

APPENDIX VI: ECONOMIC PICTURE

Overview

The prevailing activity in the broader geographical region is by far the magnesite mining industry including extraction, treatment, and final production.

Only a few people are full-time farmers, shepherds, resin collectors, or forest workers. Nevertheless, most of the people employed by the mining companies are also part-time farmers on small family holdings.

The tertiary sector is apparent in the villages of Mantoudi and Prokopi and consists mainly of small shops and tavernas.

Tourism, apart from the pilgrims to Osios Ioannis o Rossos at Prokopi the year round, is not developed. Only Prokopi acts as a stop-over point for the tourists travelling towards the resorts of northern Evvia.

From the regional point of view, the whole area belongs to category d as defined by the law 1246/87, except Prokopi and Mantoudi which belong to category c.

The EEC also considers the entire region, with the exception of Mantoudi and Prokopi, as a problematic area in the sense of the directive 268/75.

The primary sector

Farming

The main irrigated farming area in the region is the plain of Mantoudi, covering ca. 650 ha., while in Prokopi the area under cultivation does not exceed 350 ha. The rest of the farming land of the region is considered marginal hilly agricultural land suitable for fruit-tree plantations. The average ownership does not exceed 2 ha. and is too small to fully sustain a family enjoying the average standard of living in Greece today unless farming methods and marketing of the products are radically revised.

There is little motivation for such modernization, however, because farming is considered merely a secondary occupation. Therefore, the aim of most of the part-time farmers is not to maximize revenues but to optimize them by trying to keep labour and capital investment as low as possible. This is why the greater portion of the farming area is used for growing low-labour crops -mainly wheat and other cereals.

Nevertheless, in recent years a marked shift has been observed regarding corn and vegetable cultivation. This shift, which is encouraged by the local Bureau of Agricultural Development, has been made possible through mechanization of farming and expansion of the area cultivated by the few full-time farmers (2-3% of the population) by leasing or, less often, buying the fields of those employed outside the primary sector.

The soil of the Kereus valley and the plain of Mantoudi is fertile and especially suitable for corn and vegetables. The peasants complain though, about high water retention due to inadequate drainage. The use of fertilizers and pesticides is extensive (1.5 t/ha for cereals, 1.0 t/ha for vegetables) and irrational. The advice of the single agronomist employed by the Bureau for Agricultural Development in Mantoudi and responsible for the whole basin is seldom followed; people rely more on the opinion of their neighbours.

Agricultural cooperatives exist merely on paper and efforts to group the farmers together in small agricultural collectives of 3-4 holdings may be considered to have failed.

The Union of the Agricultural Cooperatives in Mantoudi functions as an agency for collecting the cereals and corn harvested, paying subsidies to farmers, and for transacting the business of agricultural insurance.

Marketing of the other products is difficult and the farmers complain of difficulties in selling last year's bean

crop because of the low prices offered by the merchants (allegedly 30% lower than those of the previous year).

Animal Breeding

Animal breeding is not very important in the region and the few full-time shepherds are elderly : there are about 4 families in Mantoudi, 4 in Prokopi, and 15 in Dafnoussa who are farmers at the same time. There are only 80 cows in the whole valley, 6.750 sheep (260 domestic), 12,400 goats (2,000 domestic) and two pig sties (one near Mantoudi, the other at Pili) with a total of 160 sows (census 1985). According to the same census, Prokopi has 50 sheep and 750 goats, while for Dafnoussa the figures are 400 and 700 respectively.

The exact number of animals grazing in the forest of the study area is not known, since apparently some shepherds bring in their flocks illegally.

The methods employed are archaic and the infrastructure rudimentary. There are few shelters for the animals built in the traditional way using branches of trees interwoven together and fewer proper shelters built with stones. For the most part the animals are kept in unsuitable cold shelters made of metal sheeting in a very precarious manner. This led last year to an extensive catastrophe with hundreds of animals killed by shelters collapsing under the weight of snow.

