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## ‘Expanding Empire’ — in 1969 and today

The following excerpt from “Expanding Empire — The global war drive of big business and the forces that will stop it” was written in 1969 during the Vietnam War. The author, Vince Copeland, was a founding member of Workers World Party and had been a militant steel worker fired in 1950 during the Korean War for his revolutionary politics. “Expanding Empire” is today more relevant than ever. The full pamphlet can be found at [www.workers.org/cm/empire.html](http://www.workers.org/cm/empire.html).



The expand-or-die aims of U.S. big business were relatively concealed from the American people during both world wars. The expansion of the internal market in the 1920s, 1940s

and 1950s helped to make foreign trade and investment seem unimportant. And the plunder of the external world being almost unaccompanied by territorial acquisition, it went unnoticed by the great masses of this country. Moreover, both world wars were “started” by the “other side.” That is, the pressure of the expand-or-die logic was working harder on German big business — and Japanese and Italian — in World War II, than on the Allies.

Furthermore, since Hitler was even more brutal, vicious and reactionary than the Kaiser, it was difficult to recognize in him merely a different type of representative of big business than U.S presidents. It is only today in retrospect that many progressives can clearly see him as the prototype of what some American representatives of the corporations have already become today. World War II seemed, even more than World War I, to be fought “to make the world safe for democracy.”

The results of World War II, however, are in themselves the best lecture on what that war was all about as far as the rulers of the United States were concerned. Contrary to the wish-thoughts of many sincere anti-fascists, these rulers fought an imperialist war, rather than an anti-fascist war.

U.S. big business, the biggest owner of worldwide property in all history as a result of the war, double-crossed its Soviet and Chinese allies, who had borne the brunt of the fighting and done the bulk of the dying. It cheated and exploited its own capitalist allies — Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, etc. — using Marshall Plan “aid” to honeycomb these countries with U.S. investments.

It hobnobbed with its wealthiest Nazi “enemies,” building up their industries, collaborating with the very banks that had backed and virtually created Hitler. It freed the Japanese militarists it had at first purged and imprisoned. It formed partnerships with the Zaibatsu monopolists who had bombed Pearl Harbor. And it raked in billions upon billions in unprecedented profits. This was what World War II meant for U.S. big business.

And it was all more or less predictable, on the basis of the character of big business and of the state that was its political instrument.

World War II was confusing, however, because it appeared to be a war against Nazism.

For the Soviet Union, it was such a war. But there was no big business in the Soviet Union. And independently of the virtues and vices of Stalin, as well as the glorious heroism of Stalingrad, [for the USSR] the war was a defense of a new and progressive social system as against big business gone mad.

For the United States, it was a different war. First, it was a war to prevent Hitler from expanding at the expense of the United States. And second, it was a war for the United States to expand at the expense of its soon-to-be exhausted allies — Britain, France, etc. The U.S. has now penetrated into the former colonies of those countries with many billion dollars worth of investments, and in fact, has challenged the hegemony of much of big business in the “mother countries” as well.

The most powerful explanation for the cynicism and disillusionment of our age may be unknown to the masses, but the general situation has been all too clear: the sacrifice of 40 million lives for the “four freedoms,” for “peace” and “democracy” and the like, only to see the “freedom” of a world laboring under a \$112 billion mortgage to the U.S. banks, the “peace” created by the most deadly war machine in history and the “democracy” guaranteed by military and fascist puppets of the U.S.

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