

HENRY GEORGE ON TWO CONTINENTS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE DIFFUSION OF IDEAS

The impact of Henry George's land value taxation theory was nothing less than global in scope, and his epochal *Progress and Poverty* – first published in 1879 – gained wider fame than any other political or socio-economic treatise emanating from an American pen. While George's doctrine was essentially a product of his experience in California during the land-grabbing 60's and 70's, the most pervasive influence of the San Francisco sage was not manifested at home, but in Europe, Australasia and other distant places.

It is with some aspects of this remarkable diffusion of Georgeism during the latter part of the 19th century that this study is concerned. In particular, we would like to examine the circumstances under which this ideological stimulus was transmitted and received in such divergent settings as England, China and Japan. First we will trace the history of the Georgeist influence in each of these countries and then compare their respective patterns of development.

I. ENGLAND

In the fall of 1882 the struggling young writer, George Bernard Shaw, was strolling along a London street one evening when he happened to wander into Memorial Hall while a meeting was in progress. Writing about this event twenty-two years later, Shaw recalled that he knew at once that the speaker had to be an American for four reasons:

Because he pronounced "necessarily" with the accent on the third syllable instead of the first; because he was deliberately and intentionally oratorical, which is not customary among shy people like the English; because he spoke of Liberty, Justice, Truth, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth-century superstitions; and because he explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of the Creator who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of there since... Now at that time I was a young man not much past twenty-five, of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, full of Darwin and Tyndall, of Shelley and DeQuincey, of Michael Angelo and Beethoven, and never in my life studied social questions from the economic point of view, except that once in my boyhood read a pamphlet by John Stuart Mill on the Irish Land Question. The result of my hearing that speech and buying from one of the stewards at the meeting a copy of "Progress and Poverty" for sixpence (Heaven only knows where I got the sixpence!) was that I plunged into a course of economic study, and at a very early stage of

it became a Socialist and spoke from that very platform on the same great subject, and from hundreds of others as well... And that all the work was not mere gas, let the feats and pamphlets of the Fabian Society attest. When I was thus swept into the great Socialist revival of 1883, I found that five-sixths of those who were swept in with me had been converted by Henry George.¹

Shaw's reaction to Henry George's first public address in England was typical of the catalytic effect of the American's personality upon an England that was ripe for land reform. In this section we will try to evaluate George's role in this stage of British Socialist development by first sketching briefly the earlier growth of British social and economic thought which either provided ethical justification for, or pointed towards George's program of socializing economic rent, and which in at least one case anticipated almost the exact language of the San Francisco Sage; and then to discuss the nature of his association with British Socialists – the forces which attracted them as well as those which led to their divorcement.

Once, in addressing some thousands of unemployed Londoners gathered around the Royal Exchange (the Lord Mayor had denied them the use of Guildhall) George began by calling attention to the inscription carved in the granite of the Exchange, "The Earth is the Lord's", and added, "Aye, the landlords'."² If British audiences were easily sparked by this kind of oratory it was not only because 19th-century England was suffering from an unequal distribution of property more than almost any other country in Europe, but because English tradition had long nursed the concept that the right to own land was bestowed equally by God upon all the children of men.³

Locke, for example, in his chapter on property in *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* stated that "it is very clear that God, as King David says (Psal. cxv. 16), 'has given the earth to the children of men', given it to mankind in common".⁴ But Locke was not attacking private ownership of land; on the contrary he justified private ownership on the grounds that it is man's labor, his cultivation of the soil which gives him the right of ownership:

God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it to them for their benefit and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational – and labour was to be his title to it – not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.⁵

¹ From a letter to Hamlin Garland in 1904. Excerpts quoted from Charles A. Barker, *Henry George* (New York, 1955), pp. 375–76.

² Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

³ "The idea of a natural right to the land and of a common interest in it is the instinctive possession of every nation. But in England the feeling seems more general than elsewhere, because, possibly, of the number of large proprietors and of the serious abuses to which the system has given rise." Charles Gide and Charles Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines* (London, 1932), p. 559.

⁴ Thomas Cook (editor) (New York, 1947), p. 13

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

While Locke's doctrine provided a useful justification of private property, by implication it provided a basis for land reform as well, since it emphasized the actual use of the land for social benefit, and Locke's statement that "the measure of property, nature has well set by the extent of men's labour and the conveniences of life" could be utilized to the advantage of those protesting against the abnormally large holdings of gentry who did not make full use of the soil.

By the end of the 18th century much stronger assertions were forthcoming. In 1775 Thomas Spence like Locke felt that "in the state of nature the earth and the fulness thereof were common", but denied Locke's thesis that labor exerted upon land bestowed permanent title to property. The labor argument was valid with regard to manufactured goods but who could "seriously argue that the earth was manufactured by the aristocracy"? Spence's solution was that the parishes should seize the land and let it to the farmers at a moderate rental.⁶

A more scholarly approach, likewise based upon natural rights, was evolved by Professor William Ogilvie in 1781. Ogilvie asserted that "the earth having been given to mankind in common occupancy, each individual seems to have by nature a right to possess and cultivate an equal share".⁷ Like Locke he believed that "all property should be the reward of industry", and his solution was almost exactly that formulated by Henry George a century later, namely, the taxing of the entire value of the soil (minus improvements) and thereby restoring ownership to the community. Ogilvie's essay did not receive wide notice but was reprinted by the Chartists in 1838.

The closest anticipation of George's solution was that of Patrick Edward Dove in 1850. Starting with the premise that the Creator provided the earth for the benefit of all men, Dove showed that "the actual division of the soil need never be anticipated. . . . how can the division of the advantages of the natural earth be effected?" His answer is precisely that of Henry George: "By the division of its annual value or rent; that is by making the rent of the soil the common property of the nation."⁸ Although praised by Carlyle and others when it first appeared, Dove's work was practically unknown until 1889 when the accusation was made that Henry George had plagiarized from it, an accusation that was never substantiated. In fact when George wrote *Progress and Poverty* in 1879 the only land reformer with whose work he was acquainted was Herbert Spencer.

Although Spencer later repudiated his early views on land, they are pertinent here because of their influence on George. In his *Social Statics* (1850) Spencer, using the arguments of natural rights and individualism, stated that "each man

⁶ M. Beer, *A History of British Socialism* (New York, 1948), pp. 106-107.

⁷ George R. Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York, 1933), p. 185. We have leaned heavily upon this scholarly exposition of George's philosophy. It is especially helpful in comparing George's ideas with those of earlier reformers and economists.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

is free to use the earth for the satisfaction of his wants, provided he allows all others the same liberty. And conversely, it is manifest that no one, or part of them, may use the earth in such a way as to prevent the rest from similarly using it... Equity, therefore, does not permit property in land." While agreeing with Locke that the only justification for landed property would be that of labor, contrary to Locke he believed that historically, ownership was acquired by force, and not consent. His solution is that "instead of being in the possession of individuals, the country would be held by that great corporate body - society. Instead of leasing his acres from an isolated proprietor, the farmer would lease them from the nation. Instead of paying his rent to the agent of Sir John or his Grace, he would pay it to an agent of the community..."⁹

Although he attacked socialism and communism as paternalistic fallacies in this same work, Spencer at this time considered the freedom to use the land as a necessary condition for giving free-play to individualism, a theme which was soon echoed by English liberalism.

