

FEUDAL HUNGARY

(From the "Manchester Guardian,"
23rd March)

OF ALL the Continental States only France and Hungary have a thousand years of continuous existence. The history of France was broken by a revolution; in Hungary, though there have been revolutions, the traditional social order was never destroyed, and Hungary remains, therefore, uniquely enslaved to her past. . . . Alone in Europe, her policy is determined by the aristocracy and gentry as exclusively as though the eighteenth century had never ended; with modern phrases and modern education a feudal society is fighting for its life. Before 1918 the political "nation" of the privileged upper class had three aims: to preserve the "thousand-year-old frontiers," to transform Hungary into a Magyar national State by "Magyarising" the minorities, who were actually a majority of the population, and to maintain the great estates. Though they feared German domination, they feared the liberation of their Slav subjects still more, and so co-operated in the first war for German supremacy.

Defeat brought thousand-year-old Hungary to an end, but the Allies, blinded by anti-Bolshevik fears, not merely tolerated the survival of the Hungarian privileged classes; they assisted in their restoration, first with French arms, later with League of Nations loans. Hungary remained virtually immune from the agrarian reforms which elsewhere changed the face of South-eastern Europe. One thousand families continued to own one-third of the land; three million agricultural labourers, one-third of the population had no land at all. . . .

In recent months, with the waning prestige of Germany, Hungary has appeared as the standard-bearer of constitutionalism in Central Europe. The Constitution of Hungary is genuine, but it is no more democratic than the British Constitution in the eighteenth century—it is a Constitution for the aristocracy and gentry. But there exists a democratic opposition. Just as during the period of German predominance the governing class tolerated a pro-Nazi opposition and even appeased the Germans with measures of anti-Semitism, so lately they have tolerated a democratic opposition and let its utterances be published. This opposition has genuine democratic principles, but little influence and no power. The Social Democrats, its most serious component, are a purely urban party, with no agrarian programme and no contacts with the peasantry; if they are now favoured by the governing class it is not because they are democratic but because they are anti-Russian. The Smallholders' party comes nearest to representing the interests of the peasants, but even it is a party for those peasants who possess land—and most Hungarian peasants have none. Obscure and ignored, the Hungarian peasant holds the future of Central Europe in his hand, for a

Hungary without great landlords could renounce the tradition of national superiority and could co-operate on an equality with the surrounding peoples. No one knows whether the Hungarian peasant is astir. In November, 1918, the Károlyi regime, with its programme of universal suffrage, land reform, and national equality, could perhaps have made a lasting revolution at little cost; its own errors, and still more the hostility of the Allies destroyed it. Now Hungary has had twenty years of White Terror in the countryside, and the liberal forces have been taught, by almost a generation of experience, not to venture beyond the limits of the towns. Social revolution in Hungary will entail a long period of struggle and confusion. Only one thing is certain: if the Allies help to preserve the great estates and the political power of the traditional governing class they will preserve allies for Germany in a future war.

"PAY-AS-YOU-EARN"

THE PAY-AS-YOU-EARN method of collecting income tax from wage workers is under discussion in Australia. *The People's Advocate* (Adelaide) makes this comment:—

The pay-as-you-earn taxation scheme is again receiving consideration by the Federal Government. A special committee has been appointed to investigate and report on the question, following the report received from taxation officials, who are alleged to be opposed to the scheme. Those who support the proposal claim to do so because of their tender regard for the horny-handed son of toil. Their hearts almost break to think that he may not always be in receipt of the high wages (?) he now receives and may even be out of employment. They are grieved to think he may not be in a position to pay his income tax, so with due solicitude for his future welfare graciously suggest that the tax shall be deducted from his wages as he earns them. Under such a scheme, in the event of a future reduction in wages or unemployment, they will have the satisfaction of knowing that no matter who suffers, the Government taxation Shylock will have received his "pound of flesh."

Looked at from a common sense and just standpoint the pay-as-you-earn proposal is a splendid device for exploiting wealth producers. It makes certain that the Government gets the money no matter who goes short. It calls upon the employer of labour to do the collecting of the tax without any remuneration, and it is certain that those in business who are in a position to do so must pass on this extra cost in increased prices. Another important aspect of the question is that under the proposal the Government gets its share of the worker's wages before it reaches the exploited victim who has been responsible for the production. Most important of all, the pay-as-you-earn scheme shifts the burden of the war and the other governmental expenses from the landholders to the wages of

labour. It is surprising that trades union and other leaders are silent regarding such an iniquitous proposal. Why do they so tamely submit to this robbery of the earnings of labour? Surely they should enter a protest against such an iniquitous proposal, and demand that land rent—the natural revenue—be taken into the public treasury for the benefit of the community responsible for its appearance, thus calling upon everyone to contribute to the cost of war and the general government of the country in exact proportion to the value of the land they have to be defended and the benefits they receive from government expenditure!

MY NEIGHBOUR'S LANDMARK

A NEGRO SCHOLAR'S APPRECIATION

MR. WILLIAM H. DINKINS, A.M., LL.D., the President of Selma University (under the auspices of the Alabama Colored Baptist State Convention), has written to Mr. F. Verinder: "In your book *My Neighbour's Landmark* you have opened up a line of thought that entirely escaped me in school and college, and I have been glad to include this thought in my own development of ideas. Our college students use your book. I included a notice of it in our school paper of a recent issue." Mr. Dinkins, who gratefully mentions Mr. Alexander Greene of Chicago for helping to make the contact, went on to say: "Henry George, Patrick Edward Dove, yourself and others have so influenced my thinking that I have, I think, lost all the prejudice that I had against other peoples, and I have found through reading these writers that it is possible for all men to be up and none down. I think the reason we have prejudices is that we want to be up, and we fear that if somebody else gets up we will have to get down. As a matter of fact, the Bible shows that all men may be up, and the practical means of producing this situation is through tithing and the single tax."

Mr. Dinkins is editor of the *Selma University Chronicle*, and the notice he gives (in the November, 1943, number) to *My Neighbour's Landmark* says: "This book explains the ancient Hebrew system of land, labour, learning, jubilee, sabbatic years, temple support in a way to indicate how we in our day can at least approximate the results secured under the Hebrew system. A study of Verinder will open up to the Bible student many things which have been obscure. The book is to be had from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 32 East 29th Street, New York City, for fifty cents."

The British price, published by the Henry George Foundation at our address, is 1s.

2s. 6d. LAND AND FREEDOM. A new, comprehensive and up-to-date treatise on Land Value Taxation. By Frederick Verinder.

2s. 6d. LAND VALUE RATING. Theory and Practice. A handbook for all interested in municipal finance and the rating question. By F. C. R. Douglas, M.A., L.C.C., M.P.