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A REVIEW OF SOME AGRARIAN REFORMS

BY *Earl Jones*

INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

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A REVIEW OF SOME AGRARIAN REFORMS

(with a selected bibliography on world land reform programs)

by

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INTRODUCTION

The cry for land is an old one, echoing through the centuries and growing to a lusty yell during the last fifty years. Man has long seen his economic independence as a little plot of land and his seeking to attain it has made and broken, changed and rejuvenated governments. The flights of the Pilgrims to Plymouth Rock, the Sooner to Oklahoma, and the pioneers to Oregon was spurred principally by a land hunger not requited by treaties, promises, nor international boundaries.

This same hunger is being satisfied peaceably or by force all over the globe, and its potential is or has been felt by most governments in the world. Unfortunately, many countries don't have huge expanses of land free for the taking and modern aggressions have not generally provided new territory for shifting permanently a population. Emigrations have slowed to a trickle over most of the earth's surface and nations must look within their own borders to satisfy land problems.

Tenure systems of the world have been long established and, until recently, the rights of those in control of land were considered inviolable. With new definitions of government centering on the welfare of all the people, old property rights are being abrogated and the landless in many areas are cultivating their own land. These socio-economic changes have been brought about in a multitude of ways, varying from the peaceful recognition of squatters' rights in Costa Rica to the violent revolutions and nationalization of all land in Communist China and the USSR. Between these two extremes, many schemes have been tried and have achieved many degrees of success.

Land reform can be viewed more than one way: from the social or economic standpoint, from the individual or national effects, or from the philosophical or political angles. Governments are political and have usually adopted reform laws with little or no study of the situation, with relatively small amounts of preparation for land recipients, and with less thought to the future of the action. The heat of the revolutionary spirit is seldom conducive to investigation and careful planning. Those benefitting the most in the shortest time have apparently conducted more research, planned with some alacrity, and proceeded carefully with their programs.

Each agrarian reform has its own background and operating story; no two are alike. This study examines fourteen programs --

those of Mexico, Burma, Ceylon, Communist China, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Formosa, India, Italy, Japan, The Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Syria -- trying to point out the salient features of each. These were chosen because each has special characteristics or combinations of characteristics not present in the others. Most of those not included are similar to one herein described. The Mexican program is told at greater length than that of the others since its goals and execution varied considerably during its 45 years.

The principal features of reforms can be listed as the:

- (1) length of time for the reform,
- (2) amount of land involved,
- (3) manner in which redistribution took place,
- (4) type of title issued,
- (5) compensation to former owners,
- (6) payment by the recipient,
- (7) effects on the individual income and on the national economy,
- (8) social effects,
- (9) education provided the recipients, and
- (10) financial assistance to the new farmers.

Not all of these have a bearing in each case and statistics or opinions are not available on others. Some of the reforms are so new that good evaluations are not yet possible. Nevertheless, patterns are evident in most of the programs and anyone interested in agrarian reform can learn some objective lessons from a study of representative reform histories.

MEXICO

Mexico is often described with Japan as having the most successful of the land reform programs. Significant differences can be pointed between the two but each in its own way has contributed a great deal to the better economic status of the nation. To understand the agrarian reform of Mexico, it is necessary to understand that it came on the heels of a bloody revolution involving most of the people, directly or indirectly. Old patterns were already broken and the thousands who had assisted in the fighting felt they had an economic share coming as part of the results. A timetable of the reform events helps clarify this great struggle.

1916 through 1934

During most of this time, land reform was a slow moving process. The basic laws and administrative organization were being established. The prevailing philosophy alternated between two points of view. By some, the granting of land to ejidatarios (ejidos are limited grants to use land while the government retains the title and some management rights) was viewed as a step toward establishing them as small, individual proprietors. By others the ejidatario was viewed as a person who would have continuing rights to a subsistence tract of land while he made most of his living by working on the large privately-owned haciendas. Obviously, the points of view are quite different. In one case, the ejidatario, after a few years of experience, would move on to the status of a small independent farmer --the Jeffersonian ideal. In the other case, he would remain a hired man on a large farm, but he would have continuing rights to use a small subsistence unit from which he would supplement his wages. In neither case would the ejido dominate a large proportion of the total land in the country.

