

The Menace of Population-Pressures

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THE future of Western Civilization can be endangered by a strong population-pressure. This pressure is a social tension and is of two kinds, originating from either an absolute or from a relative disproportion between population and available resources.

The first of these pressures, the absolute disproportion, exists when the ratio is such that it endangers the providing of the minimum needs of the population, as in some parts of Southeast Asia. In such an agricultural society this absolute disproportion will be felt directly; i.e., a disproportion between the available land and the number of people that have to live upon that land. It is the pressure of the number of people against available resources; ancient history and the Bible are replete with accounts of such pressure.

It may be brought about in two ways: by the exhaustion of natural resources by soil erosion as in Greece and Italy; or by cutting off a people from formerly available resources. This excision may be done in three ways: (a) by economic means, such as tariffs and exchange restrictions; or (b) by political means, such as removing Alsace-Lorraine iron from the coal of the Saar and Ruhr, one of the fundamental reasons for the three wars since 1870 and therefore a reason why the Schuman pooling proposal should seem now to merit every support. A combination of (a) and (b) can be executed by redrawing maps around original trade outlets, such as Danube upon the disintegration of

the Austro-Hungarian empire. The third method of curtailment may be brought about (c) by technological means, such as the enforced close secrecy, resented by those outside the cabal, on atomic research.

This last method brings us to the fact, however, that in modern commercial and industrial countries the absolute disproportion will chiefly be felt as a shortage of jobs. The ever dangerous risk of permanent unemployment, upon which Communist propaganda thrives, is the most menacing symptom of an absolute pressure. Even Canadians have recently seen this threat in their own Nova Scotia when, under the pressure of technological changes in their industry and markets, many coal miners were moved from Cape Breton to the hard-rock mines of Ontario, and when it was suggested by a Minister of the Crown that thousands of apple-growers should migrate from the Annapolis Valley in a second expulsion from Acadie. At least these Canadians do have some other place to which they may go, some space yet to fill under the same flag. So long, then, as there *are* new resources, technological improvements may in the long run cause an advancement in the general standard of living, as did eventually the Industrial Revolution after bringing hardship to many. Without other and new resources, however, technics—the displacement of man by the machine—can be a menace, and for other than military purposes were frowned upon by the Fascist states. European immigrants must therefore be ac-

cepted for the development of natural resources elsewhere, or there will be a resurgence of the sleeping Fascism and there will be war.

II

THE second kind of pressure, or relative disproportion, exists when the ratio is such that it causes among the people or social groups a *feeling* of social dissatisfaction. It may be felt as a standard of living *considered* insufficient—i.e., a preconceived norm below which people will not go. The modern farmer, for instance, no longer compares himself with another farmer, but with the city man and his comforts and hours of labour; eventually he compares himself with American standards of living, especially in regard to plumbing and motor cars; and this comparison can lead to tensions. We recall the "people's car" of Hitler's promised land.

Actually a genuine relative disproportion can be distinguished only with great difficulty from social tensions that originate really from other causes, and this feeling of dissatisfaction is pointed out to the masses by their leaders until it becomes a threat not only to internal social rest but also to international relations. It is this subjective feeling of the people themselves, what they believe or can be made to believe (again we recall Hitler's cry for the Ukraine), rather than the actual fact, that is of paramount importance. It is in this field of the relative rather than of the absolute that the danger of a population-pressure might develop in the future in Europe. Pressure will depend not only on the extent to which a people increases or perhaps decreases in number. It can also originate from psychological reasons brought about by *ideas* of a proper standard of living. Perhaps we do not have to go very far back into the history of our own railways to understand this.

The tension from this relative disproportion can also be increased by the loss of capital to develop such resources as have been customarily or formerly available—for instance, England's forced sale

of the Argentine railways, and in reverse the loss to the Argentine of British capital. India and Britain are at present under the same economic handicap. Usually this loss of capital is brought about by war and its destruction and prevents the development of such resources as Europe still has. Since the Middle Ages the world has been dependent on European organization in such fields as banking and transportation, but now American mass production is winning the advantage, leaving Europe dependent on and in competition with America. Export is necessary if Europe is to survive, and this fact may eventually bring about European integration in place of the present mutual rivalry within Europe. At the moment, however, Belgium is again prospering by living off her African Congo, while Holland on the other hand has lost her wealthy Indonesian colonies; her bargaining power is thus weakened, jealousy thrives, and the Council of Europe remains a piece of paper. Similarly, the declining population of France has left that country full of abandoned farms that the crowded Dutch (with nearly the same number of people as Canada in an area less than that of Nova Scotia) would like to occupy and bring into production again, were it not for the dog-in-the-manger attitude toward national territory. If tension and recurrent wars are to be avoided, European integration must come. Such a development of what would then be *new* resources would reduce the danger of population-pressure.