Apart from domestic poultry, there are two modern hatcheries, one on the road from Prokopi to Dafnoussa and the other near Mantoudi. Both belong to the same company which operates hatcheries all over Evvia (Kelaiditis). At present, both hatcheries are closed for repairs having been damaged by last winter's heavy snowfalls. When in operation they may employ up to 10 people each and their production capacity is about 150,000 chickens.

Honey

Honey production is an important complementary activity in the region. There are 6,900 beehives (400 of which traditional) with 3,300 of them located around Strophylia, the centre of the Honey Production Cooperative; the other major centres being Prokopi with 1,700 beehives and Pili with 1,900. Honey is sold locally in Prokopi in shops run by the cooperative. Prices are satisfactory (750 drs/kg) and the production of 15 kg of honey per beehive may be the source of an important additional income.

One of the problems related to expansion of this activity is its semi-nomadic character. Beehives are usually moved around according to the time of the year, to enable the bees to find enough natural nutrition. Sometimes they are taken as far as the Peloponnesus.

Forestry and Resin Collection

A description of the physical condition and an historical account of the exploitation of the Noel-Baker estate are given in a separate part of the present study.

Here we shall attempt to outline the legal, economic and social aspects of forestry in the region administered by the Forest Authority of Limni, considering the fact that both the Noel-Baker estate and the broader region stand under the Authority's jurisdiction and are subject to its forestry and development policies.

Emphasis shall be given to resin collection in view of the Forestry- Industrial Complex planned to be created in northern Evvia, probably near Istiaia -with a resin treatment capacity well above the local present-day production potential.

The operation of the Forestry-Industrial Complex, should the project be completed, is likely to have a profound effect on the mixed forests in the area. Rationalization and productivity considerations could lead to intensive methods of exploitation. This would mean reduction of the species and clear-cutting of whole strips of forest, age homogenization of the planted tree groups, introduction of alien and more productive species, cutting of new forest roads etc.

At present, forests are neglected, tree-felling is limited and often arbitrary and illegal, while resin collection is declining.

The potential of the region, if properly developed, is high. The forest, together with the pasture lands and the agricultural fields, extends over 91,738 ha. It includes the forests of mount Kavarari (880 m) and Xeron Oros (991 m) to the N.E., Kandai (1,225 m) with the Noel-Baker estate to the SW and as far as the promontory of Dirphys to the SE.

Pinus halepensis, essential for resin production, covers 38,172 ha or 55.7% of the total forest area. High altitude mixed forests of *Abies cephalonica* and *Pinus nigra* suitable for round wood production cover 22,852 ha or 39.8% of the total. For resin production the 10,320 ha of burnt forest (forest fire of 1977) might also prove to be important should modern methods of direct extraction from the trunks and the roots be employed by the Forestry Industrial Complex as foreseen.

A major obstacle to adequate management and exploitation of the forests is the complicated proprietorial status. The public forests are better managed, up to 1983, they were directly administered and exploited by the Forest Authority's Public Forest Exploitation (Κρατική Εκμετάλλευση Δασών). Since then, the rights to exploitation were transferred by Presidential Decree 126/1983 to the Forest Cooperatives created for this purpose. However, these cooperatives function either poorly or do not exist except on paper, and the forests are neglected and badly managed.

The other category, the private forests, have also in most cases a complicated status, a legacy from the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the newly formed Greek State.

Since Ottoman law did not recognize property rights on forests, the transactions between the departing Turks and the new proprietors who bought their agricultural land "together with the adjacent forest" had no legal validity until 1837 when the Commission on Disputed Forests' (Επιτροπή Διαφιλονικουμένων Δασών) declared the forests private property of the persons who bought them.

Nevertheless, the Commission's work was never completed and the legal status of many of the disputed forests remains complicated even today. These forests are called "διακατεχόμενα" i.e. of mixed state and private ownership, and in most cases their "owners" have exploitation but no property rights.

