

CURRENT MAGAZINES

The New Land Reform Proposals:—The Right Hon. F. D. Acland and Mr. Harold Spender in the *Contemporary*.

Italian Tyranny; An Anti-Fascist View:—Mr. James Murphy in the *Atlantic*.

The Riddle of Japan:—Mr. Geoffrey Drage in the *Edinburgh*.

Turkey under the Nationalists: Mr. H. C. Woods, in the *Contemporary*.

IT has been known for a considerable time that Mr. Lloyd George was incubating a new campaign, and that the field he had in mind was land reform. For some months past he has been presiding over the deliberations of a committee of Liberal landowners, farmers, labourers and politicians. The outcome is a volume, such as like conferences used to produce under his sanction in days long gone by. It is called *The Land and the Nation*. One remembers such volumes as *The People's Rights*, *The People's Budget*, and *The People's Insurance*.

On the contents of this latest brochure, Mr. F. D. Acland has written in *The Contemporary Review*. It sets forth a number of striking propositions,—that there is room to increase on an enormous scale the output of the soil of the Old Country, that such enterprise might provide work for vast numbers of persons who are now unemployed and in receipt of doles, and that to do this will involve a drastic change in the system under which land is now held. To the first two of these propositions, general assent will be given. It is the last that is beginning to stir the Furies.

Mr. Acland, who writes as a sympathiser, points out that there are now a million-and-a-third unemployed, and that there is no definite prospect of seeing this number reduced by any obvious method. The staple exporting trades of England have no sale to justify producing to their full capacity. And since the people of the country live by what they produce, it is evident that they must turn to those objects of production for which there is a market at home, so long as markets abroad are either closed or sharply limited. There is always a home sale for food.

Forty years ago, Mr. Acland goes on, England gaily turned its attention away from the furrow to the factory. If the factory cannot be relied on further, let attention revert to the furrow. At present England, which used to lead the world in agricultural

production, is being outstripped there by other countries. Take live-stock units, such as cattle, sheep, pigs. Holland, Belgium, Denmark, with slighter natural resources and no greater human resources, have been increasing fast in such live-stock units, while Great Britain has been relatively going back. It seems that if the average production in those countries were equalled in England, this would mean the settlement of something like a million more people upon the land.

Why is not this achieved? Because, says Mr. Acland, British farmers and potential farmers are more nearly without effective access to the land than Dutch, Belgians or Danes. Their farms are playthings in which the owners—who are not agriculturists—trade as with “amenities.” Everyone plays for “safety first,” no matter what happens to the soil’s productivity. The tenant knows that he has no security in his holding, and that he cannot regard it as property which he may bequeath to his heirs. The landlord, knowing how hard it may be to get a better tenant under such insecure conditions, is afraid to rid himself of one who cultivates badly. So the individualist principle of “supply and demand” has been working havoc with the chief of British natural resources.

What, then, does the Lloyd George committee propose? It proposes a plan which would combine the advantages of nationalization with those of peasant proprietorship. Under it the State would buy out all the land of the country, and become the sole landowner. It would let the soil to tenants,—guaranteeing, however, to those who are judged “good cultivators” the right of testamentary transmission from father to son.

This would have many implications. It would definitely abandon what many think—and think truly—to have been a system of great value in the past. Landlords used to be men of large means, with feudal dignity, taking their obligations to the soil as part of their profession, and willing to spend on a great scale in improving it. But those days and those conditions have passed. Sufficient proof is found in the present incessant sale of large estates. One may account for this by various causes, some of them due to world-conditions which the landlord did not create, but others due to a certain change in the spirit of the landowning class. The landowner, in fact, no longer leads. The system is, indeed, dissolving by itself, for at present only three-quarters of the land remains under it. Our question is not whether the old arrangement shall stand, but whether its transformation shall be intelligently and collectively guided. And there is a great deal at stake.

A huge bugbear, says this critic, is made out of "nationalization." But in truth the State is to-day the biggest landowner in the country. One has but to recall the areas owned by the Department of Woods and Forests, the Duchy of Cornwall, the Forestry Commission and the County Councils. It is proposed by the Labour Party to make farm workers the "employés" of the State. But the Liberal suggestion is very different, for it would conserve to "good cultivators" the right of inheritance, and it would at the same time protect the State from bad farming.

