

Can We Escape Communism?

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE of the fact that we are now allied with Soviet Russia? What if we win—as we expect to do and are determined to do? If we do win, there can be no doubt that our victory will have been due largely to the military successes of the great Russian army.

Americans pretty generally realize this, and since we, like other peoples, are affected in our thinking by our emotions, there is almost certain to be an increasingly receptive attitude towards communistic arguments. Who, therefore, can feel at all certain that in some imminent future we shall not ourselves be far more regimented than now, and much nearer to communism or socialism?

The arguments against socialism and communism of the garden variety of apologist for capitalism are none too convincing. Such conservative defenders of capitalism weaken their case by giving at least tacit, and often truculent, support to all elements in the present economic setup, good and bad alike.

Thus, they fail to distinguish income earned by productive labor from income received by land-owners for *permitting* men to work and live on the earth in those locations where work is reasonably productive and life relatively enjoyable. In particular, they fail to distinguish between capital—the buildings, orchards, vehicles and machinery of industry, which can be brought into existence only by work and saving—and, on the other hand, sites and natural resources.

Defense of the capitalistic system commonly runs in terms of its rewards to effort and efficiency. Those who produce most, those who strive to acquire skill, those who by their thrift add to the available amount of serviceable capital, those whose efficiency enables them to offer the public the best goods at the lowest prices, are rewarded; such is the contention.

But capitalism contains within it elements inconsistent with this defense, and the most fundamental of these inconsistencies is the private enjoyment of the royalties and rents of natural resources and community-produced situation advantages.

Readers of *The Freeman* understand how, through a modification of our system of taxation, this fundamental inconsistency of capitalism can be removed and capitalism made to conform much more nearly with the ideas on the basis of which it is defended. But about this, apparently, few or

none of its conservative defenders either know or care.

What if the refusal of these defenders of capitalism to take any interest in reforming it in those respects which are most imperative for its proper operation should result in its being gradually discredited among the masses? What if then the growing prestige of our brave and presently successful Russian allies—a prestige in which the Russian economic system inevitably shares—should really lead to a progressive admiration and an eventual adoption of this system? Such a denouement does not seem to be beyond the bounds of possibility.

Perhaps, indeed, only a growing general comprehension of Henry George's philosophy of a free economic system and a free earth can prevent it. Will our conservative "defenders" of capitalism nevertheless continue their indifference or opposition to this philosophy until capitalism has altogether vanished from among us and a completely regimented economy has taken its place?

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HOME WORK [UNDER DIFFICULTIES, WE'LL ADMIT]

