The Yankee Peril

Marie Louise Berneri

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As early as December 1939 we asked in *War Commentary* "will America rule the World?" and we suggested that if present tendencies continued the answer would be in the affirmative. Since then our fears of seeing American imperialism expand over the five continents have shown themselves to be well grounded. The Central and South American countries are slowly but systematically infiltrated by American capital, Canada and Australia are being drawn in her sphere, American soldiers are to be found in India. In North Africa General Eisenhower showed no intention of liberating the French Empire to hand it over to the French and he will probably not easily be moved from Italy.

Everywhere Americans rule by intriguing and corrupting. They buy Trade Union bureaucrats and generals, left-wing journalists and Roman Catholic priests. They are Franquists in Spain, Darlanists in North Africa, Badoglioists in Italy. Their intriguing is bare-faced; as people sure of their power they can afford to neglect to cover their unscrupulous actions. Roosevelt speeches, which still make all the good democrats gasp in admiration are the only concession to the principles of "freedom" and "democracy".

The Americans have all the qualities of conquerors. A ruling class which, at home, can force workers back to the factories with bayonets, can murder negroes by the hundred, can put forward such filthy propaganda as the film *Mission to Moscow* has given good proofs that it knows how to rule.

For this reason when we read in the American magazine *Life* (21/6/43) an editorial explaining that "in facing the future, the U.S. must base its foreign policy upon enlightened self interest", we have good reason to feel a cold shiver down our spine.

The American ruling class realises that the end of the war will be followed by an economic crisis and mass unemployment and they have set their mind to follow the present war with an economic war such as has never been waged in history.

Life poses the problem:

"By 1944, if present plans are carried out, we will have a civilian labour force big enough to support 11,100,00 men in uniform, run the war industries, and supply all our civilian essentials. After the war we will have this big labour force on our hands, and we will have in addition 11,100,00 returning soldiers and sailors who expect their old jobs back, or better ones. That will make the most potent labour force in history. Let's remember that in the 1930's we couldn't keep a much smaller labour force busy."

And here is the solution advocated by *Life*, a policy of American lebensraum:

"Now of course there are some subtractions to make from that potential labour force. A certain number of boys, for instance, will want to stay in the services,[1] and many women now in War jobs will want to quit industry and go back to their homes. But one fact is sure: we can't hope to solve this problem just by making subtractions. We can only solve it the other way, by making additions. We can only solve it by additions to our markets and our enterprises. We can only solve it by additions to the size of the American job, the breadth of the American horizon. We can solve it by Creating a new and more dynamic United States."

Scientific discoveries, progress in the technical field will be the factors which will create this "more dynamic U.S." And *Life* proceeds to give an idea of the shape of "Things to Come". Production of cars weighing 1,000 pounds, helicopters to become everyman's airplane, radio-telephones for cars, television in colour or even in three dimensions, electronic cooking and electronic control of the factory or home.

Life, wants America to reap full benefit from these inventions:

"If we try to keep ourselves locked up behind our oceans we shall fail in two ways. First, our domestic market will not prove big enough in the long run and so the inventions will not get developed — labour and industry might even oppose them. And, secondly, we would not be able to keep everybody at work. In order to bring about the new age we must, so to speak, open up the world. Instead of relying solely upon our own purchasing power we must find ways to increase the purchasing power of peoples outside of America. Basically, this means an enormous increase in the flow of foreign trade in both directions. It means that we must, at one and the same time, open up our own markets and build up the markets of others."

Of course *Life* is not thinking of dividends and profits for American capitalists. It wants to increase the purchasing power of peoples outside of America, a very noble purpose. The British have been increasing the purchasing powers of the Indians for over a century with the result that the majority of the population is dying of hunger. *Life* is also thinking of preparing a "home fit for heroes" for when the boys come home. "Only thus can we give them, not just a Government dole, but a chance to get ahead. Only thus can we offer them an Adventure great enough to justify the terrible struggle in which they are engaged."

What *Life* overlooks is that America will not be the only country which will want to draw a benefit from new inventions and modern machinery. Russia, Britain, the Dominions will all be anxious to build up markets, the already shrunken field of exploitation will be still smaller. America will have to eliminate its competitors and that is a job the boys will be sure to get. That of conquering new markets for American capitalists, of preserving the American empire with a strong army and navy.

For this it is necessary to make the American people empire-conscious, to inculcate in them the idea of their superiority, of the fact that a comfortable life is due to them. The American Press is certainly doing its bit towards it.

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[1] To be prepared, we suppose, for the next war to end wars?

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