

## LAND & LIBERTY

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### WHAT IS "LEBENSRAUM" ?

IN THESE times of stress and trial British Ministers are making pronouncements which contain economic truths well worth noting and pregnant with suggestion. We make the following free extracts from speeches by Lord Halifax and Mr Anthony Eden :

Dealing with the German claim for "Lebensraum," Lord Halifax declares that it must be fairly and carefully examined. But, he asserts, the problem is not solved simply by acquiring more territory. It can only be solved by wise ordering of the affairs of a country at home and by adjusting and improving its relations with other countries abroad. Nations expand their wealth and raise the standard of living of their people by gaining the confidence of their neighbours and thus facilitating the flow of goods between them. If all the efforts now devoted to the senseless multiplication of armaments, with the consequent increase of insecurity and distrust, were applied to the common peaceful development of resources the peoples of the world would soon find incentive to work together for the common good. They would realize that their true interests do not conflict and that progress and well-being depend on community of aim and effort.

Then listen to Anthony Eden. After dealing with the mistakes made in the Versailles settlement of 1918, he urges that there shall be no second mistake. "Out of the welter of suffering to be endured we must fashion a new world that is something better than a stale reflection of the old, bled white. Can we do better this time ?"

Just what steps must be taken if these high aspirations are to be realized in practice it is perhaps too much to ask Ministers to tell us at a moment such as this, but since Lord Halifax himself commends the subject to the careful thinking of his hearers it is appropriate that we should offer some reflections. First we would ask—what is the underlying cause of the claim for "Lebensraum" (living room) not only by Germany but also by other nations who believe themselves to be cramped in the same way? Whence this urge for territorial expansion at the expense of their neighbours despite the truth of Lord Halifax's assertion that to acquire more territory solves no problem? The answer is that Germany and other peoples similarly placed are one and all the victims of poverty and economic insecurity, and that they falsely attribute their sufferings to want of living room. Poverty and economic insecurity appear to them as conclusive evidence that their national territories are too small for their populations. Hence the urge for expansion whether it be at the expense of others or not, and hence a prime cause of war both now and in times past.

This is a profoundly mistaken view. The source of the economic troubles of any nation whatever is to be found, not in the smallness of the territory it controls,

but in domestic institutions which hamper and obstruct the productive efforts of its people, rob its producers of their just reward and doom to poverty and unemployment countless thousands of its subjects. Given these conditions, lust for expansion naturally follows in the expectation that sufferings will thereby be relieved. Neither leaders nor people realize that whatever the extent of the territory they dominate, poverty, unemployment and discontent will be there to curse them so long as the institutions that give rise to them remain, and that the remedy lies, as Lord Halifax says truly, "in the wise ordering of their affairs at home."

Innumerable statesmen—including Lord Halifax himself—business men and economic theorists have, time and again, declared that an essential condition of better trade and therefore to a higher standard of living, is the freeing of trade from at least some of the tariffs, quotas and exchange restrictions we now impose upon it. Conference after conference has agreed in principle, and politicians of all parties have fallen into line. But with equal unanimity they refuse in practice to take any step in this direction. On the contrary they have acted and still are acting in direct contradiction to their professed belief, as witness the ever greater obstacles to commerce and intercourse erected by all the nations of recent years. This refusal to put principle into practice must be held in large degree responsible for the Danzig and other "outlet to the sea" quarrels, for it is tariffs and other obstacles to commerce from which spring the troubles and give plausibility to the claim that a nation cannot live without political dominance over this or that seaport. Switzerland gets along without such dominance, why not Poland? Were tariffs, quotas and other such trade obstructions got out of the way, the need for ownership of ports to assure "outlets to the sea" would lose all sense and the quarrels following therefrom would be no more.

But wise and advantageous as it is even when confined to the sphere of commerce we shall never enjoy the full benefits free trade would confer until it is associated with free production. Divorced from that it is an emasculated thing, powerless to deal with poverty, unemployment and industrial crises at their root. Could it avail, these curses of civilized society would not have been, in our free trade days, equally rampant here and in protectionist countries; and the reason they were so is that the principle of free trade has never been carried through to its full length. Economic freedom implies not only the right to exchange freely, but also the equal right of all men to use the earth free from the exactions of rent collecting landlords and free from the vicious forms of taxation now imposed on producers by the State.

The vital essentials to prosperity are free production and free trade, to which must be added free migration so that men may, without hindrance, follow industry to whatever country it may settle in. Economically, what would it then matter where frontiers were drawn? Given these conditions and we shall have cut at the very root of war, for we shall then have a world of peace-loving because prosperous and contented people.

