

Can a Georgian Be a Socialist?

HAS the time arrived for the American Single Tax Party to formulate its exact attitude towards Socialism? This question is pertinent just now because in Argentina the new "Liberal Georgian" party is fighting the propaganda there of the Socialist party with just as much zeal as it opposes the programme of the ever dominant landlords. The present uncertainty of American Georgians on this question is doubtless chiefly responsible for their grouping in the conservative minds, along with Communists, Anarchists and Bolsheviks, as "pernicious radicals."

Before proceeding further I must define, technically, the term "Socialist" for the popular conception of it may include anything from an advocate of public ownership of railways to a bomb-throwing Red. Anyone examining for the first time the political platforms of the Socialist parties of the various nations will be struck by their remarkable resemblance not only in principle but even in phraseology. And if he seeks for an explanation of this phenomenon he will find that it is due to the fact of their common origin, Germany, and their common oracle, Karl Marx. Consequently all modern Socialists may be truly classified as "Marxians" and an analysis of the early doctrines of Karl Marx in every case will yield their social programme.

When Socialists glibly advocate: the "public ownership of all means of production," they are perhaps not aware that this proposal springs directly from the doctrine of Proudhon that "all property is robbery." But such is the fact, and Marx spent the most of his long life in trying to sustain this adage by a minute investigation of the statistics of production in England, the most advanced industrial nation of his time. His results were embodied in the bulky work "Capital," the first of the volumes being published in 1867, but the last two only posthumously, the second in 1885 and the third in 1893. Owing to the fact apparently that Marx first studied manufacturing, it was a long time before he discovered the fallacy of Proudhon's adage. But any reader of "Capital" with patience enough to wade through its first 2178 pages until he reaches Part VI, entitled "Ground Rent," will there find that Marx almost, if not quite discovers that only "monopolistic property"—rather than all property—may truly be called "robbery." He thus reaches the conclusion of Henry George, though he never seems to have publicly acknowledged it, and is said to have sneeringly referred to Single Tax as: "the last ditch of capitalism."

However, few Socialists have ever read "Capital" as far as this, and even these few have evidently had no effect on the practical programme of Socialism. This was formulated some years ago, before Part VI of "Capital" was published and, assuming that all property is robbery, declares a war of classes and advocates the confiscation, as soon as possible, of all private property by the State in order to abolish both interest and rent and leave the whole result of production to be divided solely among the "working

class." Theoretically, this division may be unequal, grants a greater reward for superior intelligence or activity, but practically, if the result is to be determined by universal suffrage in a society where ignorant manual laborers may have the bulk of the vote, the division would inevitably soon be made equal whatever may have been the case at the inauguration of the system. Moreover, whatever Socialism may say about respecting private property *not* used in production, such as mansions, pleasure carriages, elaborate house-furnishings, wardrobes and libraries, the inauguration of its system anywhere would doubtless soon mean the compulsory division also of these "stolen superfluities" among the proletariat as proposed by Kropotkin(1).

That these practical results of the Socialist doctrines are not just theoretical deductions has been amply proved by the recent trial of Marxism on a vast scale in Bolshevik Russia. There, though the votes seem always to have been limited to received members of the Communist party (mostly trained urban workmen and therefore superior in intelligence to the bulk of the proletariat) Socialism, as long as the worker's votes controlled, always took the ridiculous form of equal wages for all manual workers, the voting majority, and equal wages, *but on a lower scale*, for the mental workers, the minority. However, the failure of this economically absurd system to produce anything but lamentable results seems to have convinced even the ruling demagogues of its fallacy and having, within four years, either consumed or destroyed all the accumulated chattels of the bourgeois, they are now apparently returning to the former capitalistic organization of production as fast as they can do so and save their faces.

Whatever may be the case in a heavenly nation, whose inhabitants form one great family of unselfish and intelligent persons, it is clear to any student of human nature that any existing earthly nation could only be organized into a going Socialist commonwealth by the use of force without stint to coerce refractory minorities. This has been well proved in Russia where there was first established the "dictatorship of the proletariat" which in practice meant the absolute control of a disorganized nation of 150,000,000 by the compact and armed Communist electorate numbering less than 1% of the total population. Force had first to be used by the Communists to reconcile the *bourgeois* to the nationalization of its property; and then, in order to make this productive, the same arms had to be turned against the proletariat, many of whom refused to work as long as there was anything left to "nationalize" which could supply them, gratis, with food and clothes. By a State control of food these thieving loafers seem to have been gradually forced by starvation back to the factories, wherein, when they arrived, a military discipline with a firing squad in the background insured their reasonable activity even during the twelve-hour day. Western Socialists for a long time refused to believe the reported results of the Russian experiment, claiming they were

merely "capitalistic propaganda" and that the actual facts were far different. Now when this argument collapses in the face of the reports of many trustworthy Socialist visitors to Russia—including the Englishman (2) Wells, the American, Schmidt, and the Belgian, Vandevelde—they fall back upon the defense that it is not Socialism but war and blockade that have ruined Russia. Yet the unbiased student is forced to believe from the evidence that these latter evils had already done their worst in 1918, before the Socialistic experiment started, and that the *coup d'etat* of the Bolsheviki minority in November, 1917, which prevented the establishment of a constitutional republic, was the chief cause why Russia has gone from bad to worse since the Armistice (3).