In addition, partitioning of forest property is not allowed for either the fully private or the "διακατεχόμενα". This has led to collective ownership of forest estates by a very large number of legal descendants of the original owners. In these cases, exploitation of the forest is carried out by the cooperatives, in which membership is compulsory for each of the co-owners.

Further types of forest ownership, are the communal forests and the forests owned by monasteries, which enjoy a special legal status. One such monastery forest property is that owned by Moni Galatakí having a common boundary and extending southwards from the Noel-Baker estate.

A cooperative with compulsory membership is currently exploiting the forest of Mantoudi. Neither this cooperative nor the rest of the private forest owners have submitted any management plan for approval by the Forest Authority of Limni over the last 20 years.

Neglect of the forests has led to the development of a dense floor vegetation of broad-leaved semprevirent bushes, ecologically related to *Pinus halepensis*. Any future systematic exploitation would necessitate extensive clearing work to ensure accessibility of the trees to resin collectors and other forest workers.

Neither the private owners, the cooperatives nor the individual resin collectors are willing to make the necessary investment. This burden is assumed solely by the Forest Authority - but to an inadequate degree.

The better condition of the public as compared to private forests is illustrated by the fact that the resin production per hectare in the state owned forest of Papades is 560 kg while the average is ca 200 kg.

Another problem is the age distribution of the forest workers and the resin collectors: 60% are over 40 years of age, 29% over 50, with only 11% under 30.

The Forest Authority of Limni has drawn up a preliminary study of the infrastructure necessary for the creation of the Forestry-Industrial Complex. This study proposes clearing of the forest, construction of new forest roads which would optimize the distance to the trees, and maintenance of the existing forest road network. One of the proposed roads is to lead from Dafnoussa to Gourzorachi and will have a length of 1,850 m. The proposed optimal density of the road network in the forest is 13 m/ha and the mean distance to a road 384 m.

At present in the zone of *Pinus halepensis* (5,798 ha) in the Noel-Baker estate the density is 11.25 m/ha but the mean distance is 445 m. It is therefore expected that more road cutting will be recommended.

The measures suggested by the study aimed at ameliorating working conditions in order to make forest work attractive to younger people are:

1. Improved information about the advantages offered by the resin collection trade.
2. Administrative assistance in organizing cooperatives.
3. Incentives to raise the status of a resin collector to that of an industrial worker. These include:
 - a. Participation of resin collectors in the Unemployment Fund.
 - b. Right to family allowances normally offered to industrial workers.
 - c. Tax exemption for the forest vehicles.
 - d. State guarantee of stable resin prices.

From the legal aspect, the study proposes modification of the law on resin collection so that more intensive methods may be used (increase in the area permitted to be stripped, reduction of the maximal distance between two successive strippings, use of chemicals).

The Forestry-Industrial Complex is aimed at revitalizing the declining resin collection industry in the region (the traditional resin treatment plant at Ritsona has shut down, and the big forest fire of 1977 inflicted another serious blow).

However, the proposed changes and the works themselves will have significant environmental consequences and they will have to be studied and monitored carefully. In particular resin collecting can be carried out with new techniques that do not involve great damage to trees.

EAEBME, a state enterprise specialized in mining, is sponsoring the Forestry-Industrial-Complex. EAEBME commissioned a Finnish company to prepare a feasibility study, now completed but inaccessible to the public. Personal sources have disclosed that the capacity at the Complex is projected to be 10,000 t per year, i.e. half the total annual resin production in Greece (current annual production of the region is 800 t with a potential of 1,400 t). The managers of EAEBME (and most probably their Finnish advisors) consider the management principles of the Forest Authority "conservative" and "archaic".

EAEBME favours clearing whole zones in which new trees would then be planted, replacement of *Pinus halepensis* by *Pinus maritima*, increasing the density of the road network, employment of modern machinery (today rejected by forest workers).