Of course, there are many difficulties in the way. Buying out the landlords would cost a great deal. There would be an expensive army of officials, though probably by no means so numerous as the land-agents, stewards, and their staffs who are at work under the present uneconomic arrangement. And it is said there would be a most objectionable "spying" by government inspectors upon those who were suspected of wasteful or inefficient farming. But the advantages, in Mr. Acland's view, would quite surpass the drawbacks. The productivity of the soil would be vastly increased, and with it the ghastly figures of unemployment would recede. When those who oppose it talk about expense, have they forgotten the hideous drainage of the "dole"?

This argument is reinforced from an unexpected quarter. That England should take a lesson from Irish administration, may strike not a few as odd. Yet Mr. Harold Spender points out that Ireland to-day has, relatively speaking, far fewer unemployed than England. "Her agriculture is flourishing; her trade is good." And why? Because in the course of the last two generations the land system there has been completely reformed. England paid the bill, as she was entitled to do—the price for prolonging the Union for forty years. She paid "a king's ransom towards saving Ireland from her landlords". But she may at least benefit by taking a pattern from Irish experience. Compulsory sale of land is there quickly restoring the whole of the soil to the people. And the people are profiting by it, through a grave increase of competition with the English farmer in such commodities as butter and cheese. "Travelling about Ireland," says Mr. Spender, "it has been my impression that no single reform has produced so great a social change, raising a whole class in one generation from deepest squalor and degradation to a high level of comfort."

But this example is not without its warning. In Ireland, we are told, the danger just now is "the undue power of the yeoman farmer." Peasant proprietorship by itself may well result in unprofitable farming. "A mere transference of land to the farmers

would hand England over from the unchartered mercies of a small set of irresponsible men to the equally uncontrolled charities of a larger set, by no means necessarily better." Herein the proposed English system would but reassert that old principle of land tenure on condition of public service. In the Middle Ages the landowner had to supply soldiers in case of need to the king. That arrangement belongs to a remote past. But its principle was excellent, and what is now required is to substitute for feudal tenure on condition of Defence a democratic tenure on condition of Food Supply. The State, as universal landlord, would be able to insist that its subordinate holders of the soil should serve efficiently by producing national commissariat rather than national forces. In an island country, dependent at present to a needless degree on imported food stuffs, the Great War but made specially clear how great would be such a gain.

The programme of this Liberal committee is now being put before the country in a platform campaign by the most accomplished of living orators. It is likewise being assailed with the vehemence that is always sure to be raised against what looks like "Socialism." Lord Oxford and Asquith has been making cautious pronouncements, with his usual sonorous impressiveness. But his followers have adopted a sharper note. There seems to be a squabble just now about the use of Liberal Party funds for this new propagandism. And with characteristic geniality Mr. Lloyd George invites the fullest criticism upon a scheme for which he claims no such finality as for "Tables of the Law." He will warm up, however, in time,—and not a long time, unless he is changed. It is his manner to begin low, and rise high.

MR. James Murphy was appointed by the Italian Government to direct its press propaganda in London during the Great War, and when the Fascists obtained power he went to Italy as correspondent for the British press. For some fifteen years he has been making a study of Italian questions, so that he writes with some authority about Mussolini and his ways.

Three years ago, he tells us, Italians thought that they were in sight of a Golden Age. When he arrived in Rome as press correspondent, he had become infected with the enthusiasm that surrounded him on his railway journey south of the Alps. The whole country seemed to have rallied to a new life at the call of the Dictator, and there was the most amazing unanimity among all sorts of newspapers. Famous statesmen of different parties

in the past were helping the Mussolini régime; the Vatican had directed bishops to co-operate with it; even the Socialists were ready to give it a fair chance.

But Mr. Murphy has been disillusioned, and others with him. Not a single non-Fascist statesman or political leader in the country is now, he says, associated with the *Duce*. The older statesmen have recoiled to the ranks of Opposition. Not a single newspaper of repute is supporting Fascism, except "its own subsidized and controlled party organs." And for lack of any outstanding man who can be prevailed upon to enter his cabinet, Mussolini is not only Prime Minister, but Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of War, Minister of Marine, Minister of Aviation. He seems to have his hands full, and a little more.

