

# Five Hungarian Georgeists

By CHARLES K. RAVASZ

*"Their pursuits cannot serve as an example to young people living in vastly different circumstances. But all Georgeists should draw inspiration from them—and cherish the memories of those who gave their lives for the ideals in which we all believe."*

**I**F he is alive, "A" is 39. His father was a banker and his maternal grandfather the first Socialist peasant M.P. in Hungary's pre-World War I Parliament. "A" studied sociology and was still in his early twenties when he had already made a name for himself as an outstanding sociographer. In the years following on World War II he was editor of the most popular literary and political review of the day. He then continued his work as a sociographer, and because he wrote the truth as he found it he was put in gaol. After spending years in a concentration camp he was released when Imre Nagy became Prime Minister. He once again wrote and told the truth as he saw it and in the days of the Revolution became one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Council of Intellectuals. After the second Russian intervention he prepared with one of the members of Mr. Nagy's government the memoranda—published in all Western newspapers under the name of the latter—seeking a compromise acceptable to both the Soviet Government and the Hungarian people. A month later he was arrested and nobody has heard of him since.

"B" would be 36 to-day. He also was a grandson of the first Socialist peasant M.P. and so was a cousin of "A." "B" studied arts and was a leader of the underground democratic youth movement in his university during World War II. His "Letter to a Communist Capitalist" written in that period deserves to become a Georgeist classic. After the German invasion of Hungary he carried out numerous tasks for the Resistance Movement and saved many lives. But he was also the first to become aware of the dangers of the new pact between Socialists and Communists, and he warned that Hungarians might lose even the little freedom they enjoyed in Horthy's days. "B" was arrested by the Nazis and was last seen in a Nazi jail a few days before it was liberated by the Russians. Nobody knows whether he ever fell into the hands of the Soviet troops or whether he was killed by the Nazis.

"C" is 40. He is a scientist and was leader of the students' armed resistance against the Nazis. At the age of 27 he was elected to the Budapest City Council. Later he was put in charge of a branch of the nationalised industries. However, he preferred to work as a scientist and became a full professor at 36. During the Revolution, students and faculty members unanimously elected him chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of his University. He escaped early in 1957 and now does research

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work at one of the leading American universities.

"D" is 33. He is the nephew of the Prime Minister whose *coup d'etat* introduced twenty-five years of counter-revolutionary rule in Hungary. An exceptionally good-looking boy, "D" was a favourite playboy of Budapest society. But he turned his back on it and began a life of intense study and struggle when he was only 19. During the short rule of the Nazis he saved the lives of hundreds of Jews and other persecuted persons with unbelievable courage and bravery, a real life Pimpernel. The Russians nabbed him in the street one day to complete a roll call, and he escaped from captivity many months later with a serious illness. He went back to the University where he worked his way up fast and became a lecturer at the age of 24. He was also, together with "A," one of the chief organisers of the "People's Colleges." When the Communist Party turned against the people's colleges, he was removed from the University. For five years he earned a living and maintained his family as a factory worker. In the thaw before the Revolution he was allowed to take a job more in line with his capabilities and education. He was spokesman of the demonstrators in front of Parliament House when the Russian tanks opened fire in the most notorious massacre of those fateful days. He was one of the very few among those present who escaped uninjured. It is not known where he is or what he is doing at present.

"E" is 33 if he is still alive. He had a very frail physique but showed an intellectual ability exceptional even among the young Hungarian Georgeists. And that is something, because the general intellectual level was rather high in that circle, the writer of the present reminiscences being very small fry indeed in their midst. "E" studied medicine and became Secretary of one of the People's Colleges. He was arrested before he could have finished his studies. This was his second arrest, because he had spent a few weeks in gaol under the Nazis also. But this time he was in for years. When he was released a new Spring could be felt in the air. "E" became one of the leading lights and motors of the famous Petöfi Circle. During the Revolution he turned out to be a first class organiser. When everything was over and the Indian fact-finding mission visited Budapest, "E" organised the silent demonstration by tens of thousands of women which shook the whole world. "E" would have had the opportunity to flee the country like 200,000 others did. Instead he went into hiding. He was hunted down and arrested a few months later. He has not been heard of since.