Though the Socialist Party has controlled the government of Germany since 1918, it has never dared to introduce there the Marxian confiscation of property, being appalled apparently by its failure in Russia. Instead it has dishonestly busied itself in printing paper marks by the billion in order to complete the ruin of the German middle class; at home, by forcing its acceptance for bank credits, mortgages, salaries, etc., and abroad, by exchanging it or its equivalent in public "bonds," for hard American dollars. The vociferous "party of the proletariat," it has by its fraudulent fiat money forced the wages of German workmen, measured in purchasing power, to far below the Japanese level. As a crowning betrayal of its published principles, and in infamy comparable with its steady support of all the Kaiser's war budgets between 1914 and 1918, it has now installed as Minister of Finance, Herr Hermes, the tool of the German Rockefeller, Herr Stinnes.

Yet all this recent disgraceful record of the Socialist party in Russia and Germany has been no surprise to Georgians. Indeed, what would happen, if Marxians ever attained political power, was clearly predicted a decade ago by the Swiss, Gustav Buscher, in articles published in the SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

Accepting "Socialism" then as synonymous with Marxism, it is evident that Georgians have nothing in common with its practical *political* programme, which means the extinction of individual liberty and the establishment of the all-dominant State. Such a State can only be successfully operated, in the present state of social development, as an oligarchy or autocracy, and that means the discard of all the bills of rights ever won by our ancestors against oppressive governments. Accustomed to an oligarchic and arbitrary State, German workmen see no incongruity in Marxism; nor do Russians who, by its adoption, have inevitably established a Lenine as their autocrat instead of a Nicholas. But with Americans, nourished by traditions of freedom dating from Magna Charta in England and the charters of the free cities of the Netherlands, it is another story, and as soon as they comprehend the real political nature of Marxism they must inevitably reject it in toto.

Nor can Georgians accept the economic programme of Socialism because the State monopoly of all employment

by force means the sure destruction of economic liberty and the establishment in practice of State slavery, whatever may be its camouflage in theory. If a worker must work for the State or starve, it is clear that he must accept employment at whatever terms the State chooses to offer. This lack of choice is the essence of slavery and not the manner of enforcing discipline which might well vary from the sawing apart at the waist of the Haytian revolution. (4) to the placing of a dunce's cap of a Yankee country school. Whatever may have been the usefulness of chattel slavery in ancient society (5) in forcing the wandering and fitful savage to acquire regular habits of work, it was always an anachronism in the Constitution of the Great Republic, though half of its States had to suffer a cruel civil war before finding it out.

The Georgian programme of freeing the land is merely the doctrine of liberalism carried to its logical conclusion. If an individual be cut off by land monopoly from his natural employer, the earth, even an economic novice can understand that he is no longer "enjoying freedom subject to the equal rights of others," as postulated by the doctrine of "laissez faire," but is artificially restrained in his natural rights. The break-up of the medieval static society by the liberal doctrines of the French Revolution, and the free development of the initiative of the formerly suppressed classes, have been the basis of all modern economic progress, especially in the United States where, until recently, the vast unoccupied frontier and the homestead policy protected the citizens from the worst effects of land monopoly. The Georgian proposals aim to preserve perpetually and in more perfect form our industrial freedom of the early XIXth century. The Single Tax means no change in the organization of American industry, on the basis of individual liberty and initiative, but merely the destruction of the parasites of private monopoly which now drain its life-blood. It is indeed the only remedy that can save liberalism from its reactionary enemies, whether monopolistic or Socialistic, which now threaten its speedy extinction everywhere.

I have said enough, I hope, to show that Georgians have nothing in common with Marxians, either in their political or economic programme, and should therefore continue the policy of separation which was first wisely adopted at Chicago in 1920 when the Single Taxers refused to follow the other Forty-eighters into the socialistic Farmer-Labor Party. Of course, this policy does not prevent Single Taxers from encouraging trading or co-operative societies which are founded on a *voluntary* basis. A co-operative organization is socially a higher form than the prevalent one of capitalist and wage-earner; and, as the former becomes better developed, it will gradually excel the latter in efficiency and capture its markets in many other industries besides the few it now dominates. Later, in some future age, our free co-operative societies may succeed in integrating themselves into a co-operative commonwealth.

