

The Influence of Henry George in Europe

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WHAT impact did Henry George make upon European thought and politics? A number of books about Henry George have dealt with this question to a greater or less degree but perhaps the best treatment of it so far, is contained in *Henry George in Europe* by Michael Silagi - unfortunately, as yet only in the German language.*

The story of the taking up of George's ideas politically in the various countries and of the attempts, some successful others abortive, of land reformers to introduce legislation along Georgist lines, covers the UK, Germany, Hungary, and Denmark. Included also is the story of the introduction of a Georgist tax policy in Kiau Chou, then a colony of Germany, by Wilhelm Schramier.

Of Britain, perhaps the most unsought for and unwelcome effect was on the socialists who saw in George an ally of great value. It will be remembered that the arch Fabian, George Bernard Shaw, claimed to have had the course of his thinking changed by listening to Henry George speak, but

*Published by Etana, Taku-Fort-Str 13C, Munich 82, W. Germany, 1973, Price DM 25, approx. £4.25.

that he then "went on to socialism." Certainly much of George's campaigning was seized upon as free ammunition by the socialists although George categorically repudiated socialism. Of subsequent socialist legislation with one notable exception¹, it may be observed that it well indicates that most socialists have never understood or wanted to understand George. Although Germany could claim the greatest organised movement for land reform, it was only in her colony of Kiau Chou that it was put to the practical test. Prominent land reform leaders in Germany were Theodore Stamm, Michael Flurscheim, Boron Eulemstein and Adolf Damaschke, the latter the leader of the strong Bodenreform movement.

The story of Hungary includes an account of the work of Dr. J. J. Pikler², valuation chief in Budapest who began a valuation for land tax under Count Károlyi's 1918 revolutionary government.

The story of Georgism in Denmark is perhaps better known, be-

¹ Snowden's Finance Act which called for a measure of land value taxation well in line with Henry George's ideas.
² See *Symetry in Budapest in Land & Liberty*.

ginning with the successful agitation of the small farmers who campaigned for taxation to be transferred from their improvements to their land, followed by the story of the growth and influence of the Danish Justice Party dedicated to the principles of Henry George.

An interesting aspect revealed by the author is the origin of the

Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* - devised as a counter to Georgist ideas.

Sources explored are both old and new and among the latter are some unpublished letters of George in correspondence with European supporters, and statements by Sun Yat-Sen's son, Sun Fo.