What is the explanation? The Dictator changed his earlier policy. There was a show of constitutionalism at first. But within a few months he was back to his older ideas of violence, and had enlisted the support of "the baser satellites with whom he had been associated in Milan." A sign of the change was the organized attack on the ex-Fascist deputy, Misuri, on May 29, 1923. After a hostile speech by this critic in the Chamber, Mussolini openly threatened to have him punished. And he was punished, in true hooligan style. Misuri declared in the press that it was done by the Dictator's orders, and there has been no contradiction of the statement.

This incident was the first token of the existence of a secret police, like the Russian Cheka. That there is an Italian Cheka is indisputable. It has its headquarters in a Government building, and a regular constitution, adopted at a private meeting in the premier's house. Its business is twofold: (1) to spy on all movements of political parties and persons opposed to Fascism, as well on lukewarm friends as on open dissenters; (2) to suppress the more dangerous adversaries of Fascism by bastinadoing them. Ample protection and immunity are guaranteed to such agents. Incidentally, an interesting account is given of this "bastinadoing." Mr. Murphy says the assassins are specially trained for their job in barracks, where they have a dummy figure upon which to practise with a cudgel. They are instructed to avoid fracturing the skull of a victim, and to aim rather at breaking the jawbone so that he will be laid up for months! Clearly Italian political life has evolved, under Mussolini, some methods all its own. The corruption of a Socialist has been the generation of something that puts the earlier type of autocrat in the shade.

What is the evidence for all this story? Mr. Murphy cites

his proofs. There are sworn confessions, it seems, of many ex-Fascists. There is General Balbo's letter dealing with the Minzoni murder. There is the long list of deputies whose opposition to Mussolini was followed by acts of violence done upon their persons. There is the admission by the Grand Jury of the Senate that the Cheka exists as a "committee organized against the enemies of Fascism." And there is Mussolini's own acknowledgment, when the question of the Cheka and its crime came before Parliament a few months ago: "I declare before the whole Italian people that I accept the moral, political, and historical responsibility for all that has been done." When the premier said this, three ex-premiers who had been with him crossed the floor of the House, and his own Minister of Justice resigned. They would not, in the famous phrase of Lord Oxford, associate themselves any longer with "government by competitive crime."

But the system goes on. Provincial and municipal employees are watched, and if they drop a word unfavourable to Fascism they are ruined men. Magistrates and judges are subject to dismissal on twenty-four hours notice. Banks are compelled to make a daily report of their transactions to the Finance Ministry, and if any trading concern is disloyal to Fascist interests the bank with which it does business is ordered to refuse financial facilities to it any longer. Letters are opened in the post-office, and stopped from delivery if they are disapproved. Private citizens are arrested in their homes, and cast into jail with common criminals, though they have often committed no legal offence. There is no writ of habeas corpus, and no redress, no matter what is done by authority.

This terrific indictment by Mr. Murphy goes on to relate how when a Fascist is brought to trial in the law-courts there is likely to be a gang of armed militia present to intimidate witnesses and attorneys; how the statement of public accounts is manipulated; how foreign journalists are kept from prying into finance, and how the native press is systematically muzzled. But why is all this endured? It has support, we are told, from two sources, the court party and the plutocracy. Mr. Murphy believes that the aim is to abolish all democratic usages, and to establish something like the old régime of the Prussian Junkers. Fascism has played for the allegiance of the wealthy, and has secured it. The Dictator has lightened the load of taxes upon the rich, and has transferred it wholesale to the proletariat:

Foodstuffs are now taxed to the last potato and the last head of cabbage to be gathered in field or garden; but the death duties have been abolished, and also the tax on the profits made by large corporations.

No general share has been taken by the Italian people in the business of government in the past, comparable to that taken by the masses in other countries. But Mr. Murphy hopes that the present terrible lesson on such perilous neglect may waken a real public spirit, so that even the horrors of Fascism may prove to have been worth while.

In an earlier issue of *The Dalhousie Review* the case in Mussolini's favour was presented by a distinguished British Liberal who had studied it on the spot. Here is another way of drawing the picture. A considerable time, too, has elapsed between Mr. Murray's survey and Mr. Murphy's,—time in which that mood of autocratic vehemence which even Mussolini's admirer had to deprecate has had a chance to grow. Unless the great bulk of British pressmen are wrong, the Dictator of Italy is a menace to civilization. And when one hears of the dangerous times in which he has to act, one recalls Lord Cockburn's wise remark that in dangerous times the torch of justice should be made to shine most steadily.