In the later years of this period, many of the early revolutionary leaders had more or less sickened of land reform. This was particularly true of Calles, who was president from 1924 to 1928 and continued as the Supreme Chief of the Revolution and the maker of subsequent presidents until Cardenas finally shipped him out of the country in the spring of 1936. Although Calles did considerably more toward breaking up haciendas during his administration than had his predecessors, he seemed to have a change of heart about 1930 and under his puppet presidents there was a noticeable slackening in the

reform movement and some definite steps were taken to bring land distribution to a halt. At the time that Lazaro Cardenas assumed office in late 1934, the land reform movement was in a crisis. Practically nobody was happy about the results. A good share of the older revolutionists wanted to stop it. A younger and more ardent group of reformers contended that the major difficulty was that land reform had not been fast enough nor on a large enough scale. More of the same medicine, in large, fast doses, was their prescription for the ailing program.

Cardenas Period, 1935 through 1940

Cardenas took the route of the younger, ardent reformers. He was the ultra-New Deal president of Mexico. The man who expropriated the foreign-owned oil industry and the railroads kept the reform program hot, and distributed twice as much land as his predecessors. In fact, 49% of all the land distributed between 1915 and 1956 exchanged hands during his administration. To Cardenas the ejido was a highly desirable system of tenure that should play a permanent and prominent role in the nation's agriculture.

It was also during the Cardenas administration that the Ejido Bank was organized as a specialized unit to make credit available to ejidatarios. The breaking up of the haciendas and the giving of land to the peons, very few of whom had either operating capital or experience in managing a farm, was clearly a threat to agricultural production if the process was to go ahead at a rapid and extensive pace. Some means had to be found by which the former laborers could be supplied with capital and taught to assume some of the functions of management. The Ejido Bank was set up to fill at least a part of the vacuum created by the elimination of the landowners and their administrators. The bank is a government agency which makes loans only to credit societies of ejidatarios. Usually there is one society in a community, all the members of which must be ejidatarios, but many ejidos do not have credit societies. In 1955, there were only 8,114 credit bank loans to slightly fewer than 5000 societies. Through the years the Ejido Bank has developed a system of making loans in the form of seed and fertilizer. In a few cases the bank, or a machinery center, prepares the land and plants the crops for the ejidatarios. These items are, of course, all charged to their accounts and sometimes the bank receives and sells the crops at the end of the harvest season. In these situations, which are most common in the cash crop producing areas of Northern Mexico, the Ejido Bank, working through the local credit society and in close collaboration with the elected ejido leaders, has taken over some of the principal functions of the former landlords.

1941 to the Present

Since the Cardenas administration, Mexico has turned to the right. Land reform has tapered off, although the amount of land distributed each year has not yet reached the low point that prevailed in the year or two before Cardenas assumed the presidency. There are three major reasons for the slackening of the land reform program: First, the presidents since Cardenas --Avila Camacho, Miguel Aleman, and Ruiz Cortines-- have not been such fire-eating reformers and have not viewed land distribution as being of such great importance as did Cardenas. Second, there are not many haciendas with good crop land in the older areas of the country remaining to be broken up. Third, recent governments have put emphasis on bringing new lands into production through both large and small irrigation developments. At the same time, an Agricultural Extension Service has been established, and farmers are being taught to make the available land more productive through the use of fertilizers, improved seeds and insecticides. The land problem is being viewed more in the context of increasing the amount of land available for use and increasing yields per acre than in terms of redistributing the available land among villagers. Great attention is also being given to industrial development as a means, among other things, of providing jobs to rural workers and thus alleviating the pressure of population on the land. The emphasis now is on greater production, with less attention being given to the idea of redistributing the means of production.

The amount of land distributed and the number of persons receiving land during each of the three major periods are shown by the following data, which have implications for many countries needing land reform.

