

Two Spanish Forerunners

by OLE WANG

NOW that the teaching of Henry George is gaining ground in Latin-American countries it may be fitting to mention a couple of Spanish authors who, in times past, have advocated the same ideas.

First there was the political economist Alvaro Florez-Estrada (1766-1853) who twice had to flee his native country and go to England to escape from the tyrant Fernando VII. Before that he had been foremost in the resistance to Napoleon's invasion of Spain. While in England he became acquainted with the words of Adam Smith, Malthus, Ricardo and others, and in his work *Tratado de Economia Politica* (London, 1828) he preceded John Stuart Mill and others by half a century, but presented ideas similar to theirs in proposing taxation of the "net product," a tax which was to fall entirely on the proprietors of the soil. But before this there had been the French Physiocrats to whom Henry George paid due recognition.

Another forerunner of Henry George is of still earlier date. In Gerald Brenan's very informative book *The Spanish Labyrinth* (Cambridge University Press, 1950) there is a quotation from

a Spanish ecclesiastic of the 16th century, Father Juan de Mariana, who in his *De Rege et Regis Institutione*, says:

"It is a duty of humanity for us to open to all men the riches which God gave in common to all, since to all he gave the earth as patrimony, so that all without distinction might live by its fruits.

Only unbridled greed could claim for itself this gift of heaven, appropriating as its own the foods and riches which were intended to be the property of all . . . God wishes then, and it is laid down by his laws, that now that human nature, corrupted as it is, has proceeded to a partition of common goods, they should not be monopolized by a few, and that a part should always be set aside for the consolation of the people's infirmities . . . In a Republic in which some are over-stuffed with riches and others lack the very necessities, neither peace nor happiness is possible."

No doubt one could find in the various nations who took over the heritage of Spain in the New World, representatives of similar thoughts—just as one finds them in all other countries, among all races and in all epochs.

An American aerospace worker is said to have scratched his name secretly on a part of a rocket, and when it arrived at the moon he claimed partial ownership of the moon in accordance with old Roman law. He would most likely be told in any court that he had already received his reward in wages for his work—but where does that leave the private ownership of the moon? Does anybody remember that only the Creator of the moon owns it? No human being is able to claim that he produced the moon, or the earth either, for that matter—therefore no one can justly say part of one or the other is his private property. "The earth is mine," is a word out of ancient scripture which reminds us that we cannot own a world we never made, but only those things which we produce through our own effort. —From *Vaterland*, translated by Ilse Harder

Georgists are not taking off for the moon this year but will go to Montreal for the annual conference, July 26 to 30, and for Expo 67. The March HGN will give details about facilities available at College de Brebeuf. Meanwhile, decide now to get your name on the list. Write to Henry George School, 4278 Dorchester St. W., Montreal 6, Que. Can.