

realisation of fundamental causes of poverty. The author is too fond of alliteration with his references to waste on "Pints, Perms, Poms, Pictures and Pools." That there is a land question, or such a thing as private ownership of land, does not appear at all from a reading of the book, or that private monopoly of land might have something to do with this gross maldistribution of the good things of life. Prof. Hilton gets near to it once, when he asks (page 107): "What about low wages as a cause of the poverty?" a question he does not answer. And again when, in answer to the idea that all the poor have to do is to save, he says: "To save big money you must make big money, and to make big money you must either get a strangle-hold on the public, or (some rarer possibilities)." But he does not as much as guess that the monopoly in land is the permanent and all pressing strangle-hold on the nation's life. He points out that an equal division of the total wealth which would give every family £1,500, would mean an extra weekly income of £1 in interest, in addition to the earnings, but he seems never to have heard that this must soon find its way into the private rent-fund because of the economic fact that every improvement, under land monopoly, must at last accrue to the land owner. But in this we find no better guidance in Sir W. Beveridge's Foreword. The best reply to the problems dealt with by Prof. Hilton is to be found in *Progress and Poverty*, in which Henry George, in 1879, asked and answered the question: Why, in spite of increase in productive power, do wages tend to a minimum which will give but a bare living?

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Before enclosure, the English cottager had had milk, butter and cheese in plenty, home-grown pork and bacon, home-brewed beer and home-baked bread, his own vegetables, his own eggs and poultry. After enclosure, he could get no milk, for the farmers would not sell it; no meat, for his wages could not buy it; and he no longer had a pig to provide the fat bacon commended by Cobbett. Working long hours he lived on bread, potatoes and tea, and insufficient even of these. . . . At the beginning of the Enclosure period the Industrial Revolution was barely in its infancy. A large part of the spinning, weaving and other manufactures was carried on in the cottages of men who had gardens they could dig in and cows and pigs of their own. The invention of power machines, the discovery of coal wherewith those machines could be worked, led to the concentration of factories in the huge cities. But it was the drift from the villages of dispossessed men, together with the cheap child labour provided by Poor Law Guardians, that made possible the starvation wages and the tyranny of the factory system.—From *Gilbert Keith Chesterton*, by Maisie Ward; published by Sheed and Ward.

MEN AND POLITICS — ITALY, POLAND, SPAIN

IN HIS entrancing book, *Men and Politics*, published 1941, by Jonathan Cape, Mr. Louis Fischer touches frequently on economic conditions in the countries he visited. The following extracts shed much light, the first being a report of his interview with the Italian Fascist Minister, Rossoni:—

ITALY

"We have increased wheat production for the whole country," he (Rossoni) had begun, "and also increased the land under cultivation." He handed me the appropriate statistics.

I said, "You have a dictatorship. Why don't you nationalise land?"

"A dictatorship," Rossoni replied, "is a political matter, not an economic or social matter. We cannot take the land away from the landlords." The government could only buy the estates of those who wished to sell, and then the peasants could buy these lands with federal loans. In this way, Rossoni estimated, they could find work in the next five years for 400,000 families. But, this process was slow. Many landlords had grown fabulously rich by selling their huge latifundia at fancy prices. Besides, the peasants hesitated to assume the responsibility of heavy debt payments for twenty years. That is why "crowded" Italy had a great deal of untitled land: the landlords did not cultivate it; the peasants could not buy; the government would not take it. On December 7, 1935, the *Osservatore Romano*, newspaper organ of the Vatican, reported a Rome congress of peasants who urged that the estates be divided. I therefore persisted, and said to Rossoni: "Instead of conquering Ethiopia, which you hope will accommodate surplus Italians, why don't you attempt to take care of them at home by introducing a land reform?"

Slightly irritated, Rossoni replied: "The Abyssinian war perhaps has economic reasons. But chiefly the reasons are moral and political. France did not acquire colonies because she was overpopulated. Nor did England." He was saying just what I should have wanted him to say if I could have planned it. There was never any truth in the claim that economic necessity or the need of new lands for settlement, or even the need of raw materials, compelled the so-called "Have Not" countries to expand. Rossoni also had admitted that Italy behaved like any other capitalist country in relation to its rich landlords. The interview was going fine.

"Italy must make a new contribution to civilisation," Rossoni continued. "Italy must carry civilisation to the entire world." He black-pencilled that last sentence, perhaps as being too immodest.

This did not satisfy me, and I said, "You have a dictatorship. You can send people to war, maybe to their death. Why can't you take vacant land

from the estate owners and give it to the peasants?"

Signor Rossoni, to my delight, was now thoroughly aroused, and replied with equal candour, "That is demagoguery. Peasants must be directed. 'Give land to the peasants.' That is a phrase. There must be organisation. We are Fascists, not Socialists." (Pages 263-4.)

POLAND

Finance Minister Kwiatkowski, on December 5, 1935, announced in the Sejm—Poland's parliament—that Polish peasants with twenty-five acres of land spent on the average \$8 a year. (In 1929, they had spent \$22.40 a year.) But they were millionaires compared to the peasants who held only ten to twelve acres, and who constituted thirty-one per cent. of the population, and another thirty-four per cent. who owned even smaller "dwarf households." He said, "Ten million persons stand completely outside the realm of economic life." They neither bought nor sold. Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, who received three dollars a month from American relatives could become business men on that money. (Page 276.)

SPAIN

In the neighbouring province of Badajoz, hard by the Portuguese frontier, which we visited, agricultural conditions were even worse than in Caceres. Eighty-five per cent. of the population lived by the land. There were 175,000 families in the villages. But 2,946 individuals owned forty per cent. of the soil. Here, too, the yunteros took land in the spring of 1936 and then signed leases for it. (Page 311.)

The Catholic hierarchy of Spain has done much harm to Catholicism in Spain. The Loyalists are not anti-religious. In Soviet Russia the régime is frankly atheistic. One will look in vain, however, for anti-God sentiments in the declarations of the Loyalist government or of its leaders. But the church has taken the sides of the generals, the Nazi pagans, the infidel Moors and Mussolini. This will react to the disadvantage of the church. The people will distrust the church. A Franco victory will hurt the church in Spain. It will die in the hearts of common men. Only a liberal triumph could enable Catholicism in Spain to attempt to redeem itself. When the civil war broke out, the people did not burn banks or commercial houses. They burned churches. I regret this. But this has happened before in Spain and Mexico and elsewhere. Where popular wrath overflowed, it attacked the church, which was closer to the higher-ups than to the underdog. The church in Spain behaved like a political party, and it has to pay the penalties. It is in the front line of battle fighting under the Fascist banner. It cannot complain if it is struck by the bullets. (Page 456.)