

1. Portrait of a Man (1862-1934)

His work for peace

The root causes of the war



Henri Lambert spent 1915 away from his glass business in Lodelinsart, preoccupied in two directions: on the one hand, in the root causes of war and how to stop it and achieve a lasting, "eternal" peace; on the other, with the case of this particular conflagration, its causes and possible solutions for a quick peace. A kind of back and forth between theory and practice. For him, Germany had made the mistake of not clearly articulating the real motive and purpose of its declaration of war, namely its wish to get "its place in the sun" among the great European nations who had carved out colonial empires, during the period, while under the heavy leadership of Bismarck, Germany had become unified "by iron and blood."

But it was so that "Germany stuck to these fatal and inseparable errors: protectionism and political militarism – entailing, logically, autocracy, "Kaiserism", and imperialism. If, in declaring war, Germany had articulated its reasons, a serious debate on the issue would have immediately arisen in all countries, belligerent and neutral, and, as from discussion comes light, there is no doubt that throughout the world – Germany included – a strong majority among educated, conscientious and serious people would have recognised the merit of Germany's case, while condemning her war. An agreement and a solution would thence have been feasible in terms of a free trade agreement or free trade area, ensuring all nations equal treatment regarding the colonial possessions of Great Britain, France, Russia and, of course, of Germany herself. Another convention, on Germany's colonial expansion, would probably have followed, stipulating, of course, that her new colonial territories would remain open to trade with all countries. And the opportunity would have arisen to engage Germany on the path of free trade relations between home countries."

– Henri Lambert, November 1915.