

FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

*War, Taxes and Politics
in the Light of Ethical Principles*

By
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VII

WAR OR PEACE?

"What positive contribution can this country make to the cause of world peace? . . . Such a contribution can be made by the United States through setting an example to the world of a liberal and intelligent economic policy which would seek to remove political animosities by removing economic irritations. This means making our raw materials and markets more accessible to other nations, who would take our goods in exchange for their goods. It would mean, in turn, that nations round the world would lower their tariff barriers and trade with each other. It would lead to the removal of internal distress among many nations to whom such distress brings dictatorships, regimentation, made-work in the form of armies and armaments, depreciated currencies, violence and war.

"Finally, such an effort would go far toward instilling the desire for peace . . . through material contentment. . . . Shall we, then, make the one real contribution that we can make to the cause of world peace? Or is it a wiser course merely to hug our miser's gold to our chest, remain aloof from the world, spend our treasures on armaments, and then . . . take our sides in a war that we made no effort to prevent?"

—DAVID L. COHN, in *Picking America's Pockets*.

No single step would do as much to insure the peace of the world as would free trade, and the time is ripe, as never before, for the United States to take the initiative. We have nearly all the monetary gold of the world and, with exports far in excess of imports, lowering our tariffs would necessitate little readjustment. Why hamper payment of debts to us by blocking the only way through which they can ever be paid?

Too often we confuse the causes of war with incidents which only bring to flame long-smouldering embers. Much is made of the stamp act and of a famous tea party as causes of the American Revolution, but these were only the culmination of a long series of oppressions, notably the navigation acts and other measures curbing Colonial trade and expansion. Had the English, generally fair-minded, been under wiser and less pig-headed sovereigns than the Georges, it is quite possible that the American Colonies would have enjoyed a generous measure of freedom, and political independence would have meant but little, for, even as it was, independence was sought only with the utmost reluctance.

Consider what lies back of the struggle of today. Germany saw the English enjoying vast trade advantages, gaining access to raw materials and broad markets through a wide empire. Italy saw the exploitation of Africa by England and France, and turned to Tripoli and Ethiopia.

Japan, poor in resources and dependent on trade, found the markets of the Western world hemmed in by tariff walls, strangling her economic life. Can any nation hold itself blameless?

Trade barriers, and these include not only import and export tariffs but quotas, cartels, jockeying with monetary systems, and a host of subterfuges like subsidies and preferential agreements, force trade into unnatural channels and lead to strange coalitions. British discriminations drew Russia and Germany into commercial accord for some years, and "Buy British" policies, framed to give advantage within the Empire, led to the development of German markets for products once shipped to England. But we cannot put all the blame on others, for our own selfish policy of trade restriction has a history of more than a century and a half. We have done much to force trade which might have been ours into other hands, antagonizing sister republics and endangering hemispheric solidarity. We have played fast and loose with sugar markets, working havoc with producers the world over and provoking endless friction, and we have tinkered with our money, upsetting exchange and breaking contracts.

The clamor for ports leads to many a war, as in the conflict some forty years ago between Russia and Japan, when the former sought an outlet on the Pacific. Were it not for the wise constitutional provision for free trade among our states, we would see exactly the same conflicts here. How long would inland states remain content were their foreign trade subject to tolls and restrictions of seaboard states, or were interstate commerce taxed at each frontier? There have been crises when secession was narrowly averted. In the critical formative days of the Republic its very birth was threatened by controversies over trade and tariff, as in 1786, when New Jersey defied the imposition of customs

duties by New York. The Webster-Haynes controversy and South Carolina's "nullification" originated in tariff disputes, and one can sympathize with Calhoun, who, in response to President Jackson's toast, "Our Federal Union—it must be preserved," responded with, "The Union—next to our liberty, the most dear." Bloodshed and civil war were avoided by a narrow margin, but seed was sown to ripen thirty years later into a fratricidal war. In that awful conflict the tariff played no small part, for although slavery was a vital issue, the question of state's rights was born largely in tariff controversy. Quite probably even the question of slavery might have been adjusted peacefully under a wiser national policy, and it is interesting to speculate on what would have been the effect of the almost forgotten Corwin Amendment, which would have denied to Congress "the power to abolish or interfere, within any state, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said state," if it had been approved long before the issue became acute.