Ricardo, in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1817) showed that differential rent is not a natural quality of land (taking the example of a new colony where there is more land than is demanded) but that rent appears only "when the progress of population calls into cultivation land of an inferior quality or less advantageously situated. Rent then is not an indication of nature's generosity, but the result of the pressure of population." Ricardo's definition of rent is that it is the "difference between the produce obtained by equal portions of labour and capital employed on land of the same or different qualities".¹⁰

When we come to John Stuart Mill we have the synthesis of the laws of nature and the rights of man as expounded by Locke, Spence, Ogilvie and Paine, with the law of rent as formulated by Ricardo. Mill's arguments, which are outlined in his *Principles of Political Economy* (Book V, chapter 2) gave rise to the Land "Tenure Reform Association" in 1870, and whose program "claimed for the benefit of the State, the Interception by Taxation of the Future Unearned Increase of the Rent of the Land (so far as the same can be ascertained), or a great part of that increase, which is continually taking place, without any effort or outlay by the proprietors, merely through the growth of population and wealth, reserving to the owners the option of relinquishing their property to the State at the market value which it may have acquired at the time when this principle may be adopted by the Legislature."¹¹ The term "unearned increment" to designate that value of the land which was a result, not of the owner's improvements, but the growth of society, was popularized by Mill.

By this time it was not only long-haired agitators who were inveighing against the British land tenure system, but respectable Liberals like John Morley and Cliff Leslie who joined Mill's reform association. In 1873 Mill could say that

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-291.

¹⁰ Gide and Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 553.

¹¹ *Dissertations and Discussions*, V (New York, 1874), p. 225.

"it is no longer necessary to begin at the very beginning to show how there comes to be a land question, and what the question is. The newspapers and the speeches of members of Parliament and others are full of it; friends and enemies alike have helped to bring it into notice; and now we read everywhere of Land Tenure Reform, and the unearned increment of rent."¹²

This then was the background to English thought in the latter half of the 19th century which led the way to land reform and what Shaw called the "socialist revival". Since 1848 when the Chartists (for whom the question of the common ownership of the land had taken precedence over every other consideration) had disintegrated, socialism had been in the doldrums. The efforts of Liberal Laborism, led by Gladstone, had siphoned off labor discontent from the unruly waters of class warfare. The lot of the worker was improving through peaceful parliamentary action ("Our legislators are socialists without knowing it," boasted Sidney Webb); yet the attack on the outmoded land tenure system, which had hardly changed since medieval times could still rally the forces of English reformers. Thus *Progress and Poverty* – and not Marx's *Das Kapital* – was to herald the revival of socialism.

Soon after its publication in 1879, *Progress and Poverty* was widely distributed in England. After reviewing the arguments of his predecessors, little need be added in explanation of George's analysis. His theory, based primarily upon Ricardian economics, pushed the Law of Rent to the limit. Rent was the unearned increment *par excellence*; it was the source of all evil – depriving both the capitalist of his legitimate profit and the laborer of his just return. George's solution, however, differed from that of Spencer and Mill: the latter would tax only *future* increments of land value, and if the owner were dissatisfied, the state would buy the land at the current market value, and thus provide him with decent compensation. George however, had no such inhibitions. Rent to him was not just another source of revenue – it represented society's stake in land, and the entire value of the land which resulted from the rise of population and the progress of civilization belonged to society. Socialization of rent was not just another aspect of social reform – not the Fabians' "transition to Social Democracy" – but the final and only solution, the panacea that would remove the ills from modern industrial society without in any way curbing the initiative of capitalist entrepreneurs. It was his reconciliation of individualism and socialism. In fact George never claimed to be a socialist – he never used socialist terminology and never even advocated "land nationalization" as it was commonly understood; his solution began and ended in the taxation of land values:

I do not propose to either purchase or confiscate private property in land. The first would be unjust (since the increased value was not earned by the owner) and the second, needless. Let the individuals who now hold it still retain if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. Let them continue to call it

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 269.

their land. Let them buy and sell, bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell, we take the kernel. *It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent.*

... We already take some rent in taxation. We have only to make some changes in our modes of taxation to take it all.

What I therefore propose as the simple yet sovereign remedy which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, – is to appropriate rent by taxation.¹³

We have already noted Shaw's testimony on the effect of this doctrine in England; other acknowledgments are not lacking, as for example, the following statement concerning Ramsay MacDonald:

It would probably be true to say that MacDonald had been a Socialist from the time he read George's *Progress and Poverty*. "It familiarized people with the idea of common use of property, of common creation of values, of common claims to share in aggregate wealth," he has written. "It led them to discuss the problem of poverty, not as a result of personal shortcomings, but as an aspect of a certain form of social organization." George's book, indeed, had a more dramatic effect upon British political thought than any work published during the last century. It dominated the minds of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party just as it galvanized into action those who had been groping towards a Socialist Commonwealth. It even achieved the undoubted feat of making Karl Marx a popular author, for chapters of *Das Kapital* were published and read as sequels to *Progress and Poverty*.¹⁴

And Tom Mann, who was to take a different course, and become a militant syndicalist, likewise acknowledged his debt to George:

In 1881 I read Henry George's book *Progress and Poverty*. This was a big event for me; it impressed me by far as the most valuable book I had so far read, and to my agreeable surprise at the time, it seemed to give an effective answer to Malthus. It enabled me to see more clearly the vastness of the social problem... His book was a fine stimulus to me... and giving me what I wanted – a glorious hope for the future of humanity, a firm conviction that the social problem could and would be solved.¹⁵

Even Sidney Webb, who apparently was not in need of George's stimulus acknowledges its impact:

Little as Mr. Henry George intended it, there can be no doubt that it was the enormous circulation of his *Progress and Poverty* which gave the touch which caused all the seething influences to crystallize into a popular socialist movement. The optimistic and confident tone of the book, and the irresistible force of its popularization of Ricardo's Law of Rent sounded the dominant "note" of the English socialist party of today.¹⁶

This was the role of Henry George in England: he took the economic teachings of Malthus and Ricardo – that "dismal science", as it was called by Carlyle –

¹³ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1916 ed.), pp. 401–402.

¹⁴ H. Hessel Tiltman, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (New York, 1929), p. 18.

¹⁵ From *Tom Mann's Memoirs*, quoted by Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

¹⁶ From *Socialism in England*, p. 21, quoted by Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

and deduced from it, not poverty and the pressure of population upon land, but prosperity and plenty as the logical concomitants to the march of civilization.

Although George helped revive socialism in Britain (Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1881 and the Fabian Society was founded in 1884) by emphasizing the evil of land monopoly – a social problem that was particularly acute in Britain, in Shaw's words, the British socialists soon outgrew Henry George. Mill had long before extended the concept of unearned increment to include *all* types of differential profit which were social in origin. And what was the government going to do with the huge revenue collected from land? George's answer was vague, in terms of social benefits, and services to society. But the Fabians wanted the municipalities to engage in industry – to start socializing industry and not just land. Shaw explains the Fabian position as follows:

...and here we have checkmate to mere Henry Georgeism, or State appropriation of rent without Socialism. It is easy to show that the State is entitled to the whole income of the Duke of Westminster and to argue therefrom that he should straightway be taxed twenty shillings in the pound. But in practical earnest the State has no right to take five farthings of capital from the Duke or anybody else until it is ready to invest them in productive enterprise.¹⁷

The Fabians could not stop with Georgeism because the essence of this doctrine – the taxation of land values – had overflowed the confines of socialism and rapidly spread to the camp of the Liberals. Practically everyone left of the House of Lords was clamoring for land value taxation (not all of them of course, advocating *complete* appropriation of rent, as did George), and the Fabians were moving ahead of the Liberals in preaching a broader form of Social Democracy. Shaw writes about the Liberals:

Here the moderate members are content to demand a progressive Income Tax, which is virtually Lord Hobhouse's proposal; and the extremists are all for Land Nationalisation, which is again Lord Hobhouse's principle. The cry for taxation cannot permanently be resisted. And it is worthy of remark that there is a new note in the cry. Formerly taxes were proposed with a specific object – as to pay for a war, for education, or the like. Now the proposal is to tax the landlords in order to get some of *our* money back from them – take it from them first and find a use for it afterwards. Ever since Mr. Henry George's book reached the English Radicals, there has been a growing disposition to impose a tax of twenty shillings on the pound on obviously unearned incomes: that is, to dump four hundred and fifty millions a year down on the Exchequer counter, and then retire with three cheers for the restoration of the land to the people.¹⁸

Unless social democracy were carried forward, the downfall of the landed gentry, said Shaw, would fill the streets with unemployed lacemakers, coach builders, domestic servants, etc. – who formerly catered to the aristocracy.

