

BOOK REVIEWS

TOLSTOY'S REMEDY FOR BAD DREAMS

Tolstoy: Principles for a New World Order,
David Redfearn, London:
Shepherd-Walwyn, £9.95.

The central theme of David Redfearn's work is Leo Tolstoy's advocacy of Henry George's ideas in his quest for a better world order. Surrounding this, an extraordinary amount of information is packed into this book of less than 200 pages. The author worked for two years on this his final opus, and his research is varied and thorough.

A brief history of Russia is included, enhancing our understanding of the milieu in which Tolstoy lived and worked. There is also a brief biography of the great author and something about the surrounding intellectual atmosphere.

In the first half of Tolstoy's life he produced such masterpieces as *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, and he is thereby universally recognized as the greatest of Russians and one of the world's greatest authors. Less universal is the appreciation of his work in the second half of his life, which to him was much more important. He was appalled by the misery he witnessed, the treachery of governments in their futile and destructive wars, man's inhumanity to man. He sought a better society founded on sound moral principles. These he found in the Sermon on the Mount and in other great world teachings.

Tolstoy was attracted to Henry George's works, *Progress and Poverty* and *Social Problems*. At first, however, he misunderstood George's proposal as land nationalization and wondered if this would not exchange one slavery for another. Later he had a clearer grasp of the remedy of land-value taxation and enthusiastically promoted it.

Despite his prestige, Tolstoy had the same difficulty George's followers have always met with - incomprehension and indifference. His appeal to Tsar Nicholas II to adopt land-value taxation to avoid revolution was met with a total lack of response. One wonders if Nicholas remembered this when he faced the firing squad.

Tolstoy asked his English interpreter, Aylmer Maude, how the single tax movement was going in England, and was told that it was too much for the Conservatives and not enough for the Socialists. Tolstoy despaired of this, and wondered 'who is to do this work that so urgently needs doing?'

The world went on its catastrophic way, erupting in World War I and the Russian Revolution. Though Tolstoy missed these events, having died a few years earlier, his prophetic eye foresaw such disasters if morality was not observed.

David Redfearn carries the story

OBITUARY

Land & Liberty deeply regrets to announce that two of its contributors have died.

David Redfearn, a Quaker, was dedicated to the idea that war could be eradicated. His latest book - a study of Henry George's influence on Leo Tolstoy, which has just been published in Britain - is being translated into Russian, and will be published in Moscow on Sept. 25.

Edgar Buck, a Cardiff solicitor, has for many years contributed penetrating analyses of the way in which private property in land created social problems. Through the United Nations Association he actively campaigned for the relief of poverty in the Third World.

Both were members of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, through which they campaigned for social justice.



● Leo Tolstoy

up to the present time, showing the continuing disorders of the world and how the land question is the bottom question. He also points out that the movement for land-value taxation has, after all, achieved some advances and is in practice in various parts of the world, with beneficial results.

THE BOOK concludes with the new opportunities in Russia with the end of communism and the quest for perestroika. During the communist period, Tolstoy was dismissed as an ineffectual dreamer and Henry George as a bourgeois reformer. But times have changed and it is rather the failed regimes of autocracy and communism that seem like bad dreams.

Recent Georgist efforts in Russia are recounted by Mr. Redfearn. An appreciative Foreword by Anatoly Gorelov of the Academy of Sciences, Moscow, says: 'If Leo Tolstoy were alive in the year 1992, his support of Henry George's single tax on the value of land as a means of achieving common rights to it would, to my mind, remain absolutely unchangeable. As President of the Leo Tolstoy Society, I share this opinion.'

And let us remember, this is not just a needed reform for Russia, but for the world.

BOB CLANCY