

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Following is a brief excerpt from one of Arthur W. Madsen's most famous editorials which appeared in *Land & Liberty*, London, in September, 1939.

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.

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...

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 manufacturers. 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.