



**TOLSTOY:
PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER
BY DAVID REDFEARN**

Reviewed by Angela St. Clair

Shepherd-Walwyn, 1992
ISBN: 978-0856831348

Leo Tolstoy was a renowned Russian novelist and philosopher best known for his two longest works, *War and Peace* (1865–69) and *Anna Karenina* (1875–77). He was also a prominent thinker and advocate for non-violence, simplicity, and a form of Christian anarchism. He believed in living a life of moral and ethical purity, rejecting violence, and advocating social and political change through non-violent means. Tolstoy was a devout Christian, and his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount had a profound impact on his life and work. He was a vegetarian.

David Redfearn's *Tolstoy: Principles for a New World Order* provides a comprehensive and highly readable overview of the life and work of Leo Tolstoy. He shows how Tolstoy regarded his most important work as making people aware of social injustice and freeing the world from spiritual degeneration and evil. Redfearn describes how Tolstoy put his genius into social observation. How he clearly saw the flaws of the social fabric that would lead to catastrophes in the 20th and 21st centuries.

He begins by discussing Tolstoy's early life and his upbringing in a wealthy aristocratic family. He then goes on to examine Tolstoy's military career, his religious conversion, and his development as a writer. He argues that Tolstoy's central theme is the need for a new world order based on the principles of non-violence, Christian love, and social justice. He examines Tolstoy's works in detail, showing how they explore these themes and offer solutions to the problems of the modern world. One of the strengths of Redfearn's book is that he sets Tolstoy's work in the context of his own life and experiences. He shows how Tolstoy's personal struggles and religious conversion shaped his views on society and politics. Redfearn also discusses the influence of other thinkers on Tolstoy, including Rousseau, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche.

Of particular interest to readers of *Land & Liberty* will be the many chapters he devotes to the relationship between Tolstoy and Henry George, depicting their mutual respect and the influence they had on each other even though they never met.

Another strength of the book is that it is written in a clear and very engaging style. Redfearn avoids technical jargon and makes Tolstoy's complex ideas accessible to a general audience. He also includes personal anecdotes and insights, which help to bring Tolstoy to life.

An example is a description Redfearn gives of a couch in his study that was known as the 'eight-legged couch.' It was a large, comfortable couch, obviously with eight legs. It was Tolstoy's favourite place to sit and write. In its drawers, he kept the manuscripts he wanted to keep secret from his family. This eight-legged couch was more than just a piece of furniture; it was a symbol of his creativity and his commitment to his work. He spent many hours sitting on the couch, thinking about his writing and working on his novels. This was the couch on which he was born on 28th August 1828 and also many of his children.

Tolstoy's eight-legged couch was a place where he met with friends and visitors. He would often sit on the couch and talk for hours about his ideas and his work. The eight-legged couch was a central part of Tolstoy's life, and it played an important role in his writing. It was a place where he could be creative, think about his work, and meet with the people he loved. The eight-legged couch is still preserved at Tolstoy's estate in Yasnaya Polyana, Russia. It is a reminder of the great writer and the life he lived.

The very entertaining first chapter mentions Tolstoy's wild youth, his gambling debts, and his sets of tools which testified to his devotion to manual labour. Redfearn also mentions the letters to his wife which were only to be handed to her after his death! So many examples that Redfearn details make his book such an engaging read. Tolstoy becomes a real person.

Redfearn highlights much of Tolstoy's connection with Henry George and his ideas. He shows how a prominent thinker like Tolstoy living at the same time as George perceived his works. Also, how George was equally impressed by Tolstoy.

Tolstoy was first introduced to George's work in the late 1880s, and he quickly became a devoted admirer. He wrote that George's book *Progress and Poverty* was 'one of the most important books ever written' and that it had 'a profound influence' on his own thinking. Tolstoy agreed with George that private ownership of land was the root cause of poverty and inequality. He argued that land is a common heritage that belongs to all people and that no one has the right to monopolize it for their own private gain.

Tolstoy also agreed with George's proposal for a single tax on land. He believed that this tax would be the most efficient and equitable way to raise revenue for the government and that it would also help discourage land speculation and promote the more equitable distribution of land.

Tolstoy's writings on land reform had a significant impact on the Georgist movement in Russia. His influence can be seen in the work of many Russian Georgists, including the writer and activist Vladimir Chertkov. George was also very impressed with Tolstoy's work. He wrote that Tolstoy was 'one of the greatest men of the age' and that his writings were 'a powerful force for good in the world.'

HGF BRIEFING NOTES

George and Tolstoy never met in person, but they corresponded with each other on several occasions. In their letters, they discussed their shared ideas on land reform, social justice, and the meaning of life. Here are some examples of how Tolstoy incorporated Georgism into his literary work:

- In his novel *Resurrection*, the character Prince Nekhlyudov comes to believe that the only way to solve the problem of poverty is to implement a single tax on land.
- In his essay 'The Land Question', Tolstoy argues that private ownership of land is the root cause of all social problems, including war, crime, and poverty.
- In his book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, Tolstoy argues that Christians have a moral obligation to work for the abolition of private property in land.

In October 1910 on his last railway journey, Tolstoy occupied his time talking to fellow passengers about Henry George and the single tax.

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy died in 1910 age 82. Henry George Died in 1897 age 58. The deaths of Tolstoy and George were a great loss to the world of thought. They were both brilliant thinkers who made significant contributions to our understanding of society and the economy. Their ideas continue to be relevant today, and their work continues to inspire people around the world.

David Redfearn (1947-2013) was a scholar of Russian literature and thought and a leading expert on the work of Leo Tolstoy. He was appointed to the Chair of Russian Literature and Intellectual History at Oxford in 1997. Here are some of the positive reviews of the book:

Redfearn's book is a clear, concise, and well-written overview of Tolstoy's life and work. It is an excellent introduction to Tolstoy for those who are not familiar with him, and it will also be of interest to those who are already familiar with his work but want to learn more about his life and the ideas that shaped his thinking. ('The Slavonic and East European Review')

Redfearn's book is a valuable contribution to the Tolstoy scholarship. It is a well-researched and well-written book that provides a comprehensive overview of Tolstoy's life and work. Redfearn's analysis of Tolstoy's ideas is insightful and thought-provoking. ('The Russian Review')

Tolstoy: Principles for a New World Order is an excellent introduction to the life and work of one of the greatest writers of all time. It is a book that will be of interest to anyone drawn to Russian literature, philosophy, or social justice and, in particular, the connection with Henry George. 📖



FRIDAY MEETINGS

In the autumn nothing can really be compared to sitting at home relaxing with an interesting book. But it is also an option to add a social element to your reading by attending our Friday Meetings. These Friday study groups at Mandeville Place continue to play an important role in the activities surrounding the Henry George Foundation.

At the moment The Afternoon Study Group is led by Bart Dunlea, and it keeps its usual timeslot from 2:30 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Currently, the subject being covered is *The Science of Political Economy* by Henry George. The book has a very rich ethical and social focus throughout. In addition this central piece of work was the last book written by George, who died before the book was completed. The original publication was finished by George's son from notes before being published in 1898.

Go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83880666680>

Meeting ID: 838 8066 6680
Passcode: 544247

The Evening Study Group also remains in its usual timeslot from 6:45 P.M. to 8:15 P.M. The evening sessions are currently led by David Triggs.

Among other interesting subjects Triggs will review his experience at the Labour Party Conference, where he was promoting LVT as a representative of the Coalition for Economic Justice.

Go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87944408537>

Meeting ID: 879 4440 8537
Passcode: 603155

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