Period	Number of Hectares Distributed		Number of Persons Receiving Land	
	Total	Av./year	Total	Av./year
1916-1934	7,777,356	409,335	783,135	41,218
1935-1940	17,890,577	2,981,763	814,519	135,753
1941-1956	11,146,291	743,086	267,276	17,818
TOTALS	36,814,224	920,356	1,864,930	46,623

It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the land which was originally in haciendas is now in ejidos. According to

the 1950 census of agriculture, there were 17,579 ejidos in the country with a total of almost 39 million hectares of land. This land represented approximately 44 percent of the crop land in the country. In addition, there were just over one million small-farm owners who had an average of about 1.3 hectares each. The land distribution program, directly and indirectly, has greatly changed the pattern of landownership. Moreover, the political power of the original class of large landowners has been greatly diminished. As individuals, some of the new class of landowners have significant influence on government administrative practices, but organized labor, the growing middle class, has more.

Of the almost three million farmers in Mexico in 1950, over 96% were either ejidatarios or owner-operators. The ejidatarios alone outnumbered the total of all other farmers by a small margin. However, since 1950 it is almost certain that the number of private holders has gained relatively. The ejidatarios, however, in spite of their numbers, operated only about 44% of the total crop land in 1950, whereas the private farmers operated 56%. Moreover, when we add together the number of ejidatarios and the one million private farmers with less than five hectares each, we find that this combined group of about 2,553,000 farmers operated only 51.5% of the nation's crop land. The remaining farmers, fewer than 400,000, operated the remainder. A significant part of the farm land is still in a few large holdings --23% is in the size of more than 200 hectares. This percentage is lower than that for this statistic in the United States, however.

Without doubt, there were terrible injustices and inefficiencies done during this reform period. It could have been done quickly and efficiently as in Japan, but the Mexican government had neither the administration machinery, the technical know-how, nor the control of its officials and people that Japan did. Much of the failure of the first 30 years can be blamed on this lack. Nevertheless, the reform has remade Mexican agriculture and the tenure system and much of the current economic and social progress can be traced to the distribution of land the first few years. Further education, both in the form of general and vocational or extension education, will further aid the ejidatarios to farm more efficiently and to make a real economic and social contribution to the government of Mexico.

In some areas, Mexico now faces a problem of minifundia. Many of the ejido units are far too small to give a reasonable standard of living to the farm family. Plots of 1/4 hectare are not uncommon. When this is combined with the slow rate of rural general and agricultural education, a serious situation is encountered. Industrialization will help but strident efforts to remedy the plight of many rural families must be employed soon.

BURMA

Burma attained her independence and sovereignty on January 4, 1948. The ensuing constitution provided, "The State is the ultimate owner of all lands." It further gave the right to regulate, alter, or abolish land tenures or take possession of any land and distribute it for collective or cooperative farming or to agricultural tenants. Its first trial showed that many amendments would be necessary to suit the changing circumstances, so the new Land Nationalization Act was passed in 1953.

The provisions of this act included:

1. The status of the tenants and agriculturists must not be reduced to lower levels as a result of nationalization.
2. The owner-agriculturists must be given exemption from expropriation of their agricultural lands.
3. There must be no bar to the right of exemption of agricultural lands belonging to resident non-agriculturists who are desirous of working their own lands.
4. Democratic principles must be observed in expropriation, in granting exemption, and in distribution.
5. Payment of fair compensation must be made.

The Central Land Nationalization committee is appointed by the President to control and supervise all other land committees and give them advice. A district land committee is also appointed for each district with the same capacities. The village land committees, which do most of the actual deciding, are elected from among the agriculturists by themselves.

A priority system was proscribed: (1) tenants and those who possess less than one-fifth of a tadontum (defined as an economic unit for the area), (2) agriculturists who possess a tadontum but find it impossible to make a satisfactory living thereby, (3) seasonal agricultural laborers, and (4) casual field laborers. Compensation varies somewhat with ownership but in general is repaid as follows. Those with up to 100 acres taken over, receive 12 times the annual

revenue (rent, established for the area and soil). For each 100 acres up to 1200 and more, the ratio is reduced one time, so that those with this larger amount receive only the rent for one year. Owners could take payment in cash or government bonds bearing no interest, so most chose cash. Since the reform has gone slowly, it has not so far been a large drainage on the treasury. Only 142,737 acres have been expropriated.

