

THE LAND QUESTION IN ROUMANIA AND HUNGARY

ILLUMINATING AS to the causes of misery and therefore of strife and war is the article on the leading article page of the *Glasgow Herald*, 4th September. At the time of writing the author spoke of the extraordinary wave of feeling which was sweeping over Transylvania. It had its roots in something deeper than national patriotism. It is the land hunger of the peasant who, hardly more than a serf before the last war, was first granted land of his own and an independent existence under the Roumanian Government, and who sees this independence threatened by union with a country where semi-feudal conditions still exist.

For obvious reasons politicians on neither side have cared to dwell upon this problem. But Dr Maniu, who started life himself as a landless peasant under the old Hungarian regime, understands it very well. His personal character and his well-known love for his native Province have gained him a powerful following, not only among the Roumanians of the north, but quite possibly among the younger Hungarian peasants who are loth to return, for purely sentimental reasons, to the state of landless dependence which will almost certainly be their lot under Hungarian rule.

Thanks to the Agrarian Reform brought in by Roumania after the last war, each Transylvanian peasant could own his own small croft, and was not obliged to work for a return in kind from his Hungarian overlord. It is safe to assume that this condition of affairs will not long remain once most of Transylvania is in Hungarian hands again. The Magyar-Transylvanian noble families, which include those of Count Teleki, Count Bethlen,

and other leaders of Hungarian Nationalism, have long felt exceedingly bitter at Roumanian partition of their once-great estates between the peasants after the last war.

For 20 years now those families have looked across the frontier and seen their relatives in Hungary proper enjoying the privileges long superseded in the modern world. Now, however, the new frontiers will enclose them safely in Greater Hungary, and it will probably be only a question of time before the antique Hungarian system of land tenure will once more restore their estates to them in full—at the expense of Roumanian and Hungarian peasant alike.

The land problem, too, was at the root of Hungary's indignant refusal of Roumania's first offer of an exchange of populations. Probably the fulfilment of this offer was dreaded by the Transylvanians themselves as much as any frontier changes, however drastic. The mere transference of the Magyar minority across the border would have taken no account of the estates and small holdings left behind them, land which in the aggregate came to a handsome proportion of Hungarian-Transylvanian nobles' old property. The peasants themselves could have been under no delusion that Hungary would treat them any better than she has treated her own landless population; while their influx into the already overpopulated rural villages, where it is sometimes a problem to devise labour for all, would merely have brought hardship to the districts concerned, as well as dire poverty to the transplanted. Exchange of populations only works where there is nothing to lose.

THE NEW DUKE OF BEDFORD AND HIS INTERESTS

THE MARQUIS OF TAVISTOCK well known as an advocate of "Social Credit" and the distribution of a monetary "National Dividend" to cure unemployment and make trade flourish (despite the bankers!) became the Duke of Bedford on the death of his father, which took place on 27th August. *The Times* obituary of the late Duke described him as "a great landowner," placed in the Peerage of England also as Baron Russell of Chenies, Baron Russell of Thornhaugh, County Northampton, Baron Howland of Streatham, Surrey, sole heir to the Barony of Chandos, created by Writ of Summons in 1337.

In another obituary it was stated that a Duke of Bedford could ride from Great Missenden in Bucks to the Wash without once leaving his own land; but in the course of years the Russell family parted with at least a quarter of their original possessions.

In 1913 the Duke sold part of his London estates including Covent Garden Market (rather the monopoly toll on the food-imports into London it was his privilege to collect under an Act of 1823), Drury Lane Theatre, the Royal Opera House, the Waldorf Hotel, the Aldwych Theatre, the Strand Theatre, Bow Street Police Court and property in 26 other streets—in all some 19 acres called the Covent Garden Estate.

At the time of the sale one newspaper remarked that when John Russell, Earl of Bedford, received Covent Garden from the Crown in 1552, it was valued at only £6 6s. 8d. In 1919 it was stated in the *Evening Standard* (25th October) that the net profits of the syndicate to which it passed was £199,000 a year. When the sale took place in 1913, Mr Mallaby Deely, M.P., and others, had an option to purchase for which Sir Joseph Beecham agreed to pay £250,000 and the Duke was to be paid

£2,000,000 (see reports, 17th February, 1917, upon the hearing of motions in the Chancery Division dealing with the administration of the estate of the late Sir Joseph Beecham); but on the death of Sir Joseph the trustees apparently sold the estate, for we find it reported in the *Daily Chronicle* of 18th March, 1920, that Mr Edgar Creyke-Fairweather in agreement with the Covent Garden Estate Company acquired the whole of the property for a sum which considerably exceeded £2,500,000.

In spite of the sale the Duke retained a very large part of Bloomsbury and, as the obituary says, "he kept also his private boxes at Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres each with its own entrance to the street." And there remain the estates in Devonshire, Cornwall, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northampton.

In many discussions with the new Duke on the Social Credit controversy he was wont to say "he had no interest in land" (was his father denying him anything?), and he could never be brought to see the advantages of Land Values Taxation.

In his new capacity now as one directly interested in collecting and absorbing these values he can at least better appreciate the arguments of the "King Charles Head Single Taxers." And with all he has said or may say about the National Dividend for "increasing the purchasing power" of all the people (including himself), in the quiet hours of contemplation the truth of Thomas Carlyle's picture must occur to him: "The widow is gathering nettles for her children's dinner; a perfumed seigneur, delicately lounging in the *Ceil de Bœuf*, hath an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and call it rent."