

# The Formula for Peace

IT isn't difficult to reassemble a dismembered clock if you know the principle of clock-making. Likewise, making peace offers no problem if its formula is understood and followed. What exactly is peace? To say that it is the absence of conflict is merely to describe peace negatively, not to explain it. What we need to know is, what is the essential cog in the mechanism of peace or, conversely, what deleterious substance creeps into it to cause a breakdown? When a "peace conference" tries to put together the pieces of a shattered society, ignorance or neglect of principle results in a piece of patchwork, lacking an essential part or containing the same injurious substance that stopped the works in the first place. That is why every treaty of peace has been the prelude to another war.

It calls for no elaborate investigation to establish the fact that the principle of peace is *production*, while that of war is *destruction*. But that does not help us unless we ascertain the nature and purpose of production. Seeing how in wartime a vast amount of elaborate things come into existence, we could, by limiting our definition, declare war quite productive; do we not speak of "war production"?

We are therefore impelled to define production not merely as the making of things, but as the making of things for a given purpose. For all production is the result of human effort, which, in turn, is the result of human will. Nothing is produced until somebody wills to produce it. To define production fully, then, we must answer the question, why do men work? And the answer is, men work to live—to satisfy their needs and desires. Sometimes men exert effort in the making of things for which they have no use—like

building pyramids and battleships; when we look into the motivation behind such effort we find that the desires of the workers have nothing to do with it. If force, duress, coercion were absent, the men would be making shoes, growing onions, playing the harmonica—doing what they will. Whether what they make is in fact "production" is decided in the marketplace, where one worker *willingly* gives up what he has for what another worker offers. Since no worker willingly buys a pyramid or a battleship—the taxes which pay for these things being forcibly extracted from his earnings—they can be called "production" only by arbitrarily limiting the idea of production.

If we identify peace with production, and production with the desire to live, we are getting close to a basic principle. Peace becomes a relationship between human beings in which the normal impulse to better their circumstances through an ever-increasing fund of goods and services is uninterrupted. That is the mainspring of peace. Whenever that mainspring is tampered with, whenever people are prevented from engaging in productive enterprise, or, which is the same thing, in enjoying the fruits of their labor, peace is on the way out. The principle of destruction, war, has set to work. Just as the clock will continue to operate even when its face is broken, or one of its hands is bent, so society may manage to creep along somehow while the desire to live with many of its members is in fact a struggle for existence; but in both cases deterioration has set in and disintegration must follow. Doles and pyramid-building may temporarily smother the disaffection of those who, through no fault of their own, are out of production; but that in-

creases the intensity of the explosion, for the cost of these palliatives is put on the production of others, and their sense of justice is thereby violated, their security is likewise threatened. It is then that war is in the hearts of men.

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This puts the matter of war on an economic basis. There are, of course, psychological factors present which

becloud the issue. Ideologies, race-hatreds, national pride, religion—but all these are effects; none of these thought-patterns will in itself cause men to engage in mass-murder or court death. Want, hopelessness and fear for the future must be intense to overcome the will to live. The adage has it that the rich make war and the poor fight it. The fact is that the poor make war; not because they want it, but because it offers a refuge from despair, if not a way out of their dilemma. All we can

say about the rich is that in their equal ignorance of causes they also look upon war as a surcease from the general uncertainty. Nor can we say that the "leaders" make war, in the sense that they cause it; the Napoleons, Hitlers, Stalins, Churchills, Roosevelts can merely channel the disaffection, but it must be prevalent before they can channel it.

The causal condition for war, then, is the frustration of poverty. What is the cause of poverty? Three causes have been suggested: 1) the niggardliness of nature; 2) over-population; and 3) the maldistribution of wealth. The first two are in fact one, for the over-population theory merely assumes that the birth-rate exceeds the capacity of nature to provide subsistence. We can dismiss this theory on the evidence that the greatest wealth abounds where the concentration of population is greatest. That leaves us the maldistribution theory; what is produced does

not get around to the producers on an equitable basis. Somehow the flow of wealth is impeded, and great masses of men who contribute labor to the existence of wealth get little of it. Any impediment to the distribution of wealth must result in a curtailment of production, because he who is without wealth ceases to be a customer; and the non-customer is a non-employer. That is to say, poverty creates poverty, unemployment causes unemployment.

The ultimate cause of war, therefore, is the instrument by which the wealth produced by labor is channelled to the non-laborer. And that instrument is always political. In the polished language of political economy we call that instrument privilege; the more descriptive term is thievery. The difference between privilege and thievery is that the one is legal and the other is not. But, etomologically the word betrays its content; a privilege signifies a favor, an advantage, and implies a disfavor or disadvantage. One cannot enjoy

the emoluments of a privilege except at the expense of another; what one receives because of the privilege, another is deprived of. In every case this inequitable transfer of production from one to another rests on power.

War can never be abolished until the political power to grant privilege is abolished. Conversely, peace cannot obtain where the policeman is in position to take one person's property and give it to another. That is the deleterious substance which creeps into the mechanism of peace and causes it to break down. Whether the privilege consists of a tariff, a grant of land, a patent, an exclusive right of way or a sinecure supported by the taxing power of the government, the end-result is injustice; somebody is robbed for the benefit of somebody else. It is always done with a night-stick, beribboned with the law.

The problem of peace is domestic, not international. The essential cog in the mechanism of peace is economic justice, and that condition cannot be provided by a contract between politicians; it can come about only by the giving up of privilege at home. There is no other way.