Shaw's essay was written in 1889, only seven years after he had been "awa-

¹⁷ G. B. Shaw, et al., *Fabian Essays* (New York, 1891), p. 233.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

kened" by Henry George. By this time, appropriation of rent was just another plank in the Fabian platform, which called for "the emancipation of industrial capital" as well. But it would be a mistake to credit George with just the introduction of a specific proposal; what George did was help inculcate a spirit, a frame of mind among the masses which made the work of gentlemen socialists like Webb much easier.

Crane Brinton has remarked that "if ideas really do influence the crowd, it is only after they have been transformed into symbols, ritual, stereotypes".¹⁹ George's influence in England during the 1880's is an outstanding example of this type of phenomenon. In the first part of this section we tried to show how the truths which George brought to Britain were not new—they were part and parcel of British liberal thought. Neither in his analysis nor in his solution did George bring radically new ideas to Britain. What he did bring however, was a dramatic portrayal of a type of injustice which he had literally seen grow overnight with his own eyes in California in the 1870's — the injustice of land speculation and land monopoly. George saw speculators grab thousands of acres in Marin county while workers in San Francisco lived huddled together in poverty. In hitting at land monopoly George was striking at an injustice that was anathema to the Manchester businessman as well as the worker in the London slums.²⁰ George did more than to popularize Ricardo and Mill; by his evangelical, crusading zeal (his five extended speaking tours in England and Ireland between 1882–1889 had almost as much to do with his influence as his writings) he dramatized the spirit of social reform, and once the wheels were set in motion, the movement he helped inaugurate left him far behind. George never captured British socialism; he merely recharged its spiritual batteries, helped it become a mass movement, and in a period of only a few years became only an historical figure associated with a particular phase of British socialist development, rather than one of its chief apostles. By 1889 when George came to England for the last time, it is significant that the majority of the "Henry George Campaign Committee" was Liberal in make-up. Fabian socialists like Webb still welcomed his presence — not as a socialist agitator, but as a wedge into the ranks of respectable Liberals and Conservatives — a missionary to the clergy — an ambassador for the spirit of social reform (specifically, land reform) rather than a teacher of socialist doctrine. Webb's letter to George, briefing him on his impending visit, is indicative of the role in which the Fabians had cast him at this period:

You will find us making progress in a direction which may generally be called socialistic, and on the land question in particular, ordinary Liberal opinion is fast ripening. The Radicals and the town wage earners generally hardly need your visit, except always by way of inspiration and encouragement. They are already pushing the party leaders as

¹⁹ *English Political Thought in the 19th Century* (London, 1933), p. 3.

²⁰ A vast amount of unimproved land, free of taxation, was tied up in Britain. One-fifth of the land within the boundaries of London county lay vacant; in Birmingham almost 25% of the land was unimproved. Similar conditions prevailed in Edinburgh, Manchester, Bradford, etc. See Yetta Scheftel, *The Taxation of Land Values* (New York, 1916), pp. 380–381.

fast as they can... What holds things back is the great class of the middle class, religious, respectable, cautious, and disliking the Radical artisan. These need your instruction most, and you are of course just the man who can give it to them, without offense or resentment. Your visit will do immense good in stirring up the *bourgeoisie* – especially among dissenting sects. Pray pay them special attention and remind all your committee to bring you into contact with all the ministers around...

I am afraid that you will be denounced by the wilder kind of Socialists. Headlam, Pease and others beside myself are doing all we can to induce them to keep *quiet*, as it would be fatal to arouse an antagonism between the radical and socialist parties...

Now I want to implore your forbearance, when you are denounced as a traitor, and what not, by Socialist newspapers; and 'heckled' by Socialist questioners, or abused by Socialist orators, it will be difficult not to denounce Socialism in turn. But do not do so. They will only be the noisy fringe of the Socialist Party who will do this, and it will be better for the cause which we both serve, if you can avoid accentuating your differences with Socialists.²¹

Thus Shaw in 1889 relegated George to a minor role in social democratic economics, while at the same time Sidney Webb found a limited use for him in consonance with Fabian strategy – a strategy of gradualism, and infiltration of specific proposals across class boundaries and culminating in parliamentary approval. This was the unhappy position Henry George found himself in at the final stage of his association with the Fabians.

What about the other branch of British Socialism – the Social Democrats of Hyndman's and Morris' persuasion? Here we find even less of an ideological convergence, and yet there was the same spiritual stimulus – especially in the case of William Morris – and the same attempt to capitalize on George's wide popular appeal. George's relationship with Hyndman – the friend of Karl Marx – is particularly illuminating:

About this time [1880–1881] Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* began to produce a great effect upon the public mind, partly in consequence of the land question in Ireland, and even in Great Britain, being more to the front than it has been before or since our day; partly because of the active manner in which it was pushed first in the *Radical* by William Webster and afterwards in the Liberal press; and partly on account of the bright journalistic merit of the book itself. Marx looked through it and spoke of it with a sort of friendly contempt: "The capitalist's last ditch", he said. This view I scarcely shared. I saw the really extraordinary gaps in the work and its egregious blunderings in economics, but I also recognized to an extent that Marx either could not or would not admit, the seductiveness for the sympathetic, half-educated mob of its brilliant high-class journalese. I understood, as I thought, that it would induce people to think about economic problems who never could have been brought to read economic books pure and simple; and although I saw quite as clearly then as I do now that taxation of land values can be no solution whatever of the social question, I felt that agitation against any form of private property was better than the stereotyped apathy which prevailed all around us...

[Hyndman took the position that] George will teach more by inculcating error than other men can impart by complete exposition of the truth, Marx would not hear of this as a sound contention. "To leave error unrefuted is to encourage intellectual immorality. For ten who go further, a hundred may very easily stop with George, and

²¹ Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 516–517.

the danger of this is too great to run." So far with Marx. Nevertheless, I still feel that George's temporary success with his agitatory fallacies greatly facilitated the promulgation of Marx's own theories in Great Britain, owing to the fact that the public mind had been stirred up to consider the social question, and political economy generally, by George's easily read book. But that George's fluent inconsequences should be uncongenial to Marx's scientific mind is not surprising. George was a boy with a bright farthing dip fooling around within the radius of a man using an electric searchlight.²²

By 1889 only the Fabians saw any value in the work of Henry George (except for the Liberals of course) – as the exponent of one particular aspect of their program. (Shaw, at this time cautioned Socialists against attacking George – otherwise the public would get the impression that the socialists were opposed to land value taxation.) Hyndman, however, debated the issue publicly with George.

