

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

LET us state it clearly. We want to see the defeat of Hitler and Hitlerism. Our lot is cast with democracy, albeit over and over again its processes have disappointed us. We assert that the Georgeist reform is possible of application only in a society where free speech, freedom of assembly and popular government prevail. It is therefore vital that the measure of Freedom we now enjoy be preserved, and defended against encroachment. Nothing can be more dangerous than the smug assumption that Freedom will, somehow, take care of itself. Like all abstractions, Liberty and Justice simply won't work by mere wishful thinking. Rather must they be translated into a behavior of living. There must be realistic effort—risk, if need be—to keep and enjoy the qualities that alone make life worth living.

NEVERTHELESS, let us recognize that Hitler has offered a challenge—one which not to meet is to succumb to Hitlerism, in one form or another. The issue is this:—The old order has changed. The world is interdependent. We can no longer presume to enjoy a comfortable isolation from the misfortunes of other lands. The day of isolation—political as well as economic—is past. The onslaught of the dictators has jarred us into a realization that the boundary lines of the world are not eternal.

TYRANTS, says Henry George, employ current trends for their own purpose, and he adds, "We who would free men should heed the same truth." We already have ample testimony of the manner in which the tyrants are dealing with the current trend of world interdependence. Does not Hitler boast that he will reduce the entire world to the Nazi sway? What plan has democracy athwart this totalitarian threat?

WHAT of internal reconstruction? Hitler has here made another challenge. After the lightning war is to come the lightning peace, swiftly organized. Hitler has a plan, and the weary masses are eager for some way—almost any way—out of the hell of economic insecurity. Against this, what plan can the democracies hold out as an incentive for carrying on the struggle? Typical of the programs proposed for the post-war period is that of Sir Richard Acland, M. P., in his book, *Unser Kampf*, an answer to Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Sir Richard asserts

that a goal worth striving for is the common ownership of the means of production. Yet he senses the danger in this, for he says: "This leaves now only the biggest problem of all, namely that of political and individual liberty under common ownership. The problem is a very real one. Notwithstanding the amount of democratic control over working conditions which will exist through the many different forms of workers' meetings, the whole of the economic work will go forward under one central guiding plan, one organization . . . Over this organization one man will in the last resort preside. Human nature being what it is, we must consider how we can make sure that the political and cultural life of the nation does not fall under the control of this organization or of its chairman." The author goes on to deal with this problem, but in a most unsatisfactory way. He asserts that 100% liberty is impossible, and consoles us with a counter-assertion that 100% denial of liberty is also impossible. An international armed police, incapable of being bribed, is apparently his solution to this "biggest problem of all."

UNFORTUNATELY, this is the sort of idea that is stealing upon the democracies. But is this the thing that democracy is fighting for—an imitation of totalitarianism? Were it not just as well to yield to the enemy? It seems clear to us that any such concentration of power is a broad down-hill road to tyrannical dictatorship. Democracy's answer to Hitler must be something more than, "See, we ourselves are adopting your plan."

ADVOCATES of the collection of the rent of land by government and the abolition of all restrictions on the exchange of goods, have the only workable plan—an economic as well as a political democracy. This is the only *real* answer to Adolf Hitler. On the other hand, we must recognize that the idea of common ownership and centralized power—because of its easy acceptance—is widespread. Yet, this is not to despair. We must learn to do our work in the world as we find it. Social reform cannot be expected to triumph until it becomes instilled in the minds of the people. The same means and opportunities to effect such triumph are at our disposal as are available to all other reform groups. We must not be afraid to face the test of survival of our principles under a democratic order. While from time to time we may be disappointed, we shall refuse to be discouraged. We shall always retain our faith in the Power—and final Victory—of Truth.