

"LOOK AROUND THE WORLD TODAY"

The Strife in Tunis

A series of economic and social problems which must be solved if a settlement is to be reached lie beneath the immediate political causes of the Tunisian crises, inherited by M. Faure's new French administration, writes *The Times* special correspondent, January 29.

Tunisia is a protectorate which the French occupied in 1881 because they considered that an independent Tunisia threatened the security of French rule in adjacent Algeria, annexed in 1865 by Napoleon III, which politically forms a part of Metropolitan France. For many years nationalist feeling in North Africa has been increasing. A state of siege was declared in Tunisia in 1938, and has persisted continuously since that time. The growth of Arab nationalism elsewhere and the formation of independent States in the former French protectorates of Syria and Lebanon, as well as new Muslim States in Asia, have combined to increase the North Africans' impatience with their colonial status.

As in all lands, social discontent in Tunisia is intimately related to the prevailing system of land ownership as the following extracts from *The Times* article show: "Until the entry of the French, Tunisia was a country of artisans, small-scale agriculture and primitive grazing. Now, of the three million hectares of cultivable land, half is owned by about 6,000 French citizens while most of the rest is divided up into Tunisian peasant holdings. The fact that some of the French-owned estates were

reclaimed by French enterprise from former waste and rough grazing does not mitigate the resultant social disequilibrium. More than a third of the population is now composed of migrant seasonal agricultural labourers."

The article speaks of the dispossession of many Tunisian peasants to build up French estates, and the influx of French manufacturers, aided by a system of preferences, has displaced Tunisian artisans without providing them with alternative means of livelihood. "At present the Tunisian sees Frenchmen (and South Europeans who have been granted French nationality) taking up posts in Government service and French-owned enterprises while more than three-quarters of the Tunisian Arab labour force seeks steady employment. The concentration of property in the hands of the French mining and similar companies aggravates his discontent."

M. Bourguiba is the leader of the Neo-Destourian (Constitutional) Party. Its main driving force is provided by the Arab trade union movement, UGTT, which organises the labourers and the General Union of Tunisian agriculturists, UGAT, consisting of peasants and farmers. The latter has up to the present hoped to win economic reforms by the methods of Western trade unions. Owing, however, to the predominance of French land-owning and commercial interests in Tunisian political life, the attitude of the authorities towards such labour activities as would be considered legitimate in Europe is less liberal than might have been hoped. Labour unrest

is sometimes countered by arrests and occasional shootings by the gendarmerie, who, incidentally, come directly under the authority of the French commander-in-chief, not of the civil Government.

It is gratifying to see *The Times* newspaper thus revealing the fundamental causes of the trouble.

Landless Africans in Kenya

A Petition to Parliament demanding the restoration of the land to the disinherited Africans of Kenya forms the keystone of a great campaign initiated by the Kenya African Union. A statement published by the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism, who are circulating the petition in Great Britain, refers to the alienation of 16,700 square miles of land taken from the Africans by Europeans during the present century. Mostly the best agricultural land has been taken. Some of it is farmed by only 2,000 Europeans (out of a total "white" population of 38,000). The rest lies idle. Most of the five and a half million Africans are crowded into the barren and tsetse infested "Native Reserves," forced to scratch a bare living from the poor soil allowed them. This in turn leads to excessive cultivation, causing soil erosion and a further worsening of the Africans' condition.

Before the settlers came, the land was held in common by the tribes. But when Kenya was made a Protectorate—a cynical word to employ in view of subsequent developments—it was claimed that such communal ownership passed to the Government.

The Crown Lands Ordinance, No. 27 of 1938, and the Native Lands Trust Ordinance, of 1938, authorise the alienation of native lands and the restriction of African occupation to reserved areas. The Commissioner of Lands can survey land and divide it into farms which have been given to Europeans only. In these areas, Africans are excluded entirely from the occupation of land. A European farmer may not even employ a non-European manager. The Petition calls for the withdrawal of these Ordinances. Further, it asks that Africans shall have the right to occupation and ownership of land in any part of Kenya and that they shall be allowed to occupy and farm immediately the large unused areas at present reserved to Europeans.

This journal deplores these conditions in Kenya. We recognise the just protests of the landless Africans, none-the-less we regret that the Petition should call for rights to the "occupation and ownership of land." So long as one man owns the land on which another must live there will be exploitation and inequality. To the tenant it makes little difference whether the land-owner be white or black. How much better, had the Petition demanded that the land of Kenya be thrown open on equal terms to all who wish to work it, subject only to the payment to the Exchequer of a rent equal to the benefits they enjoy, and to be shared equally by all. Only thus can justice between white and black, land-holder and landless, be achieved.

[Delegates of the Kenya African Union were guests at the Georgeists' Dinner held in London, on February 2. Copies of the Petition may be obtained from the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism, 21 Strutton Ground, London, S.W.1.]

How the English People Became Landless. A brief history that should be in every senior pupil's satchel. 2d.

Henry George—A Biography. By Professor R. Geiger. Paper Covers. 1s. 6d.

Source of Egypt's Discontent

Egypt's present political controversies with Britain seem a "superficial froth," writes Mr. Clem Brown in *Forward*, December 22. Returned from Egypt where he has been employed for twenty years as a technical adviser to the Government there, Mr. Brown says that the real cause of that country's social, economic and political troubles may be traced to peasant land hunger. "Competition for land, either to rent or to buy, drives land up to fantastic figures."

