

Henry George's Ideas in World Politics

By VIGGO STARCKE

VOLTAIRE, in satirical mood, said about foreign affairs: "In olden days—when people still had grand manners—the lion, together with three other animals had to divide a booty. As a magnanimous and righteous being the lion divided the booty into four equal parts, whereupon, for reasons which he promised to explain at the proper time and on another occasion, he seized the three parts at the same time threatening to strangle anybody who dared to touch the last part." And that, added Voltaire, is precisely the acme of foreign politics.

Today foreign policy has become too serious a matter for banter. It is of greater importance than domestic policy because freedom from foreign domination is a condition for gaining freedom within the country. The tension between East and West spells danger for mankind, for peace and freedom, more so than at any time in the past.

Wars are more dangerous than epidemics but like these they have their causes. If we can discover their causes and prevail upon mankind to remove them, we shall be able to attain results in the field of politics as outstanding as have been attained in the field of epidemiology and surgery.

Nature is harsh, to be sure, and men are not all equally good, but the fundamental causes are to be found elsewhere; and we are in the fortunate position that these are revealed to us, if we will but read the peace treaties. There you will find what really was behind the waging of war, namely, what the vanquished had to concede to the victor. It was almost always land and trading interests, land with coal, oil and metals, trading interests by way of privileges to be gained, or customs barriers to be removed.

It is in the solution of the land problem and in the liberation of trade, therefore, that we must seek the possibility of removing the worst causes of war. That is why Henry George stands today in the very center of the problems of world politics.

Towards the East is Soviet Russia as a massive block. In the course of a few years, since the last war, Russia and Communism have subdued twelve European states, not to speak of what has happened in Asia.

What is left of Europe, divided by tariff walls and ridden by restrictions, forms but a narrow fringe on the Eurasian continent controlled by Russia. The arguments brought forward to excuse Russia's conquest of the Baltic coastline can again be used with advantage for an occupation of the rest of Europe.

People are not happy, be it towards the East or the West. In neither sphere has freedom been fully realized or justice carried through.

We love peace and we want peace. But apart from the western Communists and defense nihilists, who prefer peace to freedom, the western world has firmly resolved to prefer freedom to peace.

Henry George says about the spirit of freedom: "It has toppled thrones and cast down



hierarchies. It has strengthened the Scottish Covenanter in the hour of trial, and the Puritan amid the snows of a strange land. It charged with the Ironsides at Naseby; it stood behind the low redoubt on Bunker Hill."

Towards the West people have tasted so much of freedom that they know how to appreciate it. They have experienced freedom in the spiritual field and in the intellectual field, even if they have not so far experienced freedom in the economic field, or justice in the social field.

Freedom is a remarkable thing. It released creative forces so that man's intellect blossomed and gave us the modern science that taught us to understand Nature, and the modern technique that enables us to control her.

Behind progress trailed a long dark shadow of poverty, housing shortage and unemployment. Hungry and shivering people had to go empty handed past shops with food and clothes which they could not afford to buy.

Among the poor classes the resentment at injustice was growing. Among the proletariat the hatred of wealth reared its head. The poor felt that some hidden injustice was the cause of their misfortune. But anger and hatred are blind. People did not see that there is a fundamental difference between wealth accumulated by transposing valuable property from other people's pockets into your own, and wealth accumulated by making valuable property with your own ability. The former makes the community poorer, the latter makes the community richer.

The masses of the proletariat thus become easy prey to a propaganda that called more upon human envy than upon divine anger. The campaign against injustice that should have been a campaign against poverty, turned into a campaign against wealth.

Karl Marx saw it without understanding the importance of what he saw. He believed that both land and machines were capital, because

both of them took part in the process of production.

Houses, machines and tools have all been made by men. They are capital, but they wear out and come to an end. Moth and rust corrupt them. But we can build new houses and construct better machines, if we have access to land and the riches it supplies.

Land, however, has not been made by human work. Furthermore, it is everlasting. Access to land is the condition of all labor and all capital. Karl Marx himself made this significant admission: "Land monopoly is the basis of capitalist monopoly." If, therefore, Karl Marx had been as logical and as dialectical as he is passed off to be by the Communists, he would have directed his campaign against the monopoly of land thereby to destroy the foundation of capital monopoly. His failure to do so delayed the liberation of labor for a hundred years. The young Karl Marx became the father of communism, which today threatens world peace. The old Karl Marx became the father of social democracy, which is but a frail bulwark against communism, both building upon the same fundamental misapprehension.

In all Socialist dominated countries there has been resort to restrictions and economic planning instead of solving the land problem. This has brought Europe to the brink of bankruptcy.

It was Henry George who saw the fundamental significance of the land question. He it was who pointed out its rational and just solution. Therefore he stands at the gates which give approach to one of the most important problems in world politics.

The solution is a simple one: The things you have made by your work are yours. The things I have made by my work are mine. But the things that neither you nor I nor any human being have made, they shall belong to us all.

Free trade is the original state of affairs. Tariffs and restrictions are later abnormities. They are responsible for many wars. They keep the western world disunited in spite of the military cooperation.

Independence for a nation is a condition for liberation of the people.

We who have lived through the first World War remember how near the absolutist empires came to over-running Europe. Only the cooperation successfully established by the democracies during the war, and the entry of America later on, prevented the destruction of the democracies.

We who now live through the third World War, at the stage where it is still cold, have it in our power to prevent it breaking into flames. Today the cooperation has been established. Today America is with us *beforehand*.

Had the Emperor and the dictators been thus forewarned, the first and second World War might have been averted. It may be significant that the dictators of our time know where the democracies stand.

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It is not true that N.A.T.O. increases the danger and risk of war in the world. It is the other way round. Danger and risk of war are imminent. The Eastern block was a menacing reality. Therefore N.A.T.O. came into being. As Burke said: "When bad men combine, the good must associate."

It was Alexander Hamilton who pointed out: "As too much power leads to despotism too little leads to anarchy, and both eventually to the ruin of the people."

Let us then treat men with justice! Henry George has shown us how.

In all countries, where people live in oppression and possesses neither land nor freedom, there they will prefer communism to capitalistic democracy, seeing that capitalism only offers them freedom without land, whereas communism offers them land without freedom.

The day we offer the people both land and freedom that will be the day when justice has won and communism has lost.

(Address at the Public Demonstration, Folk High School, Odense, August 3, 1952).