The mining sector

The magnesite deposits of northern Evvia are the richest in Greece and produce first quality ore. Magnesite is found either in veins within fractures or in fracture zones of serpentinized peridotite formations. Since magnesite is an alteration product of peridotite, the concentration of the ore decreases with depth. Therefore, surface mining is the most common method employed for its extraction.

Within the broader study region, there are two main deposit concentrations: the area of Pili-Agia

Triti-Mantoudi (Kimasi basin) and the area of Kakavos-Troupi-Paraskevrema (Kereus basin).

Two companies are active in magnesite mining: ΑΕ Επιχειρήσεων, Μεταλλευτικών, Βιομηχανικών Ναυπλιακών with its affiliated company Μακεδονικοί Λευκόλιθοι (FIMISCO or Skalistiris Group) which employed 3,293 persons in 1984* and Μεταλλευτική Εμπορική και Βιομηχανική ΑΕ (Papastratis Group) which employed ca. 400 persons.

The mines of the Kakavos-Troupi-Paraskevrema area lie within the core study area.

Mining rights were sold by the Baker family within the Noel-Baker estate at Gerorema, Paraskevorema and Drazi.

The Skalistiris Group possesses surface mines at the sites of Paraskevorema, Koufala, Gerorema, Pyrgos, and Drazi (Eastern Sector), Kakavos Moraitis, Pefkali, and Xomantri (Western Sector), Archangelos, and Psili Rachi (Northern Sector).

The Central Sector contains the installations for the production of double-fired magnesite, the flotation enrichment plant, and the port facilities.

The Papastratis Group possesses both surface and underground mines at Tampaka between Kakavos and Drazi.

Being the main economic activity, mining has given the surrounding region an industrial rather than agricultural character and has influenced the social outlook of the people.

Magnesite production in northern Evvia constitutes the greater part of total magnesite production in Greece. The main products are raw magnesite, alkaline, double-fired magnesia and fire-resistant bricks.

Most of the production is exported and Greece possesses a large share of world magnesite market (1974: 46% of the raw magnesite market**).

However, exports were customarily directed towards preferential customers. For example, 90% of the fire-resistant bricks used to be absorbed by Romania.

Today the sector is in a deep crisis. Skalistiris Group ran into debt and was eventually taken over by O.O.A.E., the public organization responsible for the management and restructuring of ailing enterprises. While Skalistiris Group is operated by O.O.A.E., the installations of Papastratis Group are practically shut down.

The reasons for the crisis are both external and internal. The external reasons are:

- competition by cheaper products from China and Korea
- decline of the European steel industry, which could be a potential customer since the dolomite bricks in the furnaces are being replaced by magnesite bricks, which perform better.
- currency difficulties in the Eastern European countries where most of the exports were directed.
- drop in double-fired magnesia prices in the world market.

The main internal reason is bad management, applying not only to the economic, but also to the social and environmental aspects of the operations. It is, however, important to note that social and environmental mismanagement has resulted in appreciable present and future economic costs. The core of the problem was the paternalistic attitude of the industrialist towards "his" workers, and the company's relations with the state and the political patronage-clientele structures.

*) record figure in company's history

***) record figure

To work for the Skalistiris Group was (and still is) considered to be a privilege. Employment was usually mediated by a local politician who would in this way keep his constituents happy. In return he would mediate so that loans or other services and favours were granted to the Group.

This system worked satisfactorily for all sides as long as the company was making a profit. After the crisis which started around 1978, it made all rationalization impossible -all the participants being trapped in the short-term perspective of immediate economic or political gains.