There were many others. Their lives and adventures

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must strike Georgeists in the Western world as strange and odd. Their pursuits cannot serve as an example to young people living in vastly different circumstances. But all Georgeists should draw inspiration from them—and cherish the memories of those who gave their lives for the ideals in which we all believe.

In rather more propitious circumstances this band of Georgeist intellectuals would have left their mark on the history of human thought, perhaps even on world history. As it is, all that is left of them is a few lines devoted to them in a couple of periodicals with a limited circulation.

## Justice and Charity

By GLENN E. HOOVER

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Extracts from an address given at the San Diego conference of the Henry George School last July.

**T**HE eternal verities do not change from year to year, as do the fashions in automobiles or women's cloths. Nor do the ills of our society result from our failure to find new truths, but rather to our failure to understand and accept the old ones. For this reason, as Justice Holmes once said, it is often more useful to "elaborate the obvious than to elucidate the obscure."

Notions of justice are important in all human relations, but there is time here to comment only on the just distribution of scarce goods and services. You will note that I said "scarce" goods, because, luckily for us, what economists call "free goods," the air for example, are normally so abundant that there are no disputes about the equitable distribution of them. If and when some evil genius develops a feasible way to "fence in" the air we need, we would pay tribute to landlords as we now pay tribute to landlords, but as yet we have been spared that species of extortion.

To reach any valid conclusion about the just distribution of scarce and useful goods, we must begin by noting the origin of them. There is, first of all, the planet on which we live, the product of Nature or of Nature's God. The more desirable parts of our earth are now the property of private persons, although neither they nor any of their predecessors produced it. Nor is the value of these private holdings the product of their past or present owners, but rather it derives from the population which surrounds them.

That all men should share equally in the free gifts of Nature is a thesis so obviously just that it appeals to all who can give it unbiased consideration. The practical way to respect these equal rights is not to attempt to "divide up" the earth, but to take the annual value of land for public purposes. To elaborate on these principles, before this audience, would be to question your ethical sensitivity and waste our time. . . .

Although one can, in the name of Justice, ask that the socially created value of land be used for public purposes so that all may share alike, we have no such equal right to the products of labour. Mankind, in all its stages of

Mankind continues to rush towards its destruction and will not listen to their message. Yet, their message is simple, it does not require much intelligence or a lot of education to understand it. They were certainly not apologists for monopoly capitalism and they were most certainly not prepared to make their peace with Stalinism. They wanted to combine the new freedom from exploitation of man by man with the freedoms humanity had acquired in a centuries long struggle and which are now being lost in an ever growing part of the world. Will they find followers to carry on their message?

development, has recognised that he who produces something has a special claim to it which must be respected by others. The same holds true for whatever he acquires by a free exchange on terms accepted by both parties. Justice does not require that he who goes out and picks the berries, catches the fish or cuts the wood is obligated to share them with others, merely because he is better off than his neighbours. Difficulties arise, however, when a group of men work together at a joint task. It is easy to tell what a solitary fisherman has produced. The fish that he brings home—if he is an honest fisherman—are those which he caught himself. But what does a worker in a large factory "produce"? He must have added something to the total value of the output, but how much? How can the value of his services be determined, if at all?

It has been said that where large numbers of men are working together it is impossible to determine the value of the services of any single worker. We are reminded that in the making of automobiles, for instance, there are involved not only factory workers, but also those who mine and smelt the ore, produce the fibre, the wood and all the materials which go into the completed cars. They all must ultimately be paid from the money received for the cars. But if each is to share according to the value of his contribution, how can that value be determined? The easy—but dangerous—answer is, that the problem is insoluble.

It is dangerous to conclude that we have no method for determining the value of a worker's service, because such a conclusion leads logically to a system of equal pay for all workers who contribute to a common task. Such a system of rewards, in my opinion, would be fatal to the economy of any people who would adopt it, except, perhaps, in small religious communities where the normal economic motives are suppressed, or completely eliminated. It is worthy of note, I believe, that the notion that all workers in a joint enterprise should receive equal pay finds no more favour in the USSR than in the USA. It runs counter to the common-sense of mankind, everywhere and at all times.