Exploitation of colonies has been productive of much strife and so long as the outposts of empire are seen as preferential and exclusive trade opportunities, the struggle for colonies will go on. Selfish folly cost England dearly in America, and our expansion into the Pacific brought unrest to Asia. Colonies are, it is true, often a disappointment and a source of worry, expense, and danger, but even false hope springs eternally, and when a mother country finds herself saddled with a bad bargain, she tightens more often than she relinquishes the bondage of subject peoples. The peace of the world would be enormously strengthened if all colonial possessions everywhere and under every flag maintained an open door to the trade of all nations.

For generations we have sought peace, but the futility of shallow devices, however well-intentioned, is all too appar-

ent. We made treaties and conventions; we made agreements about dum-dum bullets, poison gas and the caliber of guns; we talked disarmament while rearming went on faster than ever before, and we frame arbitration agreements, world courts and peace pacts, but all these are cast to the winds as soon as any nation has its back to the wall. Why not abandon childish, halfway schemes and go to the root of the problem when all else fails? *The way out of war is not through fanciful, impracticable measures, nor does it lie in trying to extinguish its flames or in efforts to mitigate its horrors. The way to peace is to end once and for all the great causes of conflict, of which the greatest is the restriction of trade, denying to men the freedom to earn a livelihood.* Restore to all the liberty which should be theirs and we shall be on our way to a just and enduring peace, and, though we act alone, we can do much for our own prosperity and security by dealing justly with all the world.

To offset hardships caused by closed markets and by exclusion from sources of raw materials, we resort to shaky schemes. We loan millions to countries which would gladly earn what they are forced to borrow if we had not closed the doors of trade, and among nations as among men, "loan oft loses both itself and friend." Must we forget the lesson of war debts amounting to some eleven billions, which could be paid only by the sale of goods to us? Must we forget loans innumerable collected only by armed occupation and the seizure of customs houses? International loans are always a source of potential danger, and necessity for them would be largely obviated by free trade. Are the supposed benefits of "protection," even as dangled before our eyes by the most ardent advocate, worth their cost in unpaid debts, armaments and blood?

In spite of recent madness in building our tariff walls higher, there are encouraging signs. By the Atlantic Con-

vention, Mr. Churchill and the President committed our two great nations to a broader liberality, and if these protestations are lived up to, much will be done for amity. Secretary Hull is going as far as Congress will permit to cement the ties with Latin America, and such policy will strengthen us on this side of the sea and give hope to all the world. To our allies it opens the way to future rehabilitation: to us it gives hope for the settlement of obligations by profitable trade and for economic revival after the war: to the oppressed nations overrun by the Axis it makes possible a supply of the primary needs of life when war is ended, and in enemy lands it gives promise of fair dealing which will turn some minds to peace.

Few can find in their hearts any feelings but ill will toward those who have brought on the war and who are pressing it in ways which are truly hellish. There is not the slightest inclination to gloss over what Germany and Japan have done and what they are still doing: we must wage the war with all vigor. Press it to the utmost without sentimentality or hypocritical tears, but when it is won, and when the vanquished forswear all spirit of conquest and violence, we must remember that vengeance is the Lord's. Then will time be ripe for mercy, when we must give to the conquered the opportunity to regain a place in a world of civilization, prosperity and peace. Remember the words of Edith Cavell: "Patriotism is not enough: I must have no hatred or bitterness toward anyone."

To plan in detail for peace, while bitter conflict still rages and all the future hangs in the balance, is premature, but we must do some thinking now if the tragedies which followed the last war are to be avoided. This war must be fought to a finish, and post-war policies must be strong and unmarred by the weaknesses of twenty-five years ago, but they must not be shaped in a spirit of vengeance. To deny to the

vanquished the chance to re-earn a place among civilized nations will only prolong bitterness and conflict and jeopardize the future. There must be a complete disarming of the Axis to insure future security, but when this is effected, we must ourselves disarm so far as is safe. We, too, must forswear violence, and our armaments must be limited to what the protection of the world demands. With the stage set for peace and with the abandonment of aggressive war, and when our enemies show themselves worthy of trust, the way will be open to start on the long and difficult path of rehabilitation and a peace which shall endure.