When OOAЕ took over the Skalistiris Group in 1984, the company's situation was the following:

- Losses increased from year to year, adding to the company's enormous debt.
- The company was over-manned. The number of people employed increased constantly together with the debt. Most of the workers were unqualified (80%) and poorly utilized. The tendency to loaf was high and personal or political links were more important than performance.
- The equipment was to a great degree superfluous, old (90% over 10 years), and badly serviced. Needed spareparts were unavailable, while inappropriate spareparts were kept idle in the stores. "Cannibalization" of some of the equipment was the method commonly used to keep the rest in operation (only 65% of the equipment was operational).
- After 1978, when the crisis started, research and prospecting were reduced drastically.
- Short-term cost reduction methods were employed in extraction, jeopardizing long-term perspectives. Surface mining produced lower quality ore and made future underground exploitation impossible. To further reduce costs, the inclination of the mine walls exceeded 45%. The risk of landslides led to the abandoning of certain sites (near Troupi).
- The debris produced by this extensive method of mining forms huge mounds spoiling the environment. No measures were taken to restore the landscape (with the exception of some vain efforts to camouflage the debris with newly planted bushes at Paraskevorema).
- The flotation plants were in a bad shape with half the personal occupied with maintenance duties. The effluents of the plants have damaged the Kereus river environment. Only after a legal battle initiated by the Cultural Club of Mantoudi did the company agree to construct precipitation basins for retaining the suspended matter.

Management by the O.O.A.E. has ameliorated the economic situation of the company by stopping any new employment and by rationalizing production towards the more competitive prime quality products. Annual losses have been radically reduced but they are still high (ca. 1. billion drs. per year) and prospects are rather gloomy. Further reduction of personnel and shutting down of some mines producing lower quality are judged necessary.

Moreover, it is not evident that the funds needed for the renewal and maintenance of equipment will be made available or that the government will be prepared to bear the social and political cost of the unemployment which would result from further reduction of personnel, there being no alternative employment possibilities in the region.

Already it seems that a cheaper alternative to rationalization is envisaged: according to press reports, which have not been officially denied, Skalistiris ships are used to import raw magnesite from Turkey, which is processed at the plant near Mantoudi.

The tertiary sector

Detailed data on the tertiary sector are not available, and all information was collected locally.

The main economic functions such as the Agricultural Bank and other banks, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives and the Office of Agricultural Development are situated in Mantoudi. The same is true for the health services. The only dentist and pharmacy in the broader region are located in Mantoudi, as is the regional Health Centre. Higher secondary education (lykeion), both general and technical, is offered only in Mantoudi.

The second largest centre in the broader region is Prokopi, situated in the study area proper. According to information obtained from the Community Office, in Prokopi about 45 families possess small businesses; i.e. there are 7 tavernas and restaurants, 5 coffee-houses and bars, 5 commercial shops, 1 bookshop, 3 tourist shops, 3 honey shops, 2 petrol stations, 2 barber shops, 2 shoemakers, 2 kiosks, 1 metal-working shop and 1 lathe, 1 shop for construction material and 1 iconographer. Prokopi is a stop-over for tourists travelling to resorts in northern Evvia in summer and a year-round pilgrimage site. Only the pilgrims stay overnight. The one hotel is of very poor standard and is almost continually occupied by people working for the mines. Better quality accommodation is offered by the church hostel with a capacity of 200 beds, it is now being restructured for use by tourists as well as pilgrims. The public and educational services offered in Prokopi are a police station, rural clinic, a midwife, a forestry station, a kindergarten, (40 children), a primary school (160 pupils) and a lower secondary school (gymnasio) (110 pupils).

The question of land ownership

Irrespective of the form taken by the conflict between the local population and the proprietors of the estate, the fundamental material claim was "land".

Seized by force in the rest of the country during the struggle for Independence, in Evvia and the regions of Northern Greece later incorporated into the Greek state, land remained for a long time in the hands of few proprietors.

Eventually, the problem was solved with the expropriations which followed the installation of the Asia Minor refugees.

Landownership passed directly to the agricultural families who soon faced the obstacle of small fields and their great dispersion in space. Especially in Prokopi, where employment in the mining sector is high, many fields are left idle or are hired out to the few full-time cultivators of the region.

