

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HENRY GEORGE'S  
IDEAS IN WORLD POLITICS

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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 politics 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.

Some people think that war is part of the natural order of things. Many people believe that war is due to the wickedness of man. Others that it is due to the folly of man. ~~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 is 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 centre of the problem of world-politics.

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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 12 European states, not to speak of what has happened in Asia. Russia is a continental power, geopolitically favourably situated, able from a central position to threaten aggression in several directions. Much honour is due to Russia for the fact that she has never attempted to acquire overseas colonies. Less honour is due to Russia for the fact that she has preferred instead a progressive widening of her territory, which is a more dangerous form of imperialism.

From Nature's hand Russia has been given almost everything that the wealth of the land can yield. But the sea is her weak point. Apart from the ice-bound coast of the Arctic Ocean she has but spare access to the sea. Towards the East she has access to the Sea of Japan at Vladivostock. Towards the South she must pass the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles to gain access to the Mediterranean. Towards the West the control of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and East Germany has given her access to the Baltic. To gain access to the North Sea and the Oceans she must pass through the Danish Sound and Belts.

Towards the west are the western democracies. After the east block had turned out to be an aggressive reality, the democracies became united, three years ago, in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Most of them are naval powers. They are linked together by seas and oceans. Transport by sea is cheaper than transport by land. On the other hand, sea-routes are more vulnerable to the attacks of submarines. The western powers have in the course of time founded overseas colonies. Western imperialism has had an oceano-political background.

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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.

The possession of Turkey and Greece will give access to the Mediterranean. The possession of Denmark will give access to the North Sea. The possession of the Low Countries and France will give access to the Atlantic Ocean. Russia opposed, in the last years of the war, dictatorship in Germany. She is herself in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Russia opposes private capitalism. She is herself in favour of state capitalism. Russia opposes private monopolism. She is herself in favour of state monopolism.

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People are not happy, be it towards the East or the West. In neither sphere has freedom been fully realised or justice carried through. We love peace and we want peace. But apart from the western Communists and defence 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 Covenanters 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.

Progress and invention followed and the goods poured forth. But wealth was accumulated in comparatively few hands, where a few people were able to make princely incomes for themselves and to accumulate princely fortunes. Behind progress trailed a long dark shadow of poverty, housing shortage, and unemployment. Hungry and shivering people have 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 there was some hidden injustice as 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 and 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.

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When Karl Marx came to England 100 years ago, he saw in the industrial areas the young capitalism with factories and machines. In the slums he saw the dreadful conditions in which the proletariat lived. Logically and dialectically he connected the two and said: It is capital that is the cause of the proletariat. Proletarians in all

countries unite! Karl Marx did not see that his presuppositions were wrong. He did not know that the proletarians, poverty, and unemployment had existed for centuries, before the machines, before the factories, before capitalism came into being. Therefore capitalism and the machines could not be the causes of poverty and unemployment. The cause must be sought elsewhere. It is to be found in the fact that in Great Britain a very small part of the people owns an overwhelmingly great part of the land. As in Great Britain, so it is in nearly all countries. It is a universal feature. It is a fundamental problem. 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 labour 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 labour for 100 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.

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In the capitalistic world a man might possess both land that he had not made, and capital and goods that he had made by his own work. The state only possessed what it could take by force through arbitrary taxation. In the Communistic world the state owns everything. It owns the things that no man has made; the land, the soil, and the metals. It also owns the things that are made by men; the houses they have built, the corn they have grown, the machines they have constructed, the goods they have produced. The state ordains, and freedom is dead.

Science and technique developed in the west under freedom. None of this was made by Communism. If the Iron Curtain had been lowered immediately after the Communist revolution of 1917 so that science and technique could not have entered, then the large, amiable Russian people could have been dead today from starvation, and Communism.

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 questions in world politics.

The solution is a simple one: The things you have made by your own 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.

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

The fundamental economic interests of a people in trade lies in importation of the goods they want, and not in the exportation of the goods they have. Tariffs and restrictions are often directed against the populations of other countries, but they are always directed against the home population of a country. They are measures that go against the interests of the nation - they are actions involving a breach of neutrality.

When representatives of the first 13 United States met to frame the Constitution in

1787, one of the difficulties was to make the single states give up some of the sovereign freedom they had enjoyed of annoying the other states with tariffs. New York State, for instance, has very high tariff barriers against the other American States, and New York was reluctant to forego the possibility of plucking Connecticut and New Jersey. But George Washington and Alexander Hamilton succeeded in uniting the states so that the United States today consist of 48 states with complete free trade one with the other. This is the mainstay of American strength. The broad-minded commercial policy that America has since followed internally has not yet been applied externally. In my opinion it is just a question of time, for America cannot in the long run conduct a military policy in favour of N.A.T.O., and at the same time conduct a commercial policy opposed to N.A.T.O.

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In the Atlantic Charter, which was ratified by the western democracies, and later on by Russia, we read:

"They will endeavour, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world, which are needed for their economic prosperity".

In Article 4 of the Marshall Organisation Paris Convention of 16th April 1948, (O.E.E.C.) it is declared:

"The contracting Parties will develop, in mutual co-operation, the maximum possible interexchange of goods and services. To this end they will continue the efforts already initiated to achieve as soon as possible a multilateral system of payments among themselves, and will co-operate in relaxing restrictions on trade and payments between one another, with the object of abolishing as soon as possible those restrictions which at present hamper such trade and payments".

In the North-Atlantic Treaty (N.A.T.O.) article 2 says:

"They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any of them".

In the Statutes of the Council of Europe it is stated (article 1):

"The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its Members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress. This aim shall be pursued through the organs of the Council by discussion of questions of common concern and by agreements and common action in economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative matters and in the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

The legal foundation of a liberation of trade and a solution of the land problem has thus been laid down by Treaty, but has not yet found its way into practical politics.

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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 co-operation 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 co-operation has been established before-hand. Today America is with us before-hand.

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.

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".

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Power is strength but it is a strength without  
 prefix or suffix. It is neither good nor bad.  
 Put power behind wrong, and you get injustice!  
 Put power behind right, and you get justice!

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".

General Eisenhower says in his book - "Crusade in Europe":

"Military preparedness alone is an inadequate answer to the problem. Communism  
 inspires and enables its militant preachers to exploit injustices and inequity among  
 men.

"Wherever popular discontent is founded on group oppression or mass poverty or  
 the hunger of children, there Communism may stage an offensive that arms cannot  
 counter. Discontent can be fanned into revolution, and revolution into social  
 chaos. The sequel is dictatorial rule. Against such tactics exclusive reliance on  
 military might is vain.

"The areas in which freedom flourishes will continue to shrink unless the  
 supporters of democracy match Communist fanaticism with clear and common understand-  
 ing that the freedom of men is at stake; meet Communist-regimented unity with the  
 voluntary unity of common purpose, even though this may mean a sacrifice of some  
 measure of nationalistic pretensions; and, above all, annul Communist appeals to  
 the hungry, the poor, the prosecuted for the elimination of social and economic  
 evils that set men against men".

Military preparedness alone is inadequate, says Eisenhower. Communism inspires and  
 enables its militant preachers to exploit injustice and inequity among men. Let us then  
 treat men with justice! Henry George has shown us how!

In all countries, where people live in oppression and possess neither land nor  
 freedom, there they will prefer Communism to capitalistic democracy, seeing that Cap-  
 italism only offers them freedom without land, whereas Communism offers them land  
 without freedom. The day we offer the people both land and freedom, that is the day  
 when justice has won and Communism lost.

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