IF we may trust the opinion of Mr. Geoffrey Drage, there is not much help towards the ideal of disarmament to be expected from Japan.

A few months ago, this well-known English writer was on a trip to the Far East, and paid a visit to the Japanese. He has long been a close student of foreign relations, and the ways of Tokio have disturbed him. So he tells the readers of *The Edinburgh Review* that enormous military and naval preparations are afoot there, that there is a keenly sensitive national pride, and that Great Britain should "open its eyes to the ominous position of affairs."

It seems that the Exclusion law passed by the United States in 1924 has wrecked the spirit of the Washington Conference and of the Four Powers' agreement in the Pacific. In characteristic fashion, after that law was passed, a Japanese committed suicide before the American Embassy in Tokio to mark his sense of the insult to his people. What is more to the point is that since the war, while five cruisers have been laid down by Great Britain, five by France, ten by the United States, no fewer than nineteen have been laid down by Japan. Of vessels able to steam thirty knots and over, Great Britain has six, the United States ten, and Japan sixteen. Nothing in the direction of disarmament there!

What about the land forces? Mr. Drage thinks that the total number of men available on a war footing in Japan is not below a

million. Only the authorities can tell how many could be called up in an emergency, but one writer—who ought to be able to judge—says it is intended that Japan shall have by 1930 a fully trained army of four and a half millions. The rising generation, too, is being trained for military purposes. In primary schools military drill is compulsory, and the duty of “dying for the Empire” is impressed upon schoolboys at all times.

The constitution of the country, ever since 1889, has been on the Bismarckian model, and the appearance of popular government is superficial only. Parliament, for instance, has no real control over the budget; for if this should be rejected in any year, the budget of the year preceding comes automatically into existence. War Office and Admiralty have military and naval officers as their official heads. Parliamentary debates at Tokio are not significant of what is in the mind of those really in power. And the population is now fifty-six millions, besides the seventeen millions in Korea. In short, within sixty years Japan has risen from insignificance to be one of the four greatest Powers in the world, and she is resolved to be supreme in the politics and commerce of Eastern Asia. Her leading writers are very insistent upon the value that war has had in the past for improving the national economy, and the hint for the future is not hard to discern.

Possible grounds of war are not far to seek. Mr. Drage points out that the most advantageous places of emigration, such as America and Australia, have been closed. Japan particularly needs to import from abroad the three commodities of iron, coal, and cotton. Hence she has been making vigorous effort to get control of the large coal and iron deposits in Manchuria, Shantung and Siberia. Her chief export is silk, and for this her chief customer has been the United States. But various circumstances have impeded her. Her traders, for example, have shown an unfortunate disposition to offer samples of goods which make the price asked seem small, and then to fill orders with another sort of goods which restores the balance of profit by making the price seem large. No doubt Japan has no monopoly of this method in commerce. Rabindranath Tagore would say she learned it as part of her “westernization,” from those peoples with whom “business is business” and honesty is chosen so far as it is the best policy. But in her imitation of western ways she has made a mistake. She has found it neither good business nor the best policy on the whole to destroy her credit by cheating.

So with the western market difficult, she has been thrown back on China and Eastern Asia, where she has annexed Korea

and established herself in Manchuria. Already she is predominant in Peking. Ten years ago she presented to China her twenty-one demands, requiring secrecy, under threat of dire penalties. The Japanese ambassador at Washington formally denied that these demands had been made, but they could not be hid, and in the main they were granted "at the cannon's mouth." She duly signed the Covenant of the League of Nations, and forthwith proceeded with naval and military construction. The Washington Conference and its results served chiefly to give Japan a holiday in the building of battleships, which she used to build other types of war craft, to accumulate oil stores and oil tankers, and to strengthen her naval bases.

Very little is to be made of the injury she suffered in the earthquake. Mr. Drage warns those who think she was thus put out of the international field that they are deluding themselves. That economic disaster was hugely exaggerated. There is indeed some domestic trouble from a Labour Party, but this Prussianized State has introduced new legislation against anarchists. Much talk has been heard at Osaka about Bolshevism, and there is undoubtedly unrest, promoted—strange to say—to a great extent by women workers. But this observer believes that news of a war, for example, with China would unite the working classes in patriotic enthusiasm. And it would stimulate the industries on which they depend.