Extensive exemptions have been made, principally to those families who farm as a unit, as the Moslems and Hindus do, and to those commercial rubber and garden farms which the government felt could not be operated satisfactorily by small farmers. Religious orders and institutions were allowed to keep all their land. Rice farmers were permitted to keep large units on which heavy irrigation investment had been made.

CEYLON

Before 1916, Ceylon had principally a plantation economy with small peasant farms crowded into the small valleys. Most of the higher land belonged directly to the British Crown. At that time, further sales of Crown lands to capitalists were stopped and some provisions were made for opening these lands to Ceylonese on a long-lease basis. Almost no peasants were able to acquire property under this system.

A land commission appointed in 1927, examined the whole question exhaustively and recommended new policies which were incorporated in the Land Development Ordinance of 1935 and remains the current law. This policy:

1. Eliminated the sale of land by competition and substituted a mode of selection;
2. Created a new form of restricted tenure which was neither a lease nor an outright sale;
3. Established the principle that the needs of the local population must be met before alienation to any other category is considered;
4. Devised a system of mapping Crown land under which the initiative for development was to come from the government.

The new tenure system provided that:

1. The land shall be brought under cultivation within a specified period;
2. It cannot be sold for debt at the suit of an ordinary creditor;
3. It cannot be sold, leased, or mortgaged;
4. It can be left to only one nominated successor;
5. An annual payment amounting to 2% of the unimproved value of the land in the case of peasants and 4% in the case of those earning 450 pounds sterling annually is paid as rent in perpetuity.

Where the recipient of land --peasant or middle class-- fulfills the conditions regarding cultivation and brings his allotment into productive use the law provides for the issue of a grant. When this grant is issued, the land is surveyed, a copy of the plan is

given to the grantee and provision is made for the registration of the title. Land held on such grants continues to be subject to the conditions mentioned above.

This legislation has been in existence for a period of 24 years and many of the problems have not been solved. The first step was necessarily the ascertaining of what land is private and what is Crown. The law relating to settlement of private claims was revised, taking into account the customary land use. This prescribes the block survey of village areas and after the final settlement of private claims, a village plan is prepared. This is done in consultation with village officials. No land use surveys have been carried out before mapping and it has been found that land sold for agricultural use has sometimes proved uneconomical. Only two-thirds has been mapped at all. The pressure of land-hungry peasants has forced the government to "rough-map" and sell without proper investigation. It is likely that this will continue unless immediate increases in funds and personnel are made for the program.

The policy was to give each peasant an economic holding or a person possessing a little land, additional to make his holding economic. Unfortunately, what constituted an economic holding has never been clearly defined. "Sufficient for earning a livelihood" was the sole guide in the early years. In recent years there has been a tendency to divide the available land among applicants without regard to the economics of the division. In many parts of Ceylon it is being divided up in such small units that it is sufficient only for residential use and not for agriculture. As a result, the original objective of bringing into being a prosperous, self-supporting and self-respecting peasant proprietor is not being accomplished.

The total division has been (1) 290,000 acres as village expansion to 194,000 peasants, (2) 110,000 acres in colonization schemes to 16,125 peasants, and (3) 70,000 acres to 5,900 middle class Ceylonese. Little or no land has been sold to investors for development in commercial crops.

Only about half of the land sold for village expansion has been developed during the 20 years and less than that proportion sold to middle class people has been cultivated. Part of this problem's causes stems from the poor selection of recipients. Many were unwilling to do the necessary work for development and others lacked sufficient capital. The restricted tenure clause preventing mortgaging of the land makes it nearly impossible for many to make improvements. Others are skeptical of making capital investments when they do not receive clear title to the land. A later amendment also required that the owner accept the recommendations of the agriculture service

on common cropping, management, and marketing practices. These have been unsatisfactory to some who feel capable to handle their own affairs.

There is considerable talk in Parliament for new methods and development schemes but the lack of capital makes these impractical at the moment. COLOMBO(*) funds, Crown monies, and private investment foundations are currently working to find a solution to the problem.

