

# A Chat with a Greek Refugee

THE office of LAND AND FREEDOM has long been a clearing house for the exchange of ideas, and a Mecca for visitors from all parts of the world. Only recently, it was our pleasure to have a gentleman of Greek birth call upon us. He is a refugee from his native land, at present enrolled in an American university.

It was heart-rending to have our guest relate the tragedy of his compatriots now enslaved under the yoke of the oppressor. From a Turkish friend, a neutral resident in Greece, he learns that the emaciation of the townspeople renders them practically incapable of ever taking part in Hellenic reconstruction. Neither will the urban children be likely to grow into normal men and women. Boys and girls in their early teens, with wizened faces and bodies, are now literally aged persons. Constant fear has made of them, for the rest of their lives, a mass of frustrated humanity, senile without having passed through normal maturity.

Speaking with controlled emotion, he said:

"The Nazi-Fascist taskmasters rule with 'scientific' brutality. Wherever anything grows, there will be found a modern publican waiting to claim the harvest. The produce is counted while yet unripe on the tree, and death is the penalty exacted of the Greek husbandman who takes so much as one lemon above his miserable allowance. Just enough to keep their victims alive at the brink of despair is the Fascist formula of distribution under the new order."

Nevertheless, the people in the farming areas are still in comparatively good physical health. If not broken with some new instrument of torture, they may yet be able to procreate another generation to restore the land. Reflecting on this, our friend comforted himself with the knowledge that though the Ottoman Turks came close to exterminating his people, a beneficent Providence prevented the seed of rebirth from being wholly destroyed. Nature has always fought with might and main to preserve the species of a resolute people. We need go no farther for a classic illustration than the history of the Jews. Besides, there are still Greek fishing families on the surrounding islands. Of these, only a relatively few meet with unnatural death—when their craft are spotted in verboten waters, and machine-gunned by Fascist patrol boats. From the farming and fishing villages, then, and the many refugees abroad who will one day return, may we count upon a nucleus for the repopulation of our suffering Greek ally.

The first requisite, our friend reminded us, in the rehabilitation of Greece and other prostrate

countries, will be the immediate distribution of food. A determined effort must be made to salvage what we can of their exhausted bodies. Next, the devastated areas will require supplies for reconstruction. New roads, public buildings, and shipping centers must be rebuilt.

We, in turn, remarked that through the International Red Cross and our newly formed food commission much could be achieved, adding that probably an outright gift by the American people would be made, as has been done countless times before when great areas have faced distress. However, of such generosity, our friend would have none. He was certain that repayment would be the only honorable course. He had it all figured out, but imagine our disappointment when he said, "The wharfage fees and duties on ships and cargoes entering the fine harbors of a rebuilt Greece will be sufficient to our repayment."

The proposal was offered with such sincerity that for a moment we were stunned. It almost seemed cruel to disillusion him too suddenly.

"But you are proposing that your people pay a tariff on their goods, the goods which America and other more fortunate allies want to make available to your nation. You are penalizing your own countrymen!" we protested.

He was about to expostulate, but checked himself.

"How can you reconcile," we asked, "the desire to encourage your country's rehabilitation with anything that would discourage the sending of goods into its borders?"

He puzzled on this for a while. But he gradually awakened to the import of the question. He looked about at the books by Henry George in our office—he studied the bust of George majestically resting atop its stand. Then, in our guest's countenance flashed something suggestive of a new-found acquaintance with the lore of ages.

"You've got something there!—as you say in the United States. Of course! Have you anything I can read about this?"

Indeed, we had! We gave him some literature, and bade him well as he left our office, a wiser and a gladder man.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

On the request of our dealers LAND AND FREEDOM has moved the date line ahead by one month. This will not in any way affect subscribers' full year of issues.