III

ANOTHER factor is determining the relative disproportion which causes population-pressure, and that is the composition of the age-group. There is a very marked decline in the death-rate. The European age-group from fifty to sixty-five will increase. Both Belgium and Holland have each risen nearly a million in that group alone since the late war, and even our own Canadian figures for the same group are also steadily rising, much to the belated concern of em-

ployers and welfare agencies. Through improvements in technics this group is alleged to be no longer very productive of capital wealth; indeed they are often a financial burden to the younger age-group whose own capital must be taken away from them in taxes by the welfare state to satisfy the demands for greater security and pensions to a generation that is extending more and producing less. As there is only so much pie to be divided, these ever larger pieces are being handed to the older generation, perhaps to an improvident one, at the expense of good schooling and housing for the coming generation, the children of the present taxpayers. Again, a solution seems to lie in admitting more European emigrants to this continent, for after every wave of emigration in the past there has been a compensating decline in the European birth-rate, although it must be admitted that in the past hundred years this rate has increased in Europe much more rapidly than it has in China, India, or Japan, countries that are, of course, already over-populated to a threatening degree, as we saw at Pearl Harbour.

If by means of the tapping of new resources there should arise a labour shortage in Europe and people were *able to move freely* to where the jobs were, integration would be hastened. But such a shortage is not likely to happen, for Hitler's population policy of yesterday has resulted in Europe's wide availability of labour today, and this increase of unemployed and unemployable is bound to cause social tensions. The number of graduate engineers I recently met in Holland who were willing to do pick and shovel work in a Canadian mine, could they but get there, was pathetic. And where are to be found such new resources as would create jobs? In regard to new agricultural resources, the extension of the European arable area is not very likely except by such costly and magnificent reclamation from the sea as Holland has been doing by her great technical advances whereby she has since the end of the German occupation added 168,000 acres peacefully to her area. It is true that the output in Europe is three

times as great per acre as that in the prodigal United States or Canada, but the law of diminishing returns still holds good for agriculture in general: more mouths to feed from the same area of land that is decreasing in fertility. Furthermore, with the Industrial Revolution, Europe became dependent on the rest of the world for food, and still is.

IV

IN regard to resources for energy and power, there is in Europe enough coal available, but people there are scared of the labour supply. As for hydro power there is not enough available nor ever can be. What is especially required is oil; it is necessary but too expensive, as even Britain has lately found out, and now all Europe is in an unfavourable purchasing position overseas. It is therefore difficult, under the foreign exchange set-up, for her to get from outside as many raw materials as formerly, though Europeans admit that Canada in particular has set an admirable example of generosity in making some still available. On the whole, however, the continent must rely more than ever before on its own present resources, slim as they now are. But these must be made available by economics and statesmanship through the integration already blue-printed. At present there is too much not only of the territorial nationalism already referred to but also of economic nationalism; such resources as do exist are exploited by the nations only for themselves and often at the expense of their neighbours.

This economic nationalism and lack of raw materials are the reasons there are few big industrial enterprises in Europe. All motor cars in Holland, for instance, have to be imported. No one country in Europe can guarantee being able to make enough aeroplanes. Even the famous Royal Dutch Airlines, with what will soon be the largest airport in the world at Schiphol, have to use American-made planes. Under a federation a big, *exporting* aeroplane factory could be built, more jobs provided.

THE problem of population-pressure, used as one of the excuses for the late war, must soon receive the permanent attention of scientists and statesmen. There is no need for immediate pessimism, but Europe and the rest of the world must change their thinking if danger is not to result. Internal unrest from either real or imaginary population-pressure could lead to communism or perhaps even more threateningly to a new fascism, no longer a

purely nationalistic one but an all-western-European one that, like communism, would end the cultural values of Western Europe. The problem of population-pressure there does, then, strongly affect the future of Western Civilization, of that civilization to which Canada is not only an heir but of which she is fast becoming also an ancestor. It is to Canada that weary, waiting immigrants would eagerly follow the gleam that first sparkled in Europe.

The Village Blacksmith

from THE GAZETTE of Montreal

At Daventry in Northampton, England, a village blacksmith who wishes to work long and hard has been censured by the socialist authorities. The license for his workshop will not be renewed unless he agrees not to work late hours. The blacksmith has commented: "I never knew I would get into all this trouble to be allowed to work."

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man was he,
With large and sinewy hands;
But smithies now must mind their step
In socialistic lands.

His hair was crisp and black, and long
His face was like the tan;
His brow was wet with honest sweat,
From earning what he can.
Oh, may he shame to show his face,
This anti-social man!

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You could hear his bellows blow;
You could hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow.
"Less work, more pay" was not his line,
His social sense was low.

Officials now with books of rules
Look in at the open door;
They time the flaming of the forge,
And note the bellows roar;
The sparks may fly till half-past six,
But not a minute more.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
He wonders how it all will end,
When people lose their choice.

It all to him seems wondrous queer,
This leftist paradise,
Where men must curb their will to work
And hide their enterprise,
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Now filling in his triple forms,
Onward through life he goes;
With eye on clock his task begins;
The clock will time its close;
He'll only need to watch the clock,
To earn a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
The trick is now to bide the rules,
And paralyze one's thought.
By smithies turned automatons,
The brave new world is wrought.