . . There can be no privileged peoples. We ourselves in the United States are no more a master race than the Nazis."

2. He recorded the true nature of the war:

"This is a fight between a slave world and a free world. Just as the United States in 1862 could not remain half slave and half free, so in 1942 the world must make its decision for a complete victory one way or the other."

3. He gave a common historical "family tree" for the United Nations and their common cause, the basis for ideological unity of all the allied peoples, in the concept of the "peoples' revolution":

"The march of freedom of the past hundred and fifty years has been a long-drawn-out peoples' revolution. In this Great Revolution of the people, there were the American Revolution of 1775, the French Revolution of 1792, the Latin American revolutions of the Bolivar era, the German Revolution of 1848, and the Russian Revolution of 1918. Each spoke for the common man in terms of blood on the battlefield. . . . The peoples' revolution aims at peace and not at violence, but if the rights of the common man are attacked, it unleashes the ferocity of a she-bear who has lost a cub."

4. He put the finger on the "secret weapon" of Hitler, the Fifth Column—the masked enemy within—and its worst exponents, those who "sabotage the mind":

"We must be especially prepared to stifle the fifth columnists in the United States who will try to sabotage not merely our war material plants, but, even more important, our minds."

I deliberately refrain from emphasizing Mr. Wallace's promises of a better world after the war, except as they are implied in the above declarations of policy. That is because I place more value upon policy—correct policy—than upon all the good intentions in the world. Good intentions, as has long been well-known, are good for nothing but to pave the road to hell, except when they are implemented by the most realistic policy. The hard facts are that this war is being fought not to make a better world, but to prevent this world from becoming entirely intolerable.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Sumner Welles, whose speech of May 30 takes its place alongside that of Mr. Wallace in significance, is of all members of the Roosevelt Administration known as "the hard-boiled realist." All the more important, then, when we find Mr. Welles sounding the same notes as the idealistic Mr. Wallace. From the words of Mr. Welles I pick the following, as most significant from the point of view of defining policy:

1. The recognition that our enemy is a Frankenstein monster raised by our own mistakes. This is self-criticism, the beginning of wisdom.

"And now we are engaged in the greatest war which mankind has known. We are reaping the bitter fruit of our

own folly and of our own lack of vision. We are paying dearly as well for the lack of statesmanship, and for the crass errors of omission and commission, so tragically evidenced in the policies of those other nations which have had their full share of responsibility for the conduct of human affairs during the past generation."

2. Repudiation of the "clever idea" of trying to make other peoples fight our battles for us:

"Those who indulge in false optimism, those who believe that the peoples who are fighting with us for our common cause should relieve us of our due share of sacrifice, those who are reluctant to give their all in this struggle for the survival on the earth of what is fine and decent, must be regarded as enemies of the American people."

3. Recognition of "the peoples' war," and repudiation of the aim of an American empire or "American Century":

"This is in very truth a people's war. It is a war which cannot be regarded as won until the fundamental rights of the peoples of the earth are secured. In no other manner can a true peace be achieved.

"If this war is in fact a war for the liberation of peoples, it must assure the sovereign equality of peoples throughout the world, as well as in the Americas. Our victory must bring in its train the liberation of all peoples. Discrimination between peoples because of their race, creed, or color must be abolished. The age of imperialism is ended. The right of a people to their freedom must be recognized, as the civilized world long since recognized the right of an individual to his personal freedom. The

principles of the Atlantic Charter must be guaranteed to the world as a whole—in all oceans and in all continents.”

There are persons who, indulging an easy and cheap cynicism, sneer at this deepgoing change in the nature of the dominant expressions of policy between 1941 and 1942; who point to the military disasters of the intervening period and quote the old adage: “When the devil is sick, the devil a monk would be.”

I cannot join in this cynical approach in any degree. To me, it is all the more assurance of the sincerity of the proclaimed policies that I believe that they are *dictated by the necessities of war*, that they are *necessary preconditions for victory, for national survival*. Lincoln is no less honored in history for his Emancipation Proclamation because it was issued from motives of *military necessity* rather than of the moral imperative. True it is that the policy for United Nations’ victory in this war is being forged by the fearful hammer of war upon the anvil of necessity, and is not the product of ideology. But this is no reason to doubt the sincerity or validity of the policy, but quite the contrary, it is the deepest guaranty. I can take these statements of policy as valid, without reservation, because I find their guarantee not in the hearts of statesmen with all their reservations, but in the iron and brutal necessities of national survival—and in the hearts of the masses of the people who make up the nation, and who believe in these policies without reservation.

While Sumner Welles was delivering his historic speech, negotiations were under way which culminated in the epoch-marking announcement of June 11 of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance for a term of twenty years; of

the United States-Soviet Lend-Lease Agreement which placed our relations with the U.S.S.R. upon the same basis as those we have with Britain, and which envisaged post-war collaboration with the Soviet Union; and the agreement between the three great leading powers of the United Nations on the necessity of the Second Front in Europe.

The various pacts and agreements, announced on June 11, complete the foundations for policy required for victory of the United Nations. They confirm the character of the war as a Peoples’ War of National Liberation. They consolidate the alliance of the three nations whose close cooperation is essential to victory, and to rousing, arming, and leading the peoples of the world for that victory. They deliver a smashing blow against Hitler’s Fifth Column. They open the perspective of a post-war world where it will be possible to reconstruct the shattered nations and an international order among nations, avoiding much of the unnecessary chaos and civil war that followed the armistice of World War I. They arouse the enthusiasm and fighting spirit of the people, that *morale* which the greatest military genius has always recognized as having for victory three times the value of armaments.

Truly, the peoples of the world are on the march. Victory over the Nazi-Axis monstrosity of human enslavement lies clearly ahead. The way may be hard but the people are ready and anxious to do their part. Leadership and organization in carrying the master plan for victory into every phase of the war, into every nook and corner of an all-out mobilization of every resource, are the problems to which now all thinking shall be turned. We know where we are going. Now we shall proceed more quickly upon our way.