

## THE NEW ARMS RACE

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For a century or more, it has seemed that commercial prosperity requires a large spending upon armaments and the 'defence' forces. Only WAR, and the fear of its unpredictable outcomes, has ever opened up the purse-strings of the nations and brought an allegedly full-employment that temporarily has hidden the horrors, the endemic poverty and depression.

In 1992, the memory of the Hitlerian and Stalinist period is still with us. Knowledge of events in Germany has long been more widely available and is better known than that of Russia, where the clamp upon history is only now relaxing.

The German people had suffered deeply both as immediate result of the 1914/1918 war, the destruction of their industry by the victorious Allies and then the deliberate inflation of their currency so as to wipe out the debts imposed by the Versailles Treaty. A maniacal speculation in land prices resulted, and then there came the 1931 commercial depression that engulfed the world. The suffering from all these was what brought acceptance of Hitler's messianic promise to the Germans that there would be both full employment and the restoration of 'their' land.

Hitler saw that with an enormous army and its attendant armaments industry he could strip the market of labour, thus raising the general wage level and giving an income of sorts to multitudes who otherwise would starve. He did not give many of them 'land' but he made a show of it by sequestering the relatively insignificant holdings of the Jewish. He of course could not touch the enormous holdings of the Junker families or the armament makers who had financed him.

Nature having the habit of eventually excreting anything needless or harmful, Hitler and Stalin have gone and their stamping grounds are now ruled by a new breed of promise makers. To bolster their political grip, these now are all demanding arms, and munition makers everywhere are exultant. With 'tax the poor' policies sedulously cultivated by the monopolistic press, the employment situation everywhere is getting to be as bad as in the pre-war 1930s. Thus the regrowth of the armament industries can be portrayed as a regrettable necessity rather than the monster it really is.

The sad thing is that it all is needless. Why not go to the root of the problem and, in lieu of taxation, take site rentals for the public revenue? Would not this remove the basic cause of unemployment – the keeping of land so idle or poorly used that unemployment flares and the fear of it forces the acceptance of low wage levels? Relieved from the artificial restriction on purchasing power, employment would rise, commerce would flourish and we would have the pleasant choice either of further lifting our living standards or of enjoying more leisure that might even stimulate further prosperity.

To prevent a repeat of the horror that faced the generations around and between the two world wars, we must persuade our rulers that Site Rentals for Revenue proffers the only acceptable solution and that to ignore it is to court a disaster in the 21st century at least the equivalent of that which hit the 20th.