With such a happy outcome of economic freedom, Georg-

eans will have no quarrel and may then safely call themselves "socialists," as Marxism will long since have perished. Meanwhile the Single Tax Party can never gain the confidence of the American people and commence to win elections till it convinces them that it has entirely repudiated Marxism, that dreadful menace to existing civilization. Finally, I believe that the Georgan programme offers the only policy to save the American middle class from destruction by the combats—or worse—the price-raising combinations of the land and labor monopolies—the modern Gog and Magog of free institutions. But this demonstration must be left for another article.

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REFERENCES

- (1) "The Struggle for Bread," by P. A. Kropotkin.
- (2) "Russian Privation," by H. G. Wells.
- (3) Booklets, published in 1920, by American Association for International Conciliation, on Bolshevik Russia.
- (4) "The Revolution in Hayti and Santo Domingo," by Stoddard.
- (5) "Ancient Society," by Lewis H. Morgan, Part VI.

Henry George—Prophet

THE captain of the hosts of Syria lay stricken with a leprosy. Naaman was a great man. Great in honor and achievement. His hand had freed Syria of the foreign tyrant. But he was a leper.

It was determined to send him down to Israel to be cured by the great man there who was reputed to be a Prophet of God.

When Naaman came to Israel, Elisha, the prophet, bade him bathe seven times in Jordan and be clean.

"How foolish," spake Naaman and his retinue. "Are not the waters of Syria as potent to save as the waters of Judea? If the great man had stood forth and called upon God to save the flesh of Naaman we would have believed him. If the man of God had laid hands upon Naaman and made him whole we would have said he was truly a prophet.

"But to ask Naaman to bathe seven times in the foul waters of Jordan is a silly and a foolish way to cure a leprosy."

So hath it ever been with prophets.

Once upon a time there was a country called Columbia. On the western slope was the province of California. A man named Henry George lived there. He was a poor printer employed by one of the great newspapers. He saw a great transcontinental railroad approaching his city of St. Francis. Tie by tie, and mile by mile, nearer it came. As it approached, the town lots in St. Francis rose in selling value, which is to say use value, by leaps and bounds; and in the sister city across the bay, where the railroad must have its terminus, the once useless and valueless land was being sold at thousands of dollars per acre. This was a phenomenon about which Henry George spent many an hour of thought.

Across the great country of Columbia on the eastern shore, was the city of Manhattan. It was the greatest of all the cities of the land.

Famed was Manhattan, as a city of countless industries. Men gathered from every quarter of the earth to labor, and its wealth increased marvelously.

But lo, a grievous leprosy fell upon the land. As wealth and progress came there also came to those who toiled, a grinding poverty. Splendid tenements arose. Those who created the wealth of the city were huddled in hovels of misery and hounded by the fear of destitution.

To this City of Manhattan came Henry George, the Prophet. Material prosperity he found. Wealth was abundant and comfort luxurious. But wealth was not distributed; comfort was not diffused. On one side was fabulous riches; on the other was poverty so degrading that its victims had lost all hope. Between these two extremes was a harrowing fear and a paralyzing dread of poverty that seemed worse than poverty itself.

Although Manhattan was extraordinarily prosperous, due to the augmented working power of its numberless men and wonderful labor saving machines, yet it was those who actually did the work who remained poor and were ever becoming poorer.

Wherever the Prophet saw Progress he always saw the leprous handmaiden, Poverty, stalking by her side.

He had reflected with infinite pains upon the significant fact, found everywhere, but especially marked in Manhattan that "where population is densest, wealth greatest, and the machinery of production and exchange most highly developed, we find the deepest poverty, the sharpest struggle for existence, and the most of enforced idleness."

This poverty was not merely deprivation; it meant shame, degradation; searing of sensitive natures as with hot irons; the breaking down of morals; the denial of the strongest impulses and sweetest affections.

When George first saw and realized the squalid misery of the great city it appalled and tormented him and would not let him rest for thinking of what caused it and how it might be cured.

"For what does it matter when death shall come," he asked, "whether we have fared daintily or not, whether we have worn soft raiment or not, whether we leave a great fortune or nothing at all, whether we shall have reaped honors or been despised, have been accounted learned or ignorant;—as compared with how we may have used that talent which has been entrusted to us for the Master's Service?"

With this consecration the Prophet called the great men of the city together and told them how the leprosy could be cured.

He proposed to them that a cure could be at once effected, "by gradually, but as rapidly as possible, exempting everything but land values from taxation."

Simple? Yes, too simple for the great men of Manhattan.

Like Naaman and the captains of Syria, they laughed with scorn.

"How foolish," said they. "Have not the great teachers