Good soil, a dependable climate and a well-organised irrigation system have made cotton growing immensely successful and a large proportion of the land is regularly planted with this crop. The high quality cotton Egypt grows finds a ready market, and so everyone from the rich land-owner to the poorest peasant is cotton minded. As a consequence everyone who can tries to buy land. The ambition of the small peasant owner is to increase his holdings so that he may one day become a wealthy pasha. Some few, luckier or more successful than their fellows, climb the land-owning ladder to success. Others, attracted by the high prices offered, sell their small family holdings. The unsuccessful small peasants flock into the towns to sell lottery tickets or become street hawkers.

The paramount need for land reform in Egypt is ignored by the people and their Government. Rulers and the people alike press for more and more industries, writes Mr. Brown. In a simple minded-fashion they believe industrialisation to be the key to modern progress. They ignore the horrors of the Industrial Revolution, the worst features of which, Mr. Brown says, are being copied in the new industrial slums of Cairo and Alexandria. Yet industrial progress is slow, for none of the basic conditions of heavy industry exist in Egypt. Only cotton spinning is successful.

The *Forward* article concludes with these words: "Who is to solve, and how, the problem of pasha and peasant—a problem which came before politics and will outlast politics?" The question of a method, simple, just and expedient, may be readily answered. How long abysmal poverty with its concomitants, disregard for human personality, internal and external strife must continue, history alone can answer. But if Egypt is not to perish a national saviour must arise to grant all her citizens equal and inalienable rights to work the soil of their country and to share in its value.

Africans Oppress Africans

Liberia, "Glorious land of liberty, by God's command," the sovereign African Republic on the west coast of Africa is ravaged by poverty and inequality equal to anything to be found in the European governed settlements elsewhere in Africa. (Area of Liberia, 43,000 square miles, population 2,500,000, population of Monrovia 20,000.)

In a broadcast talk published in *The Listener*, November 22, Patrick O'Donovan described the contrast between the belt of slums on the sides of the rock, on which the capital, Monrovia, is built and the quasi-American splendour in which "the wealthy" live on the top.

The inhabitants of the capital and the coastal strip

are mostly the descendents of the liberated American negro slaves who colonised Liberia from 1820 onwards. In 1847 they produced a Declaration of Independence and a constitution closely parallel to that of the United States of America. The original settlers made a rigid distinction between the Christian colonists and the native heathens under their jurisdiction. The country was divided between American-Liberians and "natives." The colonists kept the coastal strip for themselves; the rest they called the Hinterland and kept out of it as much as possible. Only owners of land could claim citizenship, thus excluding "natives," who owned theirs tribally and on a communal basis. They asserted a real superiority of brown over black. As late as 1930 the League of Nations found slavery in Liberia. These people made little attempt to educate or Christianise the natives, only to keep them firmly in their place.

Matters have changed a lot—and for the better—since before the war, writes Mr. O'Donovan, but the distinction between the two classes still exists in Liberia to-day. So long as wealth and power remain vested in Americo-Liberians, who disdain manual labour, form the country's land-owners, politicians, lawyers and ministers, there seems small chance of radical reforms in Liberia.

The oppression of African by African through the instrument of private property in land is an object lesson to those throughout the continent struggling for independence. Political reforms alone are not enough. Equal rights to use land and to share in its value must also be secured if there is to be justice and an end to poverty.

Justice William O. Douglas, a member of the United States Supreme Court said (December 18), "Unless loans and grants are tied to democratic leaders, who will work in their countries to abolish feudalism, we waste our money and perpetuate the causes that breed Communism. A feudal system that begat Communism in Russia will beget Communism elsewhere, unless it is supplanted by a democratic system."

What Nehru Wished To Do

Most Indian cities can be divided into two parts; the densely crowded city proper, and the widespread area with bungalows and cottages, each with a fairly extensive compound or garden, and usually referred to by the English as the Civil Lines. It is in these Civil Lines that the English officials and business men, as well as many upper middle class Indians, professional men, officials, etc., live. The income of the municipality from the city proper is greater than that from the Civil Lines, but the expenditure on the latter far exceeds the city expenditure. For the far wider area covered by the Civil Lines requires more roads, and they have to be repaired, cleaned-up, watered and lighted; and the drainage, the water supply and the sanitation system have to be more widespread. The city part is always grossly neglected and, of course, the poorer parts of the city are almost ignored; they have few good roads, and most of the narrow lanes are ill-lit and have no proper drainage or sanitation system. They put up with all these disabilities patiently and seldom complain; and when they do complain, nothing much happens. Nearly all the Big Noises and Little Noises live in the Civil Lines.

To equalise the burden a little and to encourage improvements, I wanted to introduce a tax on land values. But hardly had I made the suggestion when a protest came from a Government official, I think it was the District Magistrate, who pointed out that this would be in contravention of various enactments or conditions of land tenure. Such a tax would obviously have fallen more heavily on the owners of the bungalows in the Civil Lines. But Government approves thoroughly of an indirect tax like the *octroi* which crushes trade, raises prices of all goods, including foodstuffs, and falls most heavily on the poor. And this most unsocial levy has been the mainstay of most Indian municipalities, though, I believe, it is very slowly disappearing in the larger cities.—Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*. Published 1936 by John Lane, the Bodley Head.