

# Blind to the Key to Grandeur

Mussolini, it is said, wants to restore to his country something of the grandeur and dominion of imperial Rome. He calls attention, frequently and by various devices, to the splendors of Rome's past. He endeavors to arouse in his people a pride in Italy's power and an ambition to increase this power. Hitler, too, seeks for his country greater military strength. To this end, he has been propagandizing and re-arming Germany. Can it possibly be, then, that these dictators have missed one of the great secrets of national strength and power?

Let us suppose a war to break out between a democratically-governed and a dictatorially-ruled country which are, in most respects, evenly matched.

But in the democratically-governed country, because of the influence of selfish interests and the ignorance of the masses, a majority of the people must pay to a few, tremendous sums every year for permission to work and to live in their country, at any rate on all but the least desirable sites. And the few who receive these sums are allowed to keep most of the money for their support, so that they can enjoy a much better living than the common run of folk and can, in many cases, live without any work at all.

In the other country, the dictator, by some quirk of fortune, really does know the secrets of national power. He sees to it, therefore, that the community-produced rental value of land goes to the community to be used for ordinary public expenditures,

such as streets, schools, courts, police, etc. Land rent is not allowed to go to the support of drones or as a privileged income to persons who do not produce or earn it. So when every resource is being drawn upon to wage war the government does not have to divide its most natural revenues — the immunity-produced rental value of land — with private citizens who did nothing to produce it. If other sources of revenue must also be drawn upon, at least all the money so raised can be used to provide additional military supplies and equipment. None of this other revenue has to be used as a substitute for revenue from the rent of land. Result, of course, more military power.

Furthermore, the land value tax system makes unprofitable the speculative withholding of land. The good land is all used and is put to its best use. Production is greater. More can be spared, after the people are fed, to maintain and equip the army and navy. Result, again, and obviously, greater military power.

What if, with these advantages, the dictatorially-ruled country extends its empire over more democratically-ruled countries, and gives the advantages of its tax system to its newly-conquered provinces; what if the masses of the people in these newly-conquered provinces are thus relieved of the necessity, formerly imposed on them, of supporting parasites, parasites who get their living only by charging others for permission to work and live on the earth? Could it then happen that the conquered provinces would prefer the

dictator's rule to their former "freedom" and that, finally, some successor of the dictator would realize the dream of a world empire?

Or is this all wrong? Is the real way to build military power the way of inequality and special privilege? Does a nation become strong and have a better chance to win wars if a relatively few of its people are privileged to live as parasites on the rest, charging the latter for permission to work and to live on the earth? Does such a policy effectively enlist these few in the service of the dictator and his ambitions? And will their interested propaganda stir more enthusiasm among the masses for victory, make them more patriotic, make them surer that they have something real and great to fight for and make them fight better than if no parasites were living upon them?

Probably this last is what the dictators think — if they think about the matter at all. Certainly none of the dictators has yet shown an understanding of the distinction between economically earned incomes and such unearned income as land rent. And who of us seriously believes that any of the dictators will? For is not the whole matter beyond the dictators' ken, so that they struggle blindly for national power without really knowing how to get it? And is there, perhaps, a bare chance that the democracies will eventually do better?

—Harry Gunnison Brown.

See: "Progress and Poverty," pp. 442-444; "Protection or Free Trade," p. 228; "Social Problems," pp. 12-15, p. 116, pp. 208-209.