

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1943 EDITION

THIS book was written before the war. It was written in order to define the principles which may guide us in the postwar world.

I began work upon it in the late summer of 1933 after I had attended the London Economic Conference. Sharp in my mind were the impressions I had received two years earlier, from watching the League of Nations attempt to deal with the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. With the failures at Geneva and at London and with the rise of Hitler, it was evident that the world was moving towards a gigantic war. I completed the book in the early spring of 1937, that is to say after Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland and just before the Japanese invasion of North China.

The book, as the reader will see, is stamped with the realization that

the dominant fact in the contemporary world
is the return of the European and Asiatic
great powers to the conception of total war [p. 149],

that

Germany, renascent under Nazi leadership,
would . . . seek to annihilate all rival
powers in Europe [pp. 148-149],

and that in Russia

the form of the political state, the plan
of the economy, the determining policies
of the regime, are what they are because Russia
has been preparing for war on her European
and on her Asiatic frontiers. [p. 88]

Here and abroad, by the years 1935-1937, these observations were the common knowledge of so many officials and correspondents that they were not news, much less prophecy. But they were the axioms of any inquiry into the future.

So there was little time left, I felt, to clear my mind and settle my own convictions before the tempest descending upon us must leave us so preoccupied with the terrible daily urgency of war that it would be difficult to think at all of the more permanent things. With that impulse this postwar book was composed in the closing days of the prewar era.

I wrote it, daring to believe that the causes of the coming war and the principles of the reconstruction to follow it were known. I do not mean that I could invent them, or could discover them; only that it was possible to find them and to know them. I had learned that in respect to political principle in our ancient civilization only the naïve think they can be original. For the enduring principles are enduring because they reflect a very long experience.

The first eight chapters of the book may now be tested by hindsight, and the reader will readily see where they were correct and where they were not. These eight chapters are an analytic criticism of the falsities that have animated the great reaction of our times; this reaction set in about 1870 and it has doomed our generation to pass through the terrible ordeal of total wars and of revolutionary dictatorship. The remainder of the book is a constructive affirmation of the principles to which, I believe, men must and will adhere when the reaction subsides and they resume the work, so often interrupted, of conserving and developing the civilization of which we are the inheritors.

The constructive portion of the book, which begins on page 159, is built upon two affirmations. The first, and the more fundamental of the two, is that the politics, law, and morality of

the Western world are an evolution from the religious conviction that all men are persons and that the human person is inviolable. "Towards this conviction men have fought their way in the long ascent out of the morass of barbarism. Upon this rock they have built the rude foundations of the Good Society." (p. 378)

The second affirmation is that the industrial revolution "which still engages the whole of mankind and poses all the great social issues of the epoch in which we live, arises primarily from the increasing division of labor in ever-widening markets; the machine, the corporation, the concentration of economic control and mass production, are secondary phenomena." (p. 164)

The central theme of the book is posed by these two affirmations: the problem, as I see it, is how to reconcile with the comparatively new economy of the division of labor the great and ancient and progressive traditions of liberty embodied in laws which respect the human personality. The reader will find set out at length the argument as to why fascism, communism, state socialism, state capitalism, and nineteenth-century laissez-faire individualism, are incapable of reconciling the modern economy with our cultural heritage. In Chapters XI, XII, and XIII he will find what I believe to be the necessary principles of the reconciliation.

Inasmuch as I rest my case upon old and tested truths, I do not feel that I am guilty of pride of opinion when I say that the experience through which we have passed since the book was first published has not shaken but has, in fact, strengthened my conviction that it contains more truth than error. Obviously, if I wrote the book today, I would change many things in it. I would, I hope, be able to spare the reader much trouble by shortening it. But the defects of the book must be attributed to the author; the truths which it expounds are the

work of the masters of our civilization, and the reader must not let the faults of the disciple too greatly disturb him.

In the text and in the footnotes I have acknowledged the sources upon which I have drawn; there too will be found the teachers by whom I have been taught.

W. L.

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