

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

**P**OETS and dreamers have ever beheld the Millenium, the Golden Age. Ages have passed, and the Millenium is still hidden from the view of mankind. The Ideal Society apparently does not come of its own accord. If and when it does, it will come through man's own efforts. It is what we do now that determines the kind of world we shall bequeath. In the present, and in the world as we find it, our feet are set upon a path that leads on to the future. The way is indeed difficult—the forest is dense, there are treacherous pitfalls. Occasionally, there is a height which only the stout of heart may climb. From these heights, how sweet look the pleasant fields ahead! But to reach the fields one must descend again. We must struggle on, penetrate the darkness, and avoid the pitfalls. We must face the problems of the present, with courage and intelligence.

**W**E who embrace the philosophy of freedom are confident that we have the correct solution to many of the world's ills. The great preponderance of humanity is, however, unaware of our solution. Since we must continue our association with the rest of mankind, we must share the troubles that beset them. We must do something about them, now—not at the expense of impeding our true reform, but in furtherance of it. Ultimately, the seeming digression will better prepare the world for its acceptance. Indeed, if we fail to grapple with immediate problems, we run the risk of allowing the torch to be snatched from our hands by the powers of darkness—who have recently enough demonstrated their aptitude for snuffing out the light of freedom.

**A**CCCEPTANCE of our philosophy will come about only in a society where the tradition of freedom has been instilled, and where the people, to some extent, realize that Liberty must be forever guarded. It is to our interest that tyranny and oppression be combated, whenever they appear, and whatever their form. Only in the democratic countries has the way been prepared for our reform. And only to the extent that the citizens of democratic nations strive to preserve their freedom is it measurably retained. It is no easy task to conquer a nation like Finland or Denmark, where the roots of freedom go deep—even though it may seem that the powers of darkness have, for the moment, triumphed. On the other hand, it requires little effort to subdue a nation where the enemies of democracy have successfully perverted the precepts of freedom. Witness

the France of Rousseau, Voltaire and Mirabeau, whose present leaders have been so ready to discard Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. How true it is, in more than one sense, that the price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance!

**I**T is unhappily true that the disease of landownership and trade restriction is gnawing at the vitals of even our most democratic countries. Were this not so, our work would be unnecessary. But we believe that democracy can be saved, because we know that the disease is curable—and that the cure is in our hands.

**L**ET us not be cynical in these dangerous times. We can admit that the present world crisis is a struggle among rival imperialisms for world domination, and still recognize that in the last analysis it is a struggle between two irreconcilable "ways of life." The appearance of totalitarianism is as much a result of international as of internal injustice. The solution cannot be in crushing the peoples whose governments are now totalitarian. Neither can it be in allowing totalitarianism to triumph. It is a case where the excrescence, although caused by the disease, must be subdued first, and more favorable conditions created for eradicating the disease itself.

**E**ACH new crisis that comes must be handled in a different way and yet in a way that is in accordance with basic principles. Each new crisis puts a new test to our faith and ideals. If our faith is to survive, we must adapt it to such usefulness as may be required for meeting the various situations that arise. It was in this spirit that the Prophets of Israel applied their faith as they were forced to meet new developments. Isaiah was sent at a time of great national crisis, and he met that crisis by laying down precepts for the guidance of his people through that epoch. A century later, Jeremiah arose during another period of anguish, and he likewise offered practical advice to his people for that occasion. The opposition to his counsel came, strangely enough, from the upholders—in the narrow sense—of the Isaiah tradition. Yet it is now clear that Jeremiah was continuing substantially on the same path that Isaiah trod—in the larger, spiritual sense. In this there is a lesson for all of us. We can apply it to the real and immediate issues of today. We will be none the less true to our faith and principles by tackling with intelligence the problems that arise in our time. We will most certainly not be true to them by closing our eyes and dreaming on about the Golden Age.