In the latter part of his career, however, George seems to have despaired of his association with socialists (he called Karl Marx "the prince of the muddle-heads")²³ as he apparently felt they not only handicapped him in spreading his doctrine to wider circles, but that the Marxist socialist solution bore little resemblance to his own. American socialists, too, at first thought that he could be used to their advantage, and in 1886 the United Labor Party (including the socialists) ran George as its mayoral candidate in New York. The socialist journal *Volkszeitung* said that they supported George "not because of the single tax, but in spite of it".²⁴

By 1887 the alliance was broken, George himself precipitating the cleavage by excluding socialist delegates from the U.L.P. convention. A few months later the gulf became even greater when George defended the Supreme Court decision upholding the death sentence of the Haymarket anarchists. And in 1888 he incurred the scorn of the socialists by supporting the candidacy of Grover Cleveland.

George had never been as close to American socialists as to the British, the latter having a direct heritage from Locke through Mill, while the Americans, during the post-Civil War period, were influenced more by continental socialism.

George's break with American socialists widened the gap between him and the Hyndman-Morris Social Democrats of England, and was the reason for Webb's cautionary remarks in his letter of 1889. William Morris, who had considered *Progress and Poverty* as "gospel" now wrote: "Henry George approves of this murder [re the Haymarket anarchists]; do not let anybody waste many words to qualify this wretch's conduct. One word will include all the rest – TRAITOR!"²⁵

²² Henry Mayers Hyndman, *The Record of An Adventurous Life* (New York, 1911), pp. 257–258.

²³ Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 564.

²⁴ Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²⁵ Elwood P. Lawrence, "Uneasy Alliance: The Reception of Henry George by British Socialists in the Eighties", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, II, No. 1

First in America and then in England did George's following assume the form of middle-class businessmen rather than socialist workingmen. In the end it was the liberals – in the famous Lloyd George Budget of 1909–1910 –²⁶ who after a twenty-year struggle with the House of Lords, finally introduced land value assessments and taxation, and heavy increment duties on landed property, and thereby brought to fruition the spirit, if not the exact letter of Henry George's program.

This was a spirit, as we have tried to show, which had long been part of British tradition, and which came to bear on a social ill that was attacked simultaneously by both the Liberal middle class and the rising tide of labor.

II. JAPAN

It was precisely at the time when *Progress and Poverty* came off the press that Japan was in the throes of her monumental effort to meet the Western powers on an equal footing. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 had inaugurated a whole series of political, military and economic changes designed to cope with Japan's new national aspirations. Feudalism was shattered and in its place a highly centralized, authoritarian regime was taking shape. While remarkable in its speed and effectiveness – measured in terms of industrialization and militarization – the transition nevertheless engendered serious social and economic problems, just as similar changes had in the West. In Japan it was the peasants who suffered as a result of the government's policy of fostering industrial and military development; it was they who paid the bill in rent and taxes and it was they who sent their sons as conscripts to the new army.²⁷

While their lot had been far from idyllic in feudal Japan, the paternalism of the old system had afforded a measure of security which was absent under the new centralized bureaucracy. Probably the turning point can be dated as 1872 when the earlier ban on the alienation of land was lifted. A year later the promulgation of the Act of Land Tax Revision formalized the new position of the peasants. Formerly taxes had been based on yield and paid in kind; now land values were assessed and taxes were paid in money, while rent was still paid in kind. The ban on alienation had been lifted so that ownership could be clearly established and taxation rationalized.²⁸

The result of the new taxation policy afforded the government an assured income; it also subjected the small peasant proprietor to a terrific strain. He was now at the mercy of the rice merchant to whom he had to sell his crop in order to pay the tax. If the price of rice fell – as it usually did at harvest time –

(October, 1951), p. 69. Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity to consult Professor Lawrence's recently published book, *Henry George in the British Isles* (East Lansing, 1957).

²⁶ See Scheftel, *op. cit.*, pp. 380 ff.

²⁷ See E. H. Norman, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* (New York, 1940), for a highly perceptive account of the socio-economic background to the Early Meiji period.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 136 ff.

he lost considerably. And as for the tenant, he profited less than other classes during inflation and was hurt by deflation.²⁹

The best indication of the extent of agrarian unrest is the fact that there were 350 peasant uprisings during the first sixteen years of the Meiji era.³⁰ Tenancy, which had been estimated at 30% in 1868 was close to 40% in 1892. The decade from 1880-1890 when the new tax system was in full force, witnessed "spectacular shifts in land ownership". From 1883 to 1890, 367,744 farmers incurred foreclosures for being in arrears in tax payments.³¹

In Japan, unlike Britain during the industrial revolution, most of the dispossessed peasantry were not converted into an industrial proletariat, because the rate of industrial development did not keep pace with the rate of peasant expropriations. Instead, increasing tenancy and exorbitant rents led to atomization of holdings and the creation of a "stagnant and potential surplus population",³² which was only partially and gradually siphoned off into industry starting in 1894, when peasant expropriation was almost completed.

By a coincidence, it was at the beginning of this highly critical period for Japanese cultivators that George published his *Progress and Poverty*, and in 1881, two years after it appeared in New York, George's work (the 1880 edition) was placed on the shelves of the Tokyo Ueno library.³³ It was at this time too, that agrarian discontent was beginning to assume the nature of a political issue among Japan's fledgling parties. Within the ranks of the Jiyuto (Liberty or Liberal Party) which had been formed in 1880 by ex-samurai intellectuals, there appeared a radical element which pressed for relief of small cultivators and tenants. This Japanese Liberal Party, unlike its 19th century British counterpart, was rural rather than urban-oriented, and was built upon the highly unstable combination of large landowners, rural entrepreneurs, peasants and tenants who shared a common antipathy toward the government's paternalistic favoritism of urban-centered industry.³⁴ The Jiyuto intellectual leaders, drawing upon Western liberal thought, especially that of Rousseau, agitated for constitutional government and the extension of civil rights and equality. Although the peasants and tenants did not assume a significant role in the party's membership and leadership ranks, interest in their plight was evinced by a left-wing faction in the party's higher echelon, a tiny but volatile minority which was prepared to make political capital of agrarian discontent. But the program of this radical wing was not in consonance with the interests of the party's more powerful conservative elements. By 1884 the periodic

²⁹ See Robert A. Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Pre-war Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953), p. 310.

³⁰ Kada Tetsuji, *Ishin igo no shakai-keizai shiso gairon* (Tokyo, 1933), p. 80.

³¹ Norman, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

³³ Hatano Zendai, "Shoki ni okeru Sun Wen no p'ing chün ti ch'üan ni tsuite", *Shakaikeizai Shigaku*, XXI, No. 5-6, (May-June, 1955), p. 487.

³⁴ Norman, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

recourse to violence in the rural areas, culminating in the Chichibu Rebellion of October, 1884, led to the dissolution of the party.³⁵ After the promulgation of the constitution of 1889 the Jiyuto was reconstituted (1890) and eventually became the Seiyukai party, an acknowledged representative of landlord interests.

In the meantime, the former radical elements of the Jiyuto, led by people like Oi Kentaro, attempted to unite the rural tenants and newly forming urban labor classes into an independent left-wing movement. This party, the Toyo Jiyuto, was committed to governmental intervention in economic matters on behalf of the lower classes. It also organized the Greater Japan Labor Society, the League for Universal Suffrage and the Committee of Investigation on Tenancy Regulations.³⁶

To return to the progress of Georgeism: it was among this same left-wing ex-Jiyuto and Christian element that the vision of the prophet of San Francisco had become a topic of discussion. In 1887 the liberal journal *Kokomin no Tomo* (*Friend of the People*) published a translation of a speech by George entitled "Human Rights" in its first and third issues. In 1888 Matora Yujiro,³⁷ just returned from the United States, delivered a talk on George called "A Discussion of the Nature of Property and an Appreciation of Socialism", in which he described George and his doctrine in the following terms: "The famous Henry George of the United States is a member of the Socialist Party who advocates that all land be made common property . . . He contends that the reason for the disparity between the wealthy and the impoverished in society is that land is not commonly owned."³⁸

In a subsequent issue of *Kokumin no Tomo* an article on "Present political and social tendencies in America" referred to George's popularity, calling him the "most powerful of reformers", and predicting that he would be a "successful presidential candidate".³⁹

In 1891 excerpts from *Progress and Poverty* were translated into Japanese by Jo Sentaro under the title *Complete Abolition of Taxes, an Urgent Message for the Rescue of the World*.⁴⁰ In his preface Jo stated that Georgeism was the best solution for the land problem and poverty, and that socialism and communism "sound good to the ear" but that they required recourse to violence. In 1892, George's *Social Problems* was translated by Eguchi Sansho, and Tsunoda Koichiro translated the *Irish Land Question* under the title *The Land Question*.