The demand for land has remained, however, constantly high for other reasons, the most characteristic of which are:

- Social security
- Endowment of young girls
- Building and speculation.

The current demand for the expulsion of the Noel-Baker family from the Noel-Baker estate is therefore based on the reasons described above, and has nothing to do with a classical peasants' revolt demanding agricultural land. The desire to acquire plots for building purposes is probably the main object, as it is a fact that land suitable for building is scarcely available in the region and whenever offered, it commands a high price (up to 20,000 dr/m²).

There are two reasons for this:

- The population has been constantly increasing over the past years and the standard of living has risen.
- The owners of the plots do not sell, speculating on a further rise of the prices in the near future.

Nonetheless, this social need, especially as far as young people and married couples are concerned, was never explicitly expressed as a reason for the fight to oust the Noel-Baker family.

The leaders of the movement preferred to convey the impression that land belonging to the Noel-Baker estate would be distributed to landless peasants for cultivation, a picture corresponding better to traditional clichés.

Furthermore, it should not be excluded that certain people envisage the possibility of building "illegally" at the fringe of the forest --a current practice all over whole country-- speculating on the potential touristic

development of the area.

The legal side of the land ownership question as regards the Prokopi-Drazi estate is as follows:

*Edward Noel, a young British painter, philhellene and relative of Lord Byron, purchased the lands of Ahmet Aga around 1832, with a hotzeti (Turkish property title) in Evvia. In the neighbouring village of Drazi the Englishman Charles Holt Braysbridge had purchased under the same title (hotzeti) from an Ottoman owner a stretch of wooded farmland adjoining the estate of Edward Noel. He soon however sold it to Noel under the contract 9387/27-2-1839 drawn up by the Athenian notary Kosmas Kokkidis. Thus the celebrated Baker estate came into existence, covering a total area of 6,200 hectares, of which 4,300 hectares were forest and wooded land and 1,900 hectares were farmland. The committee which regulated Ottoman land sales carried out the prescribed examination and issued ruling 304/14-11-1836 covering the Drazi estate and ruling 440/10-6-1837 covering the Ahmet Aga estate. The decree of 17-11-1836 "Concerning Private Forests" specified as a prerequisite for the recognition of private forests the submission within one year of the Turkish titles to a special committee "on contested forest lands" which met in the Finance Secretariat and would examine the Turkish titles and either accept or reject each application for recognition. This procedure was not followed for the Drazi estate, while for the Ahmet Aga estate the committee on contested forest lands rejected E. Noel's application. Thus the Drazi and Ahmet Aga estates could be considered national (public) land. Later the friend of Noel Karl Friedrich Mueller went into partnership with E. Noel to purchase an indiviso half of the Drazi-Ahmet Aga estate under the contract 14728/28-5-1841 drawn up by the Athenian notary Kosmas Kokkidis. In the light of the above the state should under the decree of 17-11-1836 be entitled to consider at least the forested areas of the estate as public land and treat them as such. However through administrative deeds such as logging licences as well as through various briefing materials it has characterised and treated the forest as a private one. Only after the fall of the junta in 1974 did locals in the village of Prokopi, Evvia, which is located within the estate, begin to press their claims, forcing the state to look into the question of the ownership of the estate and characterise it as "of disputed ownership".