Some of the plans advanced to insure peace we cannot accept, seeing in them greater danger than in security so-called. There is a growing trend toward ideas of a world state—international courts, leagues of nations, "Union Now," and similar proposals, implemented by an international army. Surely past experience holds out little hope for their success, and under a free economy there would be little need for them.

Something has been said of the peril of concentration of government and of centralization of its powers, which imperils local autonomy. In a world state these dangers would be very real, for, paradoxical as it sounds, loose associations are more secure than rigid unions. Concord and unanimity among many peoples of widely diverse habits of thought, language, religion and culture, would be far more difficult in a federation of nations than it was even among the American Colonies, when such differences of tradition and background long blocked federation. Would the Western farmer and the Balkan tribesman ever see things in the same light? And could the more enlightened peoples share the views of some of the more backward not far removed from savagery? To force the lion and the lamb to lie down together must bring disaster to the lamb, and just as fam-

ily ties are more secure when too many in-laws do not live under the same roof, so the bonds between nations are stronger when not drawn too tight. Friendship is a plant of slow growth and can no more be forced among nations than among men.

The more diverse are the elements to be united, the greater will be the difficulties and the weaker will be a rigid union built on coercion. An interesting study could be made of the weakening effect upon our own republic of tying the states too firmly in bonds of centralized control through which the federal government would intrude in local affairs; but this is beyond our present purpose. Contrast rather the attempt of England to hold her American Colonies in a tight yoke with the more liberal policies of recent years. The follies of her American policies cost England her most precious possessions, while her Empire has been enormously strengthened by relaxing the ties which bind her outposts. The Statute of Westminster declares that the "autonomous communities within the British Empire are equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations . . . with every self-governing member of the Empire master of its destiny . . . and subject to no compulsion whatever." The extension of dominion status to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa has bound them in a deeper and truer loyalty and has made for strength. One wonders what would have been the outcome had the same liberal policy been pursued in America long ago, or had it been extended to Ireland and to India before it was too late.

Gladstone once said, "The oppression of a majority is detestable and odious," and such oppression would surely result from any binding federation built upon force and coercion. Would such an amalgamation of many diverse countries be guided by the majority of its constituent ele-

ments or by a majority of the populations represented? Under either plan, or under a compromise similar to that in our American Union, what would happen to a minority? Can one imagine that the United States and the British Empire would submit to a majority consisting of a host of minor states? Would we bow to the will of a majority made up of the Baltic and Balkan countries, or would those boisterous and troublesome nations be any more secure against the more powerful than they are today? Were representation based on population, what protection would Paraguay, with a population about equal to that of the city of Cleveland, have against its far more populous neighbors on every side? Would any nation join in enforcing a program to which it was opposed or contribute a military quota? The League of Nations showed the impracticability of securing unity of action in the face of differences of opinion and interests. Can we hope for greater success of future similar devices?

The great danger of federation lies in the oppression of minorities, whatever be the basis of representation, and in the destruction of that local government which is the life of self-government and freedom. All liberty is a constant struggle against usurpation, and a union on too broad and too inclusive a scale would inevitably lead to tyranny. It is the nature of men and of governments to seek power, and our own history demonstrates the difficulty of drawing hard and fast lines between the powers of a union and the rights of constituents. Having fixed a line of demarcation, there still remains the difficulty of securing adherence to it, and just as here at home, there would be a constant drift toward centralization and the obliteration of local liberties. Such a union would be forever interfering in matters purely local—labor questions, social relations, industrial life, education—and extremists and fanatics would seek to impose

majority decisions in such moral issues as gambling and the use of alcohol upon all. Until mankind has progressed further in altruistic unselfishness and has come to closer accord in many matters, such questions must be left wholly to local determination, with no pressure from higher up, for no resort to enforced compulsion in moral questions can be justified. The danger of nations dabbling in the local affairs of others would be a very real peril under these schemes of international government.

