

LAND-HUNGRY PEASANTS OF THE BALKANS

COUNT MICHEL KAROLYI, President of the First Hungarian Republic, makes an appeal in *Reynolds News* of 17th January which we hope will not go unheard. The United Nations proclaim that in this war they uphold the cause of freedom. The banner has been raised. It must be the signal for the liberation of the common people everywhere from economic thralldom. Are the Statesmen of the United Nations on the side of the dispossessed? Are they prepared to overthrow the land monopoly which is the chief cause of all poverty and distress and of conditions that make for war? This is Count Karolyi's question and his challenge.

"The recent anti-Nazi activity among the peoples of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, coupled with the continued success of the partisan armies in Yugoslavia, all point the same story. Millions of peasants are on the move. They have been oppressed and starved for generations. They are land-hungry. They see in the liberating armies of the United Nations the hope of destroying not only the Fascist invaders, but their own brutal ruling classes.

"I write particularly of Hungary because that is my own country and I know from bitter experience that there is little to choose between these Hungarian Fascists and their counterparts in Germany and Italy. For the other countries of South-eastern Europe, the picture can be modified; but the essential problems are the same.

"Hungary's ruling class is composed of landowners, who, with the Roman Catholic Church, own great areas of land. Millions of peasants have no land at all. Millions more do not have enough to maintain life. All these peasants know that only when the landowners are expropriated can there be any hope of a decent life. That fact dominates the whole problem of South-eastern Europe.

"Hungary's 'democracy' has always been a sham, and the Horthy regime, established by terror and murder, has been the most reactionary of all.

"The Hungarian rulers, like those of the other Balkan States, naturally turned to the leaders of reaction. That is why they were the natural allies of the Habsburgs, then of Fascist Italy and finally of Nazi Germany. Until these rulers are destroyed, there can be no alliance with the free peoples.

"The Allies have got to choose whether in this war for freedom they are going to secure the support of millions of peasants and industrial workers or whether, like Hitler, they are going to attempt to rely on a few thousand landlords and capitalists. If they want the support of the Balkan peoples, they must change their propaganda.

"What is the use of the B.B.C. telling the Hungarians they must withdraw their army from Russia 'because they will need it after the war'?

"Every peasant in Hungary knows that the only use the present Government will make of the army will be to use it against the revolutionary movement.

"Many of the peasants in these countries are of mixed nationality, and numbers can speak two or three languages. The Allied

propagandists ought to remember that, when they tell a different story to each of the Balkan countries!

"In Hungary the long years of poverty and oppression have created an underground opposition which is waiting for the moment to strike. The people of Rumania, sickened by the mass slaughter of their men fighting Hitler's war in the East, will break loose as soon as the Gestapo grip is weakened. Bulgaria, with its overwhelming pro-Russian population, is a factor of increasing importance. The struggle of the Yugoslav people will grow more intense.

"If we neglect this growing mass movement of millions of common people, who look to the United Nations for liberation, we shall court disaster to our cause. In this strategic stronghold, menacing Hitler's whole slave empire in Europe, new allies are rising, allies whom we must encourage and sustain, victory will not come only by the military defeat of the Fascist Powers; it will be real only if it ensures the triumph of the conquered people over Fascism, wherever Fascism may be entrenched.

CELESTIAL YORKSHIRE

[The following interesting allegory has been found by a correspondent in the book *The Great Analysis*, published anonymously in 1912 by Messrs Methuen.]

Most of us have heard of Sir George Darwin's speculation that the moon consists of matter which, at some indefinitely remote period, flew off at a tangent from the earth, leaving a gap now occupied by the Pacific Ocean. Well, let us suppose that one fine day the county of York were in like manner to break loose from its moorings and drift away into space, until it reached a point at which the balance of forces, rounding it as on a turning-lathe, set it rotating, a second satellite, between the moon and the earth. . . . Yorkshire, then, with its three-and-a-half million inhabitants—its peers and merchant princes, its squirearchy and its clergy, its soldiers, its sailors, its fisherman, its villa residents, living on their dividends, its shopkeepers and its artisans, its workers in factories and mines, its unskilled labourers, its ploughmen and shepherds, the tramps on its country roads and the grimy social sediment of its slums—this fragment of what we call European civilization would (by hypothesis) be swinging through space, a self-contained planeticle, cut off from all communication with the rest of the universe. . . . In one way or another some sort of balance would sooner or later be established between food and population, and the transitional state of siege being over, Yorkshiremen might calmly and at leisure set about the reconstruction of their polity. How would it proceed?

It would be extremely difficult for society to settle down, after the period of stress was over, into its old pyramidal structure, with the territorial duke at its apex and the hind and the casual labourer at its base. . . . Can it be supposed that the landlord would simply resume his right of demanding a tribute for the mere access

to certain portions of his land, in order that he might, at his leisure, devote certain other portions to unproductive, and partly destructive, purposes of sport and recreation? Assuredly it is not to be supposed. Remember that the masks and disguises that hide the realities of territorial privilege would now be stripped off. Men driven off the land could not emigrate, for there would be no place to emigrate to. They could not herd into the cities to scratch a precarious subsistence as parasites of the bloated host of machines; for mechanical industry, now ministering, with restricted raw material, to the definite demand of a county, instead of the indefinite demands of the world, would very soon shrink to such proportions as to make the amount of labour required accurately measurable and fairly stable. The margins and safety valves, in short, which in some degree relax the pressure of "the landed interest" upon the body politic, would then have disappeared, and the real meaning of private property in land would, so to speak, be visible to the naked eye. . . . It would be manifest from the outset that no dead level of equality should be aimed at. No man should have the right to claim tribute from another for access to his fair share in the reproductive powers of nature, or should be enabled to make a "corner" of private ownership of mineral wealth. But equal economic opportunity does not imply equality of social service, or of reward. When once men can all live like human beings they will be not only content, but happy, that the master spirits among them should move in loftier regions, like demigods of old.

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