Thus the present day heirs of E. Noel (Francis Noel-Baker), Martin Noel-Baker and Edward Noel-Baker) have submitted an application to the Agriculture Ministry for recognition of the estate under the provisions of the articles 9 -13 of the law 86/69 "Concerning the Forestry Code". The Council on the Ownership of Public Forests (COPF) ruled affirmately and the Agriculture Ministry accepted that ruling with its resolution 238522/3529/3-10-1978. The Noel-Baker estate has thus been classified as private through the processes of the abovementioned machinery of arbitration, but this judgement concerns only the forested areas on the estate, an area of 4,300 hectares. Under the law 998/79 "Concerning Protection of the Country's Forests and Woodlands", article 8, paragraph 4, an advisory appeal tribunal, the Forest Ownership Review Council (FORC) was established to deal with questions of forest ownership, attributing to the Agriculture Ministry the capacity for more reliable assessments of private claims on forest lands. Under the law 1341/83 article 9, the Minister of Agriculture is empowered under articles 9-13 of law 86/69 to refer back to the FORC all matters on which a COPF ruling has been passed. Within the framework of the abovementioned law the question of ownership of the Noel-Baker estate was resubmitted to the FORC for review. The FORC issued a majority (5-3) ruling rejecting the Noel-Bakers' claims and the Ministry of Agriculture accepted the abovementioned ruling with its resolution 147208/4674/25-4-84, so that the forest areas were now classified as public land. In 1983 the Ministry of Agriculture with its document 144695/16-5-83 ordered the chief forester at Limni, Evvia to revoke the protocol consigning the estate to the Noel-Bakers in the light of the favourable COPF ruling in 1978. The chief forester at Limni revoked the protocol of consignment with his order Ev/165/20-6-83. On the 20th of August 1983 the Noel-Bakers petitioned the State Council to cancel the previous orders, characterising article 9 of law 1341/83 as unconstitutional. The village council of Prokopi and the 9th May Society intervened at the State Council on behalf of the public with their petition of 19-3-84. In a written statement of 10-9-86 to the State Council the Noel-Bakers also filed a suit (382/84, dated 11-12-83) demanding recognition of their ownership of the forest land in question. It was to have been discussed on the 25th May 1985 at a plenary gathering of the court of first instance in Athens. With its resolution 11400/84 the court of first instance in Athens referred the case, on the grounds that it fell under local jurisdiction, to the court of first instance in Chalkis. Litigation is likely to continue for a long time to come. the signing of the Agriculture Ministry's negative ruling 147208/4674/25-4-84 means that the ownership question is now beyond its prerogatives and

has taken the road of juridical settlement in the civil courts. The Agriculture Ministry is empowered to seek a compromise settlement only during the phase where the case is being heard in the Court of Appeal, provided that it has been specifically authorised to do so through an order of the Council of Ministers, which order must be ratified by law."

All the above relates to the forest lands, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, questions have also been raised concerning the status of the farmlands, which --when there exist or may exist public claims on them-- fall under the jurisdiction of the Finance Ministry. The Agriculture Ministry has made the relevant enquiries and has received from the Finance Ministry the reply that public rights to the farmland are indeed also in question, but that to deal with the problem a special ministerial council will have to be convened.

From what we have seen, then, the dispute concerning ownership of the estate is a very old one and is not likely to be concluded soon. If the question remains in the hands of the courts it is likely that litigation will continue for more than another five years. At the same time, however, an inclination is observable on both sides in the dispute --i.e. the state on one side and the Noel-Baker family on the other-- for there to be a freeze in the proceedings, which means that legal settlement of the dispute could be delayed even longer.

The most probable outcome seems to be the resolution of the ownership question through political initiatives. The Noel-Baker family has already used the diplomatic route, e.g. the British embassy and the Council of Europe, as means of advancing its claims. It is clear that both sides expect to benefit from changes favourable to themselves in the country's political scene and thus there is a continual delay in pushing for a judicial resolution. Some compromise solution could form part of an eventual political agreement. For example the forested lands could be handed over to a special public organisation to be turned into a nature park. However, the Agriculture Ministry, representing the public, no longer has any powers to negotiate a compromise solution, given that the question is now beyond its prerogatives and under the authorisation of the Agriculture Ministry by the Council of Ministers, which would have to be ratified through legislative action. Beyond that legal prerequisite there is also the social prerequisite of the local inhabitants accepting restrictions of their rights to public lands (hunting, grazing, woodcutting, etc.)