*COLOMBO is a technical and financial assistance program operating among some Commonwealth and independent nations of Asia and Great Britain.

COMMUNIST CHINA

Reports about the present conditions in Communist China vary considerably but the physical facts of the land tenure are apparently easily told with a few words: All the land belongs to the government, the peasants are collectivized, and the farms are generally managed as communes. The agrarian reform was badly needed in China and this need was one of the larger contributing factors in the fall of the Nationalist Government.

The first relief for any segment of the rural system came in 1927 when the government took action to reduce the rent to 37.5% of the value of the crop. The exaction of this law was hampered by the fighting between parties. In 1930, a land law was passed which was based largely on Dr. Sun Yat-sen's principles. The provisions were:

1. A nationwide cadastral survey and registration of land conducted by the government for the purpose of assessing land values.
2. Land tax should be levied in accordance to the assessed value, but should not exceed five percent.
3. The peasants should obtain ownership by purchasing land.
4. The tenants should be given security of tenure.
5. The rent should not exceed 37.5% of the value of the crop.

Due to the military rebellion of the Chinese Communists and aggression by the Japanese, the government did not devote any great amount of energy to land reform. In fact, when the communists took over an area the land was immediately allotted to the peasants, but if the nationalists retook the area, the landlords quickly followed and resumed control.

The land policy of the Chinese Communists has changed with conditions. From 1927 to 1934 the policy was to confiscate the property of the rich landlords and distribute it equally among all the farmers who then became the owners. After the march to Yen-an, the policy of confiscation was dropped and rent reduction was enforced.

Before the end of World War II the rent reduction policy was dropped and confiscation revived. In 1947, a policy of complete and uniform distribution of land was adopted.

After the enactment of the Land Reform Law of 1950, there was a move toward collectives which began with the establishing of co-operatives. Collectivization was announced in 1953 and by 1955, 15% of the farmers were included. By May, 1956, it was reported that nine-tenths had been collectivized. In 1958, a program for organizing several collectives into communes was started. Results have been reported sketchily, but it appears that 90% of the collectives have changed to communes. The communes have central living dormitories, state management, central equipment, and the farmers are handled as workers from a central station. While production goals were claimed to have been met during the first year, Mao Tse-Tung has spent considerable effort attempting to find out why the 1959 and 1960 crops were near failures. 1960 goals were revised downward, probably toward a more realistic figure, but current reports indicate widespread famine despite flood control and irrigation systems.

COSTA RICA

Land reform is occurring in this Central American republic through three methods: (1) squatting on unused state or hacienda properties, with title granted after seven years of occupancy and the payment of arbitrary prices, (2) low-cost agricultural credit, and (3) government aided and sponsored or private business sponsored development of new lands. Although Costa Rica is sometimes titled as a nation of small farmers, 9% of the farms contain 71% of the cultivated land. Many of the titles to this land date back to pre-republic days or to the early days of expansion by the larger companies during the 1800's.

Many haciendas are completely or partially abandoned. The owners have made enough money to go into other businesses or their children are in professions and have no time nor inclination to continue with the farm. About 30 years ago, pressure for land in the Central Plateau and in the richer river valleys caused considerable movement to these lands. A lot of other land was available in Costa Rica but was not served by an adequate transportation system or the climate, such as on the coast, was undesirable. Later the Congress legalized their stay on these lands and provided for payment to the original owners. In practice, few payments have been made and a great many court cases are pending. Since many of these are subsistence farms, it is difficult to see how they could in the foreseeable future pay for them.

Low-cost agricultural credit is a function of the National Bank of Costa Rica. Low rate mortgage loans have made it possible for those with experience to purchase land or for its development in the settlement areas. Neither this money nor that for production has been available to squatters until they get at least the beginning of their title problems solved.

The new settlement areas have opened under government and private investment. United Fruit Company has opened vast areas of land and in many areas has encouraged small farmers to take up plots of reasonable size in the same vicinity. These farmers have been aided by the Company with land clearing, road building, schools, churches, medical care, and part-time employment. Technological skills and knowledge have been provided also.

