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THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

ON 1ST SEPTEMBER the German army invaded Poland. On Sunday, 3rd September, the Governments of Great Britain and France declared war on the Government of Germany, and the British Dominions have since joined in. People speak of the war as a terrible calamity, which it is; but calamity is a word that only appropriately describes a disaster which mankind can neither foresee nor avert, like an earthquake or a deluge or other convulsion of nature. War is a crime, the crime of murder committed with the object of subjecting the will of one party to that of the other. The tragedy is that men find themselves compelled to choose that method of settling their differences. To-day a population of over 200,000,000 souls are drawn into the conflict which when it ends will have proved nothing but that might is right. It may be that truth and justice can exercise the greater might, but that will carry no conviction, for what is true and what is just can only be established by reason and its victory awaits upon that. War, like bloody revolution, is a terrific gamble with the awful risk that truth and justice are crushed under foot and with them all hope of human progress extinguished perhaps for generations.

It is a grim outlook. What is to happen after perhaps millions of lives and countless treasure have been sacrificed? Is it impossible to learn some lessons from the past? During the twenty-five years' armistice it had been gradually sinking into the minds of statesmen and leaders of public opinion that the causes of war were economic or at any rate that trade barriers and closed markets and the monopoly control over natural resources were contributory causes which must be removed. Conference after conference, official and unofficial, has appealed to reason and to action. One after the other prime ministers and presidents have admitted that trade must be set free, if the world was to be led out of the jealousies that would inevitably lead to war. It was only a month or so ago (28th June) that Lord Halifax in his broadcast talk gave expression to that idea: "It is no doubt impossible at present for us to foresee the day when all trade everywhere will be completely free. But it is possible to make arrangements, given the opportunities, which would greatly enlarge the area of freedom. Through co-operation . . . there is ample scope for extending to all nations the opportunity for a larger economic life. . . . If the world were organised on such lines . . . no nation could fail to profit from the immense material benefits which the general application of science has brought within universal reach."

But who will make these opportunities? Who will take the initiative? Who has the understanding to see that the country abolishing tariffs does so *for its own advantage* primarily? Who has the courage to defy the vested interests that benefit by the trade restrictions? It is too late now to ask the question. Our International Union essayed to influence Lord Halifax with an appeal during the last days of the diplomatic exchanges that the British Government should offer Germany unconditional reciprocal free trade and would pledge itself to urge all other countries to do likewise—to make, in fact, a powerful gesture for the overthrow of tariff barriers everywhere. The request to Lord Halifax was neither irrelevant nor absurd, but that he could take no notice of it, far less act upon it, even when the fate of Europe hung in the balance, shows who are the real masters of Governments, those whose selfish greed causes taxation to be levied on the products of labour. If civilisation is to be salvaged from ruin and desolation whether the war is short or long, these are among the privileges that must be surrendered. Each country must, of course, act for itself to bring about the liberation of trade and production; it will not be able to do otherwise and live. We can only point out to the British Government where its duty lies when the seats are taken at the Conference table, obedient to its declarations that the fight now engaged is for freedom and democracy. There must be repeal of the laws that permit the results of production to pass into the hands of those who do not produce, that tax the people to endow and protect a monopoly in land, which has been proved beyond all contradiction to be the fundamental cause of high rents and low wages, and all the conditions that spell poverty and insecurity for the mass of the people. These conditions are at present only so far mitigated as employment is provided on war work paid for with borrowed money, leaving the problem of the national debt for a later day of reckoning.

It is lamentable to look back upon the twenty-five years of the armistice and to notice the follies of statesmanship in this and in other countries in the economic field. We leave to others the political and the diplomatic, only wishing that they would not so ignore the association of poverty with their problems. It was a Germany in distress that produced Hitler the demagogue who could inflame the passion of his mobs against the alleged oppressors beyond the borders of Germany. Given any country that has been defeated in war and with 10,000,000 unemployed, the demagogue has his stage ready made for him if he wants to blame the foreigner; yet that poverty and unemployment in Germany had as much and as little to do with the Versailles Treaty (admitting its faults) as the poverty and unemployment in this country or in the United States. It had, however, everything to do with land speculation and the world-wide industrial depression that followed upon the boom period immediately succeeding the war. By 1929 the tariff walls that all the nations had built up and had raised ever higher were operating with full effect to prevent recovery. But the mad policy was not abandoned. It was pursued still further by expedients like the Ottawa agreements creating privileges in British markets against the rest of the world, by quotas, restrictions, subsidies and exchange controls which in Germany found their

logical and complete expression in the State dictatorship of trade and production called autarchy. The nations were more and more blockading themselves, and were responsible for their own encirclement, all the while maintaining and fostering within their own borders a land and taxation system which intensified the hard times they were trying to cope with by breaking every economic law.

In 1927 at the Geneva Economic Conference we discovered the obstacles that stood in the way of the lowering of tariffs and the influences that sought to increase them. They are not alone the protected manufactures. Far more powerful and determined is the great financial interest in exemption from taxation and the transference of the burden upon the working people. For the sake of that interest, indirect taxation must be preserved at all costs and the protectionist system upheld.

The frontiers that were created out of the Versailles Treaty were not the cause of trouble. They would not have mattered the least bit if trade had been allowed to flow freely over and across them. But tariffs were erected on either side of these boundaries between states. The devilish invention for enabling some people to rob the rest of the people has interlaced Europe with a series of barbed wire fences and converted customs houses to pill boxes. War was the natural and inevitable outcome. If the barriers are not lifted by peaceful means, they invite the use of artillery to smash a way through.

BUDA PEST, HUNGARY. Commemorating the centenary, the Hungarian sculptress, Mrs Lilla Kunvari, has produced a bas-relief Henry George portrait, bronzes of which have been presented by her to the United Committee in England and to the International Conference in New York City. The gift is very highly appreciated and admired for its talented execution.

SOFIA, BULGARIA. In celebration of the centenary, Bulgarian Henry Georgeists are publishing a new translation of Henry George's address on Moses. Later in the year they expect to publish a Bulgarian translation of *Protection or Free Trade*. (Already a number of Henry George's writings, including *Progress and Poverty*, have been published in Bulgarian.)

NORWAY. On Tuesday, 5th September, at 8.40 p.m., broadcast talk from Oslo, Stavanger and Jelög, by Mr Ole Wang of Tönsberg.

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