What has Great Britain got to do with it? Mr. Drage deplores the folly of those who think, apparently with Mr. Baldwin, that there is a very peaceful outlook just now. British naval weakness and isolation have lowered prestige in the East. Sir John Jordan is quoted here:

Sixty years ago, British naval co-operation cleared the Canton delta of pirates, and for the lack of it the southern seaboard is now so infested with piracy that trade is at a standstill.

But Mr. Drage does not blame Japan wholly. He recalls to mind how she was internationally defrauded again and again, and feels that it is best to say little about "broken treaties" in the past. What he wants to see is the maintenance of a British naval force on the spot, equal to that of the United States and Japan. And he wants to see the naval base at Singapore modernized, for without it the British battle fleet cannot act in the Far East.

That opens up many a question. The proposed expenditure on Singapore has been a thorny issue in debate for the last few years. But unless Mr. Drage is very far mistaken, it cannot be

dismissed simply on the ground that it would be a gratuitous menace to those peace-loving Japanese.

JUST now we are forced to interest ourselves very specially in the Turks. Their attitude regarding Mosul has been characteristic. So it is opportune to read the article by a recent visitor to Turkey, who reports some changes he has observed from the old days of Abdul "the Damned."

First of all, says Mr. Woods, there is no democracy and there is no freedom under the new régime. There is rather a centralization and an intensified Nationalism in excess of all that went before. The policy of expulsion and "exchange of populations" has made the Turkish race for the first time by far the most numerous part of the whole country. This has had various effects. It has reduced the problem of the foreigner,—in typically Turkish form of reduction. One remembers the old saying that the way to get rid of the Armenian question was to get rid of the Armenians. But there has been the drawback of sending abroad some of those workers who were most valuable for industry. Smyrna, for example, which used to have about 250,000 inhabitants, has now only about 150,000. The former Anatolian fruit-growers and carpet-makers have carried their skill, though they could not carry their raw material, to their new Greek homes. Transference of the seat of government from Constantinople to Angora has reduced that most historic city from a population of 1,200,000 to one of about 800,000, with a corresponding exit of capital. Its port is almost empty.

But Angora will remain the capital, for various reasons. One of these is its greater facility for being defended. Another is the propriety of keeping government in touch with its own people rather than with the outer world. But most important of all in Turkish eyes is the avoidance of contact by Ministers of the new régime with the contaminating influence of Europe. There is an "agent" at Constantinople, who acts as a sort of link between the diplomatic world and the Turkish Foreign Office at Angora. Hard lines on the gilded youth of European Embassies that used to find such exhilaration in the fashionable city on the Bosphorus! Angora is—different. But the Turks, like Gallio, care nothing for such things, and so far no doubt they are right.

Angora and Constantinople are 350 miles apart, but it takes twenty-five hours to make the trip! The new capital has a population of at least 50,000; it is 3,000 feet above sea-level; and there is

a climate which lends itself to malaria. Hotels are "beyond description." It is there, however, that "parliament" meets, so the place is very active. The President, Mustapha Kemal, appoints Ministers, and there is an elected Chamber. But cabinets are not subject to the vicissitudes of either popular voting or voting in the legislative assembly. They come and go at the wish of Mustapha Kemal. It is the President who controls the voting, candidates being virtually imposed upon constituencies, and the laws are decided upon by the Party in power—to be ratified rather than discussed by parliament.

A guiding principle of policy is to get rid so far as possible of all foreign influence. No attempts are made to attract foreign capital, and every kind of obstacle is placed in the way of foreigners desiring to do business in the country. There is rampant anti-clericalism, and religious instruction in schools of all types is forbidden. Much spying goes on, most of the Christians have been either murdered or driven out of the country, and one does not need to be told that there is prevalent corruption "at any rate among the minor functionaries." But there is energetic policy in agriculture, Mustapha Kemal being himself an enthusiastic farmer. Mr. Woods has to tell us of agricultural banks, distribution of seed to be paid for after the harvest, and a great development of Ford tractors. On the whole, in the view of this observer, the country has been "pulled together," and is prospering—within limits. As the offspring of the Turco-Greek war, the government had to be in essence military. And we are warned not to judge an eastern people by western standards. One is tempted to say that if this indulgence had not been strained to the very limit long ago, there would now be no Turkish administration left to judge.

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