Only a few government settlement projects have been undertaken and these have been small. More important have been the policies of the government which allowed anyone to homestead unsold areas, regardless of nationality. New communities of Polish, Italians and Chinese have established themselves with some financial help since World War II.

While large land holdings are still prevalent here, no great social pressure has combined with sufficient overcrowding to break them up. Since so much good land is still available, it is doubtful that more stringent reforms than are operating now will be adopted in the near future.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The purpose of the Czechoslovakian land reform which took place in 1945 was the elimination of the very small as well as the very large agricultural enterprises. As a result, the number of farms from 12 to 100 acres increased 7% and the small farms were greatly reduced. All land belonging to German collaborators was expropriated. 1,208,154 hectares were taken and distributed to the landless or added to small or middle size farms. State farms, public corporations, scientific institutions, and municipalities received 180,942 hectares and some forest land was kept as state property.

A 1946 policy required that all products be sold to or through the government and farmers were paid according to the size of their farms (20, 50, and over 50 hectares groups were formed) --the more land held, the lower the price received for the products.

The instituting of the communist government in 1948 brought indirect expropriation. High delivery quotas, lower prices, restrictions on machinery purchases, and high national insurance rates forced many larger farmers to sell some of their land or be taken over by the state. In 1949, priority distributions were begun which increased the cost of consumer goods bought by large landholders. Later that same year, all farms over 50 hectares were expropriated. 1,344,179 hectares of agricultural land went to families, state and cooperative farms got 100,000 hectares and 700,000 of forest. State forests operated by the State Forestry Board received 2 million hectares.

Large and small owners have been unable to buy modern machinery because of priorities and reduced income. Only the state and cooperative farms have achieved any significant degree of mechanization. Large farmers are excluded from joining the cooperatives and many small owners have not joined because of their fear of collectivization and dislike of "equalization" of returns which allows inefficient men to share the profits of the better managers. To date no new efforts have been begun to force them into the state or cooperative systems because, in general, the private per hectare yield has been higher than that for the others.

EGYPT

The Egyptian agrarian reform law had three aims: the redistribution of ownership; the reduction of rent; and the raising of agricultural wages. This law was passed in 1952 and full assessment of its effects is not yet possible. Nevertheless, some tendencies and actions can be noted.

The law declared that no person may own more than 200 acres of land. Landowners may retain up to 300 acres if they distribute 50 acres to each of two children. Land in excess of this maximum was to be requisitioned by the government over a period of five years. Land under reclamation could not be expropriated and that owned by industrial companies would not be taken for 25 years. Owners would receive compensation at ten times the rental value, which was set at seven times the basic land tax. Since taxes were low, the payment was correspondingly low. New owners were to pay the cost, 3% interest, and 15% administration costs over a period of thirty years.

The scale of redistribution is not large. Of Egypt's total agricultural land area of 6 million acres, 1,177,000 acres, or 20% was in properties exceeding 200 acres. About half of this is liable to expropriation and some of the owners of this land will no doubt escape. About one-sixth of this land was sold privately in small acreages. So far only 320,000 acres have been expropriated.

The recipients of land have gained a small raise in income. The annual payments plus the costs have been slightly lower than the previous rentals. Gross income per acre has remained the same or risen some due to increased use of fertilizers. Four provinces have claimed 50% increase in per capita income but inflation has eaten up much of this. There is no change in the type of farming or the scale of operation. The estate is still managed as one unit, and sales of the cash crops are handled by the management. Some are managed as direct government properties while others are functioning as cooperatives. The farmers have not become independent farm operators but have a system of collectives. There is a gain in status as well as in income for they have economic security comparable to that of individual ownership. The restrictions are that he must follow the advice and council of the manager, he may not sell or sub-let for 30 years, and he may market only through the authorized agency.

In theory a Board of Farmers can reverse the decisions of the management but in practice they serve merely as a work distribution committee and acquiesce to the desires of the state official. The introduction of machinery is reducing some of the small farm features such as the family cow, oxen, subsistence crops, and diversity. The approved rotation demands uniform cropping. Each farmer receives, however, income according to how much his particular plot or plots yield.