But though, in practice, little or nothing has been done to rid ourselves of trade restrictions that breed war, it is a substantial gain that the need to do so is being so generally recognized. We are not arguing that this is all that need be accomplished if the claim for "Lebensraum" and the wars it brings with it are to be avoided and Mr Anthony Eden's "new world that is something better than a stale reflection of the old" brought into being. If ever we are to see that new and better world it will be through a much further widening of economic

liberty. Freedom must be carried into wider fields than that of commerce between nations, necessary though that freedom is. If the forces that lie behind the cry of "Lebensraum" are to be destroyed, free trade must be supplemented by free production: every obstruction that now stands in the way of access to nature's bounties must be swept away. It would then be found by the peoples of each and every country that the natural resources within their own boundaries are amply sufficient to enable them to live lives in every respect both full and happy, so that the urge to seize lands of others would no longer be with them.

At first sight it might appear that this could not be true of countries whose territory is incapable of producing the immense variety of goods which men must have if they are to live truly full and civilized lives. It will be said that some things wanted cannot possibly be pro-

duced in every country for the necessary raw materials are either inadequate or do not exist at all within its boundaries. But provided that nations are allowed to trade freely one with the other, the incapacity of some countries to produce in isolation any particular commodity would in no way disqualify them from acquiring that commodity, for the resources of the whole world would then be available to them in exchange for such goods as they are able advantageously to produce.

With free production supplemented by free trade, nature's bountiful storehouse throughout the world would be opened wide to all and abundance take the place of the scarcity, poverty and insecurity which now afflict the nations and spur them to wars for the "Lebensraum" which would then be fully and freely theirs.

W. R. L.

## THE FUTURE IS OURS—By BUE BJÖRNER

*From Address delivered as President of the International Union  
at the Opening Session of the New York Conference, 30th August, 1939*

WE KNOW that never before in the history of mankind has the enormous producing power of the world given such great chances for permanent peace and prosperity for all peoples. Truly enough, we see around us a world, where autarchy has taken the place of co-operation between nations, where "the transformation of popular government into despotism of the vilest and most degrading kind" is no longer a thing of the far future, a world in which "the sword again is mightier than the pen." But we know the reason for this. We know that only the inequalities in the distribution of wealth are responsible for such abasing conditions.

At first glance it might seem—at least to people of democratic countries—that it is the policies of the totalitarian states that are to blame for international conditions as they are to-day. But it must not be overlooked that again it is primarily the inequality in the distribution of wealth within these countries which has caused the change politically and also mentally. Let us not take the symptoms of a malady for the cause of it; the inequality in the distribution of wealth is at the bottom of the world's problems to-day and at the bottom of the social problems in any one country.

In spite of all that is happening around us, we have still reason to be optimists. There is a widening general understanding of the truth that the real causes of poverty and war are of an economic nature. And in spite of the dark political aspects we find a manifest good-will to remove these economic hindrances to the peace and prosperity for all peoples.

As a member of the Danish National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce I had the privilege to be one of the hosts to the Tenth Congress of the International Chamber of Commerce in Copenhagen this summer.

More than one thousand leading business men of forty-one countries from every part of the world met there to discuss the problem of how to bring about a world-wide co-operation, which is essential to the maintenance of peace. At the opening session at the Town Hall of Copenhagen, in the presence of H.M. King Christian, T.R.H. Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Ingrid, members of the Government and members of the Diplomatic Corps, the Past President of the I.C.C., Mr Thomas J. Watson, sounded the keynote of this remarkable Congress by stating that we can only bring about "World peace through world trade."

There may be other delegates to the I.C.C. Congress present here, who can confirm what pleasure it was to

see that prominent business men of all nations, in spite of the most severe political tension between their countries, could in a mutual spirit of goodwill meet and discuss their individual and common problems. That delegates from democratic as well as from totalitarian nations could unite in stating that "the world can produce enough raw materials and manufactured goods to supply all the people of all countries with the necessities and comforts of life," that "lasting political stability and the settlement of outstanding economic issues are necessarily interdependent." They could unite in advocating "procedure and policies which will render unnecessary the movement of armies across frontiers and which will substitute therefor the increasing movement of goods, services and capital," and they could join in their declared objective "to help people everywhere to convert their longings for peace, security and prosperity into a practical programme of economic and human understanding."

Of course the mere wish for international co-operation does not solve the problem. But the desire for opening up world trade will naturally focus the attention on the main problem, the inadequacy of the usual free trade argument and the real strength of the protection argument. The former President of the International Chamber of Commerce, Mr Fentener van Vlissingen, broached the question by stating that leading business men, who at Conferences have affirmed their belief in Free Trade, are too eager when their own difficulties meet them at home to sacrifice the ideals and to ask their government for protective measures for their own little sick industry. Others, who are also filled with the desire for international free trade, think of what is going to happen to their unemployment question at home.

It will be our task to explain that Free Trade means Free Production, and that fully to free production it is necessary not only to remove all taxes on production, but also to remove all other restrictions on production. In the words of Henry George: "True free trade requires that the active factor of production, Labour, shall have free access to the passive factor of production, Land. To secure this all monopoly of land must be broken up, and the equal right of all to the use of the natural elements must be secured by the treatment of the land as the common property in usufruct of the whole people."

Until this simple truth is recognized all efforts to bring about Free Trade between the nations are doomed