That knowledge of Georgeism was not restricted to reformist-radical circles

³⁵ Scalapino, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 316 and note 34.

³⁷ Matora, an American-trained psychologist, received a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins and became acquainted with Georgeism during his stay in the United States.

³⁸ Ishikawa Kyokuzan and Kotoku Shuzui (editors), "Shakai mondai Zatsusan", *Meiji Bunka Zenshu* (Tokyo, 1929) p. 475. See also Hatano, *op. cit.*, p. 488.

³⁹ *Kokumin no Tomo*, II, No. 14 (Tokyo, 1888), pp. 106-120.

⁴⁰ Jo, a teacher by profession, was close to the Jiyuto intellectual leader Nakae Chomin. Nakae and Itagaki Taisuke, another Liberal leader wrote prefaces to this translation. See the *Nihon shakai-shugi bunken* (Tokyo, 1929), pp. 7-8.

is evidenced by the fact that an eminent right-wing liberal like Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the most serious students of Western political science during the Meiji era, would cite George to justify his opposition to a reduction in the land tax in 1892. Fukuzawa's book, *Land Tax Theory* also refers to George's doctrine.⁴¹

In 1898 Abe Iso, American-educated (Hartford Theological Seminary) and Christian, spoke on "Henry George's Socialism" at the monthly meeting of a social reform group at a Tokyo Unitarian church. Abe later wrote a book on *The Interpretation of Social Problems* (1901) in which he stated that "rent is like a parasite in the stomach . . . as long as the parasite remains, no matter how much nourishment the body is given, there will be no benefit". As long as the present system of private ownership prevails, "progress will further poverty".⁴² Abe's solution was similar to that of George: "the common ownership of land". He also explained that George's solution was not formal nationalization, but that in calling for governmental appropriation of rent he would accomplish the very same end. Abe's program differed from George's in that he proposed issuing bonds to present landowners so that they would eventually be reimbursed.⁴³

But the staunchest and most orthodox Georgeist in Japan at this time was an American missionary, the Reverend Charles E. Garst.⁴⁴ Garst, a graduate of West Point, who had abandoned an army career to become a missionary, arrived in Japan in 1883, but his conversion to Georgeism seems to have been the result of a visit back home from 1891 to 1893. It was upon his return to Japan that he became an active exponent of the single tax, so much so that he acquired the Japanese nick-name, Tanzei Taro, meaning "Son of the Single Tax". In 1893 Garst joined the "Society for the Study of Social Problems", a group which included many young Japanese social reformers and future socialists.

Garst, who spoke Japanese fluently, was able to influence intellectuals like Jo Sentaro through personal contact as well as through his writings and translations. His article, "The New Economics" appeared in the liberal journal *Rodo Sekai* (Labor World) in 1897,⁴⁵ and after his death in December, 1898, at the age of 45, his writings were translated into Japanese and published in 1899. These included the *Single Tax* and *Single Tax Economics*. *Rodo Sekai* also published several of his articles posthumously, including his study of conditions in Hokkaido, which appeared in English.

Yet, while Garst had been propagating Georgeism among Japanese leftists and Christians as well as English-speaking circles, Japanese radicals were rapidly assimilating other doctrinal varieties of social reform. By the turn of the century, due to their awareness of the potentialities of the growing industrial

⁴¹ Kada Tetsuji, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

⁴² *Meiji Bunka Zenshu*, XXI, p. 308.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 391-392.

⁴⁴ See Garst's obituary in the *Japan Weekly Mail* (Yokohama, December 31, 1898), p. 674.

⁴⁵ This article appears under the title "Tanzei Taro" in *Nihon shakai-shugi bunken*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

labor force as an army for social revolution, the intellectuals became more interested in problems of labor and industry than those of land. Thus Marxism and not Georgeism came to dominate the thinking of the Japanese left at this time. The growth of Japanese industry after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 had been accompanied by a relative increase in the urban-industrial population thus giving to Marxism more relevance and meaning. Socialism rather than Georgeism seemed to offer more promise to the intellectuals as an agitational weapon.

As in Britain, therefore, the chief influence of Georgeism was to focus attention on the progress and poverty paradox rather than provide the doctrinal core for a major reformist movement. As in Britain, too, individuals who ultimately identified themselves with other segments of the radical movement, freely acknowledged their debt to Georgeism as a stimulus to radical thinking. For example, Kotoku Denjiro, who in 1901 was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party ("Shakai Minshuto") later cited the influence of *Progress and Poverty* and *Social Problems* among the reasons for his becoming a socialist.⁴⁶ Kotoku had been to America and it was there that the Georgeist influence was exerted.

In a similar account of a conversion to socialism, Matsukawa Takenosuke also mentioned the influence of the single tax theory, in this case it being the Reverend Garst himself who provided the initial stimulus.⁴⁷

Likewise Nokami Keinosuke told how his first interest in socialism had been generated in America in 1897 when he learned of the single tax theory through a fellow student, Miyazaki Tamizo, who was destined to remain one of the few radicals who persisted in sounding a Georgeist theme in spite of the clarion call of militant Marxism.⁴⁸

In 1903 *Progress and Poverty* was still listed among the recommended sources for the study of social problems compiled by the radical journal *Heimin Shimbun*, but its role was clearly secondary; it was held to be an old left-wing classic rather than the living truth.⁴⁹

Yet one prominent radical, Miyazaki Tamizo, continued to stress the Georgeist theme of "common property in land" rather than Marxist socialism as the solution to Japan's social ills. Impressed with the single tax doctrine during his stay in America around 1897, he rejected Marxism as an infringement upon individual rights, and like George contended that man should possess the right of ownership of the things which he produced. But land, he felt, was endowed by Heaven, and should be possessed equally.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Heimin Shimbun*, No. 10 (1904). Reprinted in *Heimin Shimbun*, I, No. 10 (Tokyo, 1953), p. 219.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, III, No. 44, p. 273.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, No. 4, p. 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, No. 3, p. 59.

⁵⁰ *Nihon shakai-shugi bunken*, *op. cit.*, p. 61; and Nakamura Yoshisaburo, "Jyuminken undo no hatten", *Shakaikagaku tokyu*, I, No. 1 (Tokyo, 1956), pp. 197-198.