The reform in practice, then, is very managerial. The idea of creating a strong small peasant class, which influenced liberal opinion when the law was passed, has disappeared almost completely. With the level of education and management skills available in the landless class, it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise.

In practice, not in theory, the redistribution of property means that the land is nationalized. The real change is that the cultivator has a recognized legal status. It does not, however, benefit the entire farm population. This is inevitable. No reform, even if it went much further than the present measure, could provide land for all in this congested country.

In addition to the expropriated land, a new reclamation project is adding and will add more cultivatable land. About 10,000 acres are now being worked and it is hoped that 800,000 will eventually be settled. These are being farmed by carefully selected, trained, and supervised newcomers. The education and supervision are covering more than just the farming practices --they include customs, the home, family, and community. No immediate plan is yet promulgated for eventual ownership of the land by the new farmers although it is expected that the formation of a new rural Egyptian society, which is the aim of the project, will take more than the 30 years of the reform law.

FORMOSA

The Chinese National Government has instituted three land reform programs. The first was the reduction of rent on private tenanted lands to a fair rate; the second was the sale of public land to tenant farmers; and the third was the distribution of excess private tenant holdings among landless peasants. These were started in 1949 and completed in 1954 with the technical and financial assistance of the Chinese-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction.

(1) To reduce the rent, a standard yield for each grade of farm land was determined. This standard yield is not necessarily the actual harvest but is closely related to the soil fertility and productivity, on the basis of which all paddy rice fields and dry land are divided into 26 grades. The rental rate was then fixed at 37.5%. Lease contracts are made between the landlord and tenant and then registered with the government.

(2) In addition to the reduction of the rental rates, the program provided tenure security to the tenants in several ways. First, tenure of lease was lengthened to six years beginning from 1949, and any landlord who arbitrarily terminated the lease before the expiration of the period was subject to penalty. Second, "key" money, a special payment from the tenant to the landlord for a lease, was abolished. Third, advance payment of rent was prohibited and the amount of the rent, including the kind and purity of crop, date, and place of payment were all clearly stipulated in the contract. All contracts to be terminated must be announced in advance and registered with the government.

(3) To give additional protection to tenants against illegal acts by unscrupulous landlords, the government encouraged farmers' participation in program execution by creating a farm tenancy committee in each area to mediate and settle rent and lease disputes. The committee membership includes tenants, owner-cultivators, and landlords but gives tenants a greater voice in dealing with rent reduction matters. In addition, the government sent field teams to the rural areas to inspect rent payment practices and investigate the condition of the tenants.

The rent reduction program has reduced rental rates successfully on 260,000 chias (a chia equals 2.3968 acres) of private

tenanted lands, or 38% of all cultivated areas excluding public land, and increased immediately the cash income of some 300,000 tenant families. The effects were most evident in improved living conditions in rural areas. New farmhouses can now be seen in the area and clothing is better. The most beneficial development has been the increased rice production and the increased number of tenants who own their own farms. In 1949 the rice production was 1,200,000 metric tons and by 1953 it had increased to 1,600,000. 1,700 tenants have purchased 800 chias of tenanted land with their own savings and 28,900 have purchased 15,600 chias with the help of agricultural credit.

The government owned considerable land in Formosa. The land was opened for sale to tenants under an aided program. All farmers tilling public tenanted lands were qualified to purchase them. They were to pay a purchase price of 2.5 times the annual crop of their lands according to their respective grades in 20 semi-annual installments. This arrangement included a provision so that the payment plus tax did not exceed 37.5%. The purchase price was paid in commodity and the market value was determined at the time of payment. 63,000 chias have been sold under this program.

A government purchase and resale of private tenanted lands program has been instituted. This measure, known as the Land-to-the-Tiller program, went into effect in 1953. A detailed survey and classification paved the way and a suitable bill was drafted and arrangements for payment were made. 2.5 times the annual crop was paid the owners with government bonds paid semi-annually for 10 years. 30% of the payment could be taken in stocks of government enterprises. The purchaser also paid 2.5 times the crop, over a ten-year period. 143,000 chias of excess private tenanted lands were purchased and resold to 200,000 farmers on the island. Currently only 15% of the farmers of the area are tenants, a figure somewhat below that of the United States.

