

France and the Common Market

by MAX TOUBEAU



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AT the moment of facing foreign competition under new conditions, in putting aside the armor of tariffs and the buckler of quotas, France wonders if she is not making too great a sacrifice. Two world wars have left her disrupted, disorganized, burdened with taxes and obliged, moreover, to meet the difficulties of her colonial heritage.

How can she be expected to compete commercially and industrially with nations who have recovered—whose products sell more cheaply on the market? To accept this situation is to run the risk of seeing factories close, shops fail and the government assailed by an immense army of unemployed.

The development is irresistible. A European economy, precursor of a world economy, is coming. Free trade will triumph over protectionism. That is a fact—and a good one. But in the face of this eventuality, will the citizens and leaders of France remain deaf to our teachings?

The price of products depends on the burden of taxes paid by those who make and sell them. In France the weight of these taxes is crushing, as well as being misplaced. We say "misplaced," because instead of being imposed on the source of all production, leaving men free to utilize it fully and to carry on their manifold activities without being deprived of the fruit of their efforts, the fiscal system ignores this source. It strikes at the office

worker, the peasant, the teacher, the doctor, the executive, the lawyer—in fact all who are productive agriculturally, industrially or commercially—and it strikes at them just in the proportion that they *are* productive.

The more you work the more taxes you pay. In contrast, if you have idle land in the country or a valuable site in the city—you may sleep. Do not put your land to use—you will not be taxed, or will be taxed but little. You will do excellently well—and from your idleness you will realize a big profit some day.

The above situation is an indescribable absurdity, with consequences as follows: whether the taxes are direct or indirect, they all have the same result—French products are more costly than foreign products of perhaps the same quality (I say "perhaps" to soothe patriotic spirits).

Reverse this trend: take from the title-holders of land a just tax based on its value and free the user of this site of all taxes which now penalize his productivity, then you will accomplish a peaceful but great revolution.

At the same time you will be relieved of the torments of anticipating the prospect of the common market and free trade. Up to now, those of us who have been preaching this doctrine have been like a "voice in the wilderness." The imminence of peril, we hope, will make people listen to us,

(Translated by Robert Clancy)