Yet while his diagnosis of social problems stemmed from George, and while he shared George's "common property" solution, he rejected George's methodological device. Instead of a single tax on land values he proposed actual land redistribution, with present owners to be reimbursed for any value of the land resulting from their own labor. Miyazaki's arguments appeared in his book, *Equal Ownership of Land*, published in 1906. He also founded and led the "Society for the Restoration of Land Rights" which was the nearest thing to a Henry George party in Japan. Other land reformers like Nishikawa Kojiro⁵¹ also made use of George's arguments as well as those of Alfred Russell Wallace, but the more rapid development of socialism and anarchism as focal points for left-wing dissidence left Georgeism far behind. In the *Single Tax Year Book* of 1917 Garst's brother-in-law and fellow missionary, Dr. Macklin of China, reported that while his own endeavors on behalf of Georgeism were not being entirely unrewarded, "there is at present no visible sign in Japan that her feet are set in the right direction".⁵²

To sum up: Georgeism appeared on the Japanese scene coincident with the rise of an incipient protest movement in the wake of the transition to industrialism. As in England, its role was to dramatize the social inequality concomitant to the industrialization process, and for a few intellectuals who formed the leadership cluster of Japanese radicalism, Georgeism proved an effective spark and stimulus to action.⁵³ On the other hand, its programmatic substance was of negligible effect.

But England was the very fountainhead of the doctrine which taught the socialization of rent, and the introduction of Georgeism did not represent the diffusion of a new idea as much as convergence with an indigenous if dormant ideological development. At the same time, the nature of the land problem in Britain was highly dissimilar to that of Japan. In the former, the evils engendered by the vast holdings of absentee owners, especially in Ireland and Scotland, could conceivably be mitigated by the application of the land value taxation principle, while in Japan minute parcelization of holdings and the extreme pressure of population upon land called for a more direct solution.

Most important of all, in Japan would-be reformers lacked access to the democratic instrumentality which alone could give legislative sanction to a peaceful social reform doctrine of the Georgeist order. Denied an opportunity to further reformism through legislative means, Japanese radicals became increasingly oriented towards the use of force, and many embraced anarchism.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Nishikawa was a socialist who collaborated with the famous radical leader Katayama Sen in publishing *Rodo Sekai*.

⁵² Joseph D. Miller, *Single Tax Year Book* (New York, 1917), p. 193.

⁵³ Kata Tetsuji calls attention to the analogous role of Georgeism as a transitional development in Britain and Japan; *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁵⁴ Scalapino points out that "the legacy of military ethics, the obstacles to legal reform, the lack of understanding of democratic theory, and the absence of conditions that would allow liberal theory to be translated immediately into practice - all combined to encourage the use of force", *op. cit.*, pp. 316-317.

Furthermore, the British tradition of individualism, which was the core of its liberal movement, was absent in Japan. Georgeism in Japan therefore, lacked the appeal which it held for British liberals.

III. CHINA

In Japan then as in Britain, Georgeism had acted as a catalyst which was left behind by the rising tide of social protest which it had helped create. In China however, Georgeism followed a different course. Here it was not a mere stimulus of ephemeral importance, but the substantive basis for a program of social and economic reform to which the Chinese Nationalist Party paid lip service for at least half a century, its slogan only recently being resuscitated and to a certain extent given legislative sanction on Taiwan.

Before tracing this remarkable fate of Georgeism, let us dwell briefly upon the historical setting. The background to late 19th century China was one of internal breakdown compounded by increasing pressure from without. Unlike Japan, which was able to contrive a political, military and economic adjustment to the Western impact, China floundered between half-hearted attempts at modernization and a stubborn clinging to traditionalism. As a result the regime found itself increasingly unable to cope with either internal dissidence or external aggression. The internal agrarian crisis, endemic to Chinese demographic conditions, had been seriously aggravated by the decline of rural handicraft industries due to the influx of foreign goods. Reduction of farm incomes, atomization of holdings, exorbitant rent and taxation, periodic floods and droughts - all these contributed to agrarian instability and even full-scale insurrection on the order of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864).

Yet Chinese reformers at the end of the century were inclined to focus on the more dramatic threat of foreign aggression. Especially after the ignominious defeat at the hands of Japan in 1894-1895 were they concerned with problems dealing with national security rather than internal social reform.

Western education, Western political forms and Western industrialization were valued as means of survival in a world dominated by mechanized gun-boat diplomacy.

As for the consideration of discrete ideas, at a time when Japanese intellectuals were being subjected to a plethora of Western ideological stimuli, including Georgeism, their Chinese counterparts were still groping for a viable formula for the synthesis of traditional values and European techniques. In a word, their receptivity to specific doctrinal impulses was much lower than that of Japanese intellectuals.

Georgeism, then, like other Western ideologies, came to China at a much later period than it did to Japan. In China, as in Japan, the early history of George's doctrine centered around the activities of a foreign clergyman, in this case, Dr. W. E. Macklin, a Canadian medical missionary. Macklin and his wife Daisy, also a physician, ran a hospital in Nanking. It is significant too that

these foreign exponents of Georgeism in China and Japan were related, Dr. Daisy Macklin being the sister of Mrs. Garst. Although Garst's translations appeared earlier than those of his brother-in-law, it is difficult to determine which of the two takes precedence as a Georgeist missionary. Macklin at any rate, lived longer, and because of his influential position with the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, was able to translate several single-tax classics which otherwise probably would not have found their way into Chinese. With the help of a Chinese collaborator, Macklin translated an adaptation of *Progress and Poverty* in 1899, followed by Spencer's *Social Statics*, Patrick Edward Dove's *Theory of Human Progression* and George's *Protection or Free Trade*.

Yet unlike Garst, Macklin had little opportunity to disseminate Georgeist ideas among native intellectuals. Even the weak but indigenous forum of social protest that had been available to Garst in Japan was lacking in China. It is questionable too whether Macklin's various translations of single tax classics made any impression upon the literati who were capable of understanding them. In reading Macklin's reports to American single-taxers one gets the impression that his pre-republican activities were restricted to the small circle of fellow missionaries and traders which comprised the European community. In 1902 he would report to the *American Single Tax Review* that he and his "single-tax missionary friends" had put Georgeism into practice in a tiny Yangtze valley health resort catering to Westerners, and he also mentioned that "Our Shanghai evening paper [the English-language *North China Herald*] publishes all I can write on the single tax".⁵⁵

Macklin wrote of his attempt to influence a local Chinese official, but for the most part his audience was Western, and it was apparently that part of the Western business community which suffered from rising rents in commercial centers like Shanghai which took his arguments to heart when he protested that "200 landlords rule Shanghai".⁵⁶

It is interesting to note that another and more tangible Georgeist impulse was being generated at this time from the German leased (read: seized) territory of Kiaochow. Under German control since 1898, Kiaochow practiced a modified version of Georgeism based upon the ideas of the German Bodenreformers. In fact Kiaochow was the first place in the world where a future, unearned increment tax was enacted.⁵⁷ According to Macklin, it was through his initiative that the German officials in charge took cognizance of *Progress and Poverty* and applied its principles in the territory. Other sources would dispute this claim.⁵⁸

Yet even Kiaochow was a foreign and not native application of the land value taxation principle, and the reason why Macklin was so restricted in his pro-

⁵⁵ *The Single Tax Review*, I, No. 3 (New York, January 15, 1902), p. 47.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Scheftel, *op. cit.*, pp. 184 ff.

⁵⁸ For Macklin's version see the *Single Tax Year Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 192, and the *Single Tax Review*, I, No. 3 (January 15, 1902), p. 47. Contrary views are held in Scheftel, *op. cit.*, p. 184, and the *Single Tax Review*, I, No. 1 (July, 1901), p. 24.

paganda efforts was that those very intellectuals who were receptive toward Western institutions and ideas – and especially anything that smacked of social reform – were for the most part in exile. Either abroad as students or political refugees, there was little chance of their being influenced directly by Macklin. When we search for the original indigenous reception of Georgeism therefore we must focus our attention upon the exiled revolutionaries and overseas students.