But we have seen that reservations must be made regarding supervision of international trade, and nations, like men, may and should refuse to deal with gangsters. We plead only for an open door to those who show themselves worthy of it, and there is often a middle course between a weak neutrality to avoid "taking sides" and war. If a neighbor shows himself to be troublesome, untrustworthy and altogether objectionable, we do not beat him up or lie in wait for him with a shotgun. In varying degrees, according to the enormity of his evil ways, we refuse to go to his house or to invite him to ours. We do not lend him our lawn mower nor trade with him; perhaps we ignore him, not seeing him when we meet on the street. Nations may well follow a similar course, ostracizing those beyond the pale of decency. In the case of those who put might above right and who betray every trust there is ample reason for breaking off relations and closing our doors, just as we refuse to deal with rascals in daily life.

Forgetting for the moment situations arising from Japanese aggression, even if we were in no way concerned with the conflict in the Far East, we might well refuse to trade or have any relations whatever with a nation guilty of unprovoked violence against another or with one which seeks to force upon another trade in narcotics, demoralizing its people. By all means close the door to such outlaws, but

close it fast, and do not be content with blocking it half-way by a self-seeking tariff. Such decisions are not always easy, for there are selfish interests to fight. But difficulty is no excuse for inaction, and ending commerce with such offenders would be a far more powerful weapon under free trade than today, when, because of stifling tariffs, there is often little to be lost. Were nations to take such punitive action they, like men, would soon learn that crime does not pay.

There are aspects to George's teaching, other than that of trade, which have vital applications to peace. His program would go far to end imperialism, lust for colonies, and all that is unsavory in the word "expansion." Increased earnings of capital and labor would reduce the incentive to emigration and both would be slower to incur the hazard of alien adventure. Flags would have less lure, for even today men and money go where the prospects shine the brightest, regardless of the color of the bunting and of political ties. The Germanic population of the United States exceeds that of what was the great city of Hamburg and is about sixty times that of all German colonies prior to the first World War. The number of Italians in the United States exceeds the combined population of Rome and Florence, and is 225 times as great as the Italian population of the pre-war Italian colonies in Africa.

We hear much of congestion and overpopulation, but these supposed problems originate in the denial of freedom and not in the niggardliness of nature, for the Creator provided abundantly for all His children. Germany, Italy, and Japan show a density of population about one-half that of England, Belgium, and Holland, and although it is true that the Axis powers are not so generously endowed by nature as some lands, any argument drawn from their natural poverty loses force when comparisons are made with brave little Holland,

where a courageous and frugal people have wrested most of their land from the sea. As Miss Margaret Bateman has shown in her pamphlet, *Who Owns the Earth*, it is a question of monopoly and the exclusion of many from all share in our common heritage. In Germany four hundred persons owned over five million acres; in Italy one per cent of the landowners held nearly half of all the arable land, and in Japan fewer than one-half of one per cent of the people own more farm land than is owned by all the rest. One can scarcely wonder that under such conditions there is emigration and demand for expansion.

The overpopulation of the globe is a pure fiction, for even the best lands are far from crowded. Let us hope that all the people of the earth will not flock en masse to our shores, but if they did, we have enough territory to provide about two acres of farm land for every family, with as much again of woodland and waste and, if all the world were to go swimming at once in the Great Lakes, each swimmer could disport himself in his own pool of about thirty by fifty feet.

Relieving pressure at home in every land by fair sharing of natural resources would overcome many difficulties and dangers. Foreign loans, investments, concession hunting, and the like, lead first to penetration and occupation, then to exploitation and domination, and, finally, to war. On every count those who earnestly seek the peace of the world should give unprejudiced thought to the only proposal of promise. To look for its full and immediate adoption, even when peace comes, would be utopian, but a start can be made to insure our own peace and safety and to blaze the path for other nations.