

Translation from the Portuguese

THE *TATUIRAS*, or landowners, attached to their lands like oysters, proclaim that Georgism is communism; and with the resistance they are offering to Georgism they are leading the world by the claw.

Communism is a historical tendency which it is folly to combat with repression. Repression is just the dung which makes the idea grow. Herculano expressed this thought in lapidary style: persecuted idea is victorious idea, eternal historical truth, forgotten by power. . . .

The way to fight against an idea is to hurl against it a better idea. Against the idea of communism, the better idea is precisely Georgism. If not, let us see!

Under Georgism all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the air, the water and the land. However, each man has an exclusive right to what he produces with his labor.

Communism adopts the first principle but does not accept the second. It wishes that also the product of individual labor belong in common to all men.

This difference causes Georgism to permit the continuation of the existing social order, which communism condemns. And as the world is going, the only way for the existing social order to escape destruction is to defend itself by adopting Georgism. In a Georgist country communism ceases to advance—the people see no reason for it. Against communism, then, there is only Georgism—which is the better idea. Never violence, for violence is hardly a marvelous fertilizer.

How many billions of dollars have the Americans already spent in order to aid the Chinese nationalists in the repression of communism? These dollars have acted as a fertilizer. The more they are poured into China, the more the communists advance—to catch them!

Why? What is the reason that the best financed of all the repressions of communism is collapsing? Because it is done by means of violence, the only arm that can do nought against ideas. Never in the world has a bullet killed an idea.

Instead of meditating on this, our *tatuiras* scratch their legs, and reject the only penicillin which can save them from the gibbet. They say in their clubs, "this Georgism is nonsense, it is nothing more than pure communism." And they wink very cleverly.

The great modern nonsense is the case of Brazil. A nation of 45 million inhabitants with an immense territory, lives in a state of penury worse than that of China, because China produces what it eats, and we even import almost all that we eat—wheat, fruit, milk, potatoes, fish and now even kidney beans. We owe the hair on our heads; and we do not pay interest or amortization; so that the national debts grow constantly without new money coming in. This is a country in which the majority go without shoes, cannot read, live on breezes and sun, and are ever more sick and *abobalhada* (stupefied)—a country, in short, with its entire interior transformed into a painful sick

ward of ex-men, ex-women and shades of children. "Brazil is a huge hospital," Miguel Pereira once said. This hospital is located on a continent which has on the north a country of the same age that has already become the first in the world in everything; and on the south a millionaire Argentina. In Europe, during many years, the anomalous situation of the Turkey of Abdul-Hamid caused that country to be designated "*L'homme malade*" (the sick man) of Europe. We shall end up by being *L'homme malade* of the Americas.

Why so?

Many know the apparent causes, but in a confluence of causes there is always a major cause which is at the bottom of the others and reduces them to mere effects. It does not solve the problem, for example, to attribute all our troubles to poverty—because poverty is in its turn the effect of some cause. What cause is that? The fiscal regime!

Rui Barbosa, the greatest celebration that Brazil has yet produced, pronounced the diagnosis a long time ago. In an article by Rui about our financial stupidity he said these words which ought to be engraved in fire on the tail of all governments:

"Our tax empiricism is a spoliative regime

of bleeding which the most vigorous nation in the world could not resist. Fiscal slavery, developed with a butchery ever more voracious by the union, by the states and by the municipalities, does as much toward the atrophy of our national organism as did Negro slavery, except that it is more obstinate and more stupid. The fury of protectionism, the taxing of exports, and the chronic unconstitutionality of interstate taxes, are three systematized suicides to which Brazil delivers itself impenitently, but consoled, like the maniacs of alcohol, opium or cocaine.

"Good then is the movement that is developing among us for the adoption of the land-value tax. In it will lie salvation. It will be the calmest and most beneficent of all revolutions."

The wonder of genius!

In less than a hundred words, Rui Barbosa says, in perfect synthesis, what prior students have tried to say in hundreds of articles.

But what good did it do? What good did it do that already in 1917, thirty years ago, our greatest genius gave to the public his synthesis? In spite of his words, our "tax empiricism" continues. Until today, taxation in Brazil has not been studied in the light of science.

The "spoliative bleeding" continues, because our fiscal regime does not collect the money of the taxpayer only, it collects his blood—the blood indispensable for his life. And from this absurdity comes the anemia of the country.

The "fiscal slavery" continues, "developing with a butchery ever more voracious," and Rui at that time could not foresee that the fiscal slavery, already monstrous, would be multiplied by ten during the *Getulino* 15-year period.*

The "atrophy of the national organism" continues, ever more furiously, with the pretext of protecting the workingman, when in reality it profits only a handful of sharks.

And Brazil continues to live "impenitently," i.e., without correcting itself, within this suicidal fiscal regime. Impenitent and "consoled," that is, consoling itself with the buffoonery of the hymn which they cram into the poor children, so that they may become as idiotic as their elders, They console themselves with the foolishness that "God is Brazilian," and with the even greater foolishness that "planting gives wealth"—for without killing the ant, the tax that falls upon production, no advantage is gained by planting nor giving. That ant eats everything.

Rui, Rui, how great you were and of how little use! Stultified from colonial days onward by the monstrous exchequer, the country neither read you nor heard you, and if it read and heard you, it was even worse, because it took no account of your words.

And the Great Crisis is arriving . . . and the Great Hunger will create the only line we are lacking—the soup line. Good soup, at least? Nothing doing!

* The presidency of Getulio Vargas.

The author, Monteiro Lobato, in his booklet "*Georgismo e Comunismo*" proceeds from this modest beginning to set forth Henry George's teachings. We are indebted to C. Matthew Ossias, our cheerful translator, who produced the above in the heat of last summer, "after hours," when his duties as a translator in the Irving Trust Company were finished.