In modern China the name of Henry George is known chiefly or even solely through his influence upon Sun Yat-sen. The exact circumstances under which Sun was exposed to Georgeism are still unclear.⁵⁹ Sun himself traces his awareness of Western social problems to the period of his European sojourn from 1896 to the end of 1897. It would seem reasonable to assume that the wide journalistic coverage of George's death during his 1897 mayoralty campaign should have impressed Sun who was in England at the time.

Some Japanese sources would place greater emphasis upon the influence of Miyazaki Tamizo, the leading Japanese interpreter of George.⁶⁰ Miyazaki's brother Torazo belonged to that fantastic band of Japanese idealist-adventurers who were intimate collaborators of Sun Yat-sen since 1899. At any rate, Tamizo's views certainly reinforced Sun's favorable disposition toward the land value taxation scheme, and by 1903 Sun had incorporated a Chinese version of the "common property in land" slogan into his own political platform. Whether he translated this directly from the English or took it from Miyazaki's Japanese version cannot be ascertained.

What is important, however, is the use of this slogan, *p'ing-chün ti-ch'üan*, literally "equalization of land rights", and Sun's reasons for making it the cornerstone of his social reform program. In the first place, Sun, like George, did not mean that "equalization of land rights" would disturb present land tenure conditions. In this respect his solution was different from that of Miyazaki since the latter was definitely concerned with inequality of holdings in Japan and proposed actual redistribution. Sun's method was simply to assess all land values, tax them at a one per cent rate and at the same time, appropriate for social use all future increments in value subsequent to the original assessment. Note that Sun, unlike George, would not socialize rent in its entirety but only the future unearned increment. In this respect, his "equalization of land rights" technique was identical with John Stuart Mill's proposal.⁶¹

Furthermore, Sun's explanation for adopting this modified version of Georgeism indicates that he did not visualize it as a remedy for China's rising agrarian distress. Rather did he choose it as a preventive for future social ills, such as those which plagued the West in its march of progress. Sun was taking the West as his model and the evils of Western industrialized societies as his target.

⁵⁹ See Harold Schiffrin, "Sun Yat-sen's Early Land Policy", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XVI, No. 4 (August, 1957), for a fuller discussion of the Georgeist influence upon Sun.

⁶⁰ See Hatano, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Schiffrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 558, 560.

Sun's motivation and reasoning can be clarified by referring to some of the arguments he adduced on behalf of his People's Livelihood (*Min sheng*) principle – one of his famous Three Principles of the People. Until the latter part of his career, *Min sheng* was based chiefly upon the “equalization of land rights” technique. In 1906, when he first began elaborating on this principle, he said that China would achieve socialism in a faster and simpler process than the West because “social problems are caused by the progress of civilization, and when the attainments of civilization are not high, social problems are correspondingly few”.⁶² Note that on the basis of his experience in the West, Sun felt that socialism was an inevitable result of capitalism. Socialism, he felt, was inevitable because the “progress of civilization is a natural process – you cannot escape it by running away”. And “Civilization has good fruit and it also has evil fruit. We must choose the good fruit and avoid the evil fruit. On the occasion of our revolution, we not only want to create a democratic state, but we want to make a socialist state – certainly this is what the West has not yet attained.”⁶³

Here we have one of the most consistent themes in the doctrines of Sun Yat-sen – the theme that China, precisely because she is last on the scene (with regard to industrialization) will quickly become the first, and outstrip the West in the solution of social problems by nipping them in the bud. Sun's “three-in-one revolution” – nationalist, political and social – could be telescoped into one, short comparatively bloodless stroke. Sun would repeatedly assure his audience of students and overseas merchants that their country's backwardness *vis-à-vis* Japan and the West was only a temporary disablement, and that in fact she could now quickly overtake them by applying beforehand that remedy which the West had discovered only through hindsight.

Why did he choose the land value taxation method as an antidote to the social problems which would be generated by China's industrialization? We believe that there are several reasons. Firstly, the Georgeist-type formula was non-violent and seemed easy to apply. In China's case it would be aimed at *potential* land speculators rather than any tangible segment of society. Thus while social revolution would wrack the West with violence, in China it would proceed smoothly as a planned concomitant to the industrialization process itself. Secondly, Sun was impressed with the tremendous increase in urban land values as a result of industrialization. By appropriating these increments for social purposes, he saw an unusual opportunity for financing China's further industrialization. In a word, socialization of the future unearned increment would allow China to pull itself up by its bootstraps. Sun of course realized that something else was needed to give land situation value in the first place and cause it to increase in value – something had to create the unearned increment. He saw railroad development in this catalyst role, for had not George shown that

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

the building of railroads increased the value of adjoining land? Therefore by 1912 Sun was planning on foreign assistance to inaugurate vast railroad projects in China, railroads being considered the key to industrial and commercial development as well.

Yet in spite of Sun's tireless campaign on behalf of "equalization of land rights" the doctrine was only reluctantly accepted by his following. Time and again they would balk and suspect it of harboring radical, wealth-dividing implications. It was incorporated into the program of the "T'ung Meng Hui", Sun's first large-scale political movement, organized in Tokyo in 1905, only because of the leader's personal prestige, and even before the 1911 revolution, opposition to this plank led to the formation of a splinter group within the nationalist camp.⁶⁴ And after the revolution, amalgamation with other groups and the formation of the Kuomintang necessitated temporary de-emphasis of the "equalization of land rights" theme.

There seem to have been two sources of opposition to Sun's application of Georgeism. During the 1905-1912 period it was the conservative, land-owning elements which were repelled by the agrarian reform connotation of the doctrine, and the burden of Sun's arguments at this time was directed toward placating this source of aggravation. After 1919 however, when the impact of the Russian revolution generated increased interest in Marxism, leftist dissatisfaction with the unearned increment concept as the mainstay of a socio-economic policy became evident. At this time, Sun's reorganized Kuomintang incorporated an additional economic plank calling for the control of capital. And the second reorganization of the party in 1924, under Comintern tutelage, led to the enunciation of definite agrarian land reform tenets, such as rent control and land redistribution. This was popularized by Sun in his "To the Tiller Belongs the Soil" slogan.

Thus in China as in Britain and Japan, an initial preference for Georgeism as the basis for social reform gradually became attenuated and modified to include other principles as well. But in China the Georgeist influence was more persistent. Whenever the opportunity arose Sun and his lieutenants would affirm their loyalty to the spirit of Georgeism. In 1912 after surrendering the reins of the newly-formed republican government to the military strong man, Yuan Shih-k'ai, Sun told American journalists that "I intend to devote my future to the promotion of the welfare of the Chinese people as a whole. The teachings of your single-taxer, Henry George, will be the basis of our program of reform".⁶⁵

It was at this time too that the other band of Georgeists in China, that led by Dr. Macklin, joined hands with Sun's group. And for a brief period Macklin

⁶⁴ In 1907 a T'ung Meng Hui faction opposing the "Equalization of land rights" slogan formed a new organization, the Kung-chin Hui, which cooperated with Sun in all other respects. Landowning supporters of the revolution in the Yangtze valley apparently led this faction. See Feng Tzu-yu, *Ko-ming i-shih*, rev. ed., I (Shanghai, 1947), pp. 248-252.

⁶⁵ *The Public*, XV, No. 732 (Chicago, April 12, 1912), p. 349.

had access to various government officials, including President Yuan, and gained their interest in land reclamation schemes. A Socialist Party, rising independently of Sun's movement, but close to it in ideology, also advocated the single tax at this time. By 1913 however, the republic had been betrayed, the socialists outlawed and Sun sent into exile once more. With Sun out of the way, Georgeism became dormant on the mainland and Macklin's influence waned as well.

