

## Two Kinds of Death

The bombing of Chinese farmers is murder of individuals only. The bombing of cities like Berlin, London and Paris is murder of civilization.

Oriental economy, fashioned by centuries of social ignorance, banditry, extortionate taxation and rack rent, approximates almost self-sufficiency; that is, a minimum of desires satisfied with a minimum of exchanges. The market is therefore of relatively small importance. Exchanges can be effected directly by simple barter, should the small town and its market-place be wiped out. Since the railroad is but a very recent, and still uncertain, means of transportation, the bullock cart is always available. People have not learned to specialize to any great extent; therefore dependence upon other specialists and upon a market-place is negligible. Likewise, desires are limited to the necessities of existence.

In a self-sufficient economy the disappearance of several individuals does not materially affect the lives of the rest. Cutting off part of a worm makes the worm shorter, but the abbreviated worm lives. However, with a more highly developed form of life any one of a number of vital centers determines the existence of the entire body. So with civilization. When, in seeking for more satisfactions men concentrate in cities, where more specialization is made possible by the greater number of exchanges, their self-sufficiency ceases and their interdependence increases.

When life has become adjusted to exchanges any interference with the locus of these exchanges, the market place, is as threatening to social existence as any interference with nerve centers is to individual existence. Society can readjust itself from a highly civilized to a self-sufficient economy. Historically, it has, to wit: from Rome to the Dark Ages. But, such a transition must be slow, if life itself is to continue meanwhile. A sudden transition is impossible without a terrible wastage of human lives. Perhaps the complete disappearance of some civilizations may be traced to sudden

destruction of vital nerve centers.

Now, the destruction of our great cities (if it can be effected with the completeness desired by militarists) would result not only in wiping out accumulated culture, but also in retrogression of our highly developed economy (of which our culture is a part). The result would be, assuming that life were not extinguished before complete transition, a decentralization of society and a simpler economy.

The very threat to the nerve centers of our civilization has already had an effect in that direction. The evacuation of London, Paris and Berlin is an indication of this tendency. These marts, the result of centuries of productive enterprises, are being broken up (temporarily, we hope) and their residents and factories scattered. If this process continues for a long time, if the accumulated means of production and exchange in these cities are destroyed, and if the fear of destruction discourages their re-building, the inevitable result will be a complete change in the economy of these nations. The people will gradually readjust their lives to the self-sufficiency of small, scattered communities, culture will decline, and so will the standard of living.

Another point: The land values of these cities will disappear. But that raises a new train of thought.