In 1920 when Sun returned to head a south China government in Canton for a brief period, his lieutenant, Liao Chung-k'ai, who fifteen years previously had translated the introduction to *Progress and Poverty* for Sun's magazine, *Min Pao*, in Tokyo, assumed the office of Kwangtung Commissioner of Finance, and announced that "we are going to try, as far as possible, to put into practice the principles of Henry George".⁶⁶ Previously, Dr. Schrameier, the former land commissioner of Kiaochow had been invited to Canton by Sun in order to carry out these principles. This latter gesture was typical of Sun: regardless of his distaste for imperialist incursions into Chinese territory, his respect for Western ideas such as Georgeism moved him to welcome a former imperialist official as an adviser.

Nevertheless in the hectic, almost semi-anarchic conditions of a disunited China, even orthodox American single taxers recognized the impracticability, if not impossibility of carrying out a single tax program. Commenting upon the Canton government's decision to violate single tax doctrine and collect excise taxes on wine and tobacco, an American Georgeist organ commented, "Possibly this is due to bad local conditions, the old [anti-Sun] governor having collected three years taxes in advance and taken the treasury with him when he was ejected".⁶⁷ The difficulty in relying upon the single tax principles as a basis for fiscal policy would be apparent to Sun and his followers during the brief periods when they assumed governmental control.⁶⁸

In his "Three Principles of the People" lectures of 1924 Sun would still retain the "equalization of land rights" formula along with other economic planks. After Sun's death in 1925 and the break with the Communists in 1927, the Kuomintang would emphasize the non-Marxist aspects of Sun's program, thus the left-wing leader Wang Ching-wei would assure an American newsman, "We are not Communists. . . Sun Yat-sen . . . was greatly influenced by your American radical, Henry George, but he was never a Communist".⁶⁹ Subsequently Sun was apotheosized by the Kuomintang and his Three Principles

⁶⁶ *Bulletin of the National Single Tax League*, V, No. 5 (May, 1921), p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ In an interview in December, 1922, Sun would declare that Chinese conditions at that time would not allow for a strict adherence to single tax doctrine, and that other forms of revenue were necessary in addition to land value taxation. See *Kuo-fu ch'uan-chi*, IV (Taipei, 1957), p. 521.

⁶⁹ Quoted by Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 461-462, from the *New York Times* (September 11, 1927), p. 5 of the Sunday feature section.

canonized. Thus the arguments of Henry George and the future unearned increment tax of John Stuart Mill became permanent features of Kuomintang ideology. While finding it highly difficult to realize these principles the Kuomintang always kept them alive as an integral part of its program.

In the end, it was only on the island fortress of Taiwan that deference to the memory of Sun Yat-sen kept this slogan alive, and in February, 1956, some fifty years after it was first enunciated, the government of Chiang K'ai-shek passed an urban land reform statute based upon the unearned increment concept of "equalization of land rights".⁷⁰

On the Communist-controlled mainland, of course, Sun's infatuation with Georgeism is only of mild historical interest, being considered typical of the rising bourgeoisie's protest against the shackles of feudalism during an intermediate phase of modern Chinese history.⁷¹

CONCLUSIONS

In comparing the fate of Georgeism in Japan and China, several observations can be made concerning the reception of ideas and the responses which they evoked during East Asia's modernization phase. In both countries, for example, the role of key individuals was much more crucial in the propagation of this particular idea than in Britain or other Western societies. Particularly striking is the double example of ideological cross-fertilization represented by the Miyazaki-Sun duo on one hand, and on the other, the two missionaries and brothers-in-law, Garst and Macklin. These two pairs of individuals, representing native intellectuals and foreigners, comprised the hard-core of Georgeism in East Asia. But while the natives, Miyazaki and Sun, imposed serious modifications upon George's solution, it was the foreign pair which preached the gospel precisely as it was written in *Progress and Poverty*.

The cases of China and Japan also highlight the limitations imposed upon foreign missionaries attempting to introduce new economic and political ideas: without the support of either a native charismatic leader or an indigenous political party, the imported doctrine is doomed to oblivion. Macklin's various translations of single tax classics had little meaning for Sun, and when he undertook the dissemination of Georgeism in 1905 he had one of his own men attempt a new, literal translation of *Progress and Poverty* rather than use Macklin's adaptation which he may not have known about in Japan at that time. Garst was less restricted than Macklin, and through the medium of the church was able to come into contact with young Japanese radicals, many of whom were Christian converts. But Garst too failed to create a lasting Georgeist influence.

China, of course, offers the best evidence of the crucial importance of indivi-

⁷⁰ *Free China Weekly* (Chinese News Service, New York, February 7, 1956).

⁷¹ For the Chinese Communist interpretation of Sun's use of Georgeist concepts, see "Sun Chung-shan 'p'ing-chün ti-ch'üan cheng-kang ti ch'an-sheng ho fa-chan", *Kuang-ming jih-pao* (Peking, October 27, 1955).

duals. Here the charismatic leadership of Sun Yat-sen sustained a George-inspired slogan in the face of ignorance, unenthusiasm and even antipathy on the part of his followers. The slogan was actually a handicap rather than a boon during the formation of the Kuomintang. Yet if charisma could keep the slogan and idea alive it could not counteract the inapplicability of the doctrine – either assumed or real – once the revolutionary movement had become centered on the mainland and sensitized to the tangible realities of the socio-economic situation.

Here we come to another difference between China and Japan: when Chinese reformers drew up their formulae they were in exile, cut off from contact with homeland developments. Under these circumstances, an abstract idea remained unchallenged and untested by the actual needs of the society they wished to reform. On the other hand, Japanese reformers, like their British counterparts, were less inclined to settle for Georgeism as a panacea for social ills because they soon became aware of industrial capitalism, in addition to private ownership of land as a source of social inequality. Thus both Japan and Britain offer numerous instances of social reformers being stimulated by George's eloquence and then pursuing other or additional reformist doctrines which they believed to be of greater pertinence. Yet in both China and Japan intellectuals exhibited a strong disposition toward some form of social reform: in both countries, there was a strong disenchantment with unplanned laissez-faire capitalism as they found it in the West.

A contrast can also be made of the different motivations which led to the initial acceptance of Georgeism. In Japan and Britain, liberals and radical social reformers related the theme of *Progress and Poverty* with the live issue of agrarian distress as well as the paradoxical relationship between material progress and social poverty. While in Japan intellectual ferment on these issues never reached the pitch which prevailed in 19th-century Britain (the authoritarian nature of the society served to stifle such a ferment in Japan), still, in both countries intellectuals were searching for solutions to live and present problems.

In China the motivation was entirely different. A charismatic leader, primarily a nationalist and secondly a social reformer, highly sensitive to the backward role assigned his nation by both Japanese and Europeans, found in George's analysis a unique but simple device to escape the evil which seemed destined to rip the Western social fabric. Thus it was for the purpose of preventing social problems before they arose and thereby getting ahead of the West that Sun welcomed the spirit of Georgeism and stubbornly clung to it. An additional seductive feature of Georgeism was that in dramatizing the tremendous wealth accruing to land merely because of its situation value in an industrializing society it led Sun to believe that he could make the industrial revolution practically pay for itself.

Finally, as a nationalist, Sun Yat-sen was bent upon avoiding open class-conflict within Chinese society. It was one of the great appeals of the land value

taxation method that it obviated the need for such a conflict. In England and to a lesser extent in Japan, this was probably one of the chief reasons for its popularity among Christian reformist circles. It will be noted that in all three countries there was a high concentration of Christian or Christian-influenced reformers among exponents of Georgeism.

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