INDIA

In India, agriculture is under the jurisdiction of the 28 states. The problems in the different regions are not the same and the legislation varies in scope and nature. In general, however, the 1947 laws of the states follow this pattern: (1) abolition of zamindari (landlord) tenure, (2) protection of tenants that remain until they become owners, (3) minimum wages for agricultural workers, (4) limitation of the size of individual holdings, (5) consolidation of holdings, and (6) the organization of agricultural credit. The village aid program, a comprehensive extension-type program, has been helping the farmers with methods, living, and general education since that time also, and may, if it is successful, play a large part in the success of the reform.

The states passed various laws which transfer the ownership of land from the zamindari to the tenant. As an example, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, the owners were paid in cash if the amount were 50,000 rupees (approximately \$15,000) or less. If more than this amount were due, they were paid in non-negotiable bonds bearing 2% interest and redeemable in 40 years. The owners were allowed to retain land which was under their own personal cultivation.

The rights of the zamindari are taken over by the state and the tenants now pay their rent directly to the states. In some states the increase in revenue is considerable.

The tenants will be given full rights of occupancy only after they have paid the state a sum nearly equal to that paid to the former landlord. Uttar Pradesh demands 10 times the annual rent.

Laws have been passed for the protection of the rights of tenants and in general provide for the attainment of heritable rights in the land, prevention of eviction, and determination of reasonable rent. Rents are fixed at one-third to one-fourth of the crop and are payable in cash. Minimum wage laws have been enacted but are hard to enforce.

The Agrarian Reform Committee (national) recommended that no individual should be permitted to hold more than five times the economical holding in the region. The excess would be acquired by the state and redistributed to those with uneconomical holdings and to landless laborers.

Several states have enacted legislation for consolidation of holdings and the prevention of fragmentation. Even after consolidation, the unit may not be economical. Cooperative farming offers a remedy, or partial remedy, and has been encouraged by the government. When one-half the owners of an area wish to form a cooperative, they may do so. The cooperatives receive special benefits in the form of subsidies, reduction of taxes, and special interest.

The provision for agricultural credit is as follows: (1) licensing and registration of money lenders, (2) maintenance of accounts in a prescribed form, (3) furnishing receipts and periodical statements of accounts to debtors, (4) a maximum rate of interest, and (5) protection of debtors from molestation and intimidation.

The reports of the progress in land reform are very incomplete and varied. Probably this is due in part to the fact that each state has its own program. It appears that the program has met a large measure of success in assuring security of tenure, preventing excessive rent, and establishing many farmers as land owners. Uttar Pradesh reports the proportion of cultivating owners is now 83% as against 10% of the total before the reforms. In Bombay, cultivating owners now form 66.3% in comparison to 10.6% before reform.

It is difficult to measure differences in total production since the use of fertilizers, better methods, more irrigation, and improved varieties has been facilitated during this same time. Some progress has been made, particularly in rice yields, but much of this may be due to the aforementioned factors, rather than reform.

ITALY

Italy's land reform approached her problems from two angles: (1) subdividing large estates and (2) consolidating excessively fragmented holdings. Although most political parties had called for these measures for years, when they got into office they ignored the challenge. Not until 1950 were any appreciable reform efforts made.

The Sila Act of January 12, 1950 applied only to the Sila Plateau and adjoining territories, provided for the expropriation of 300 hectares on single estates. The 1946-47 real estate tax valuation was the repayment price. Bonds bearing 5% redeemable in 25 years were tendered. The Agency for Development of Sila was made responsible for expropriation, distribution, and reclamation of the 534,000 hectares.

The Stralco Act of October 21, 1950, was the forerunner of the current general land reform bill. No maximum property limit was established, but progressive acreages were expropriated according to (1) owner's income from the entire property and (2) the average hectare income from land under cultivation.

Properties producing less than 30,000 lira (a lira equals approximately \$.05) are exempt from expropriation. A graduated scale lists the number of hectares liable to be taken over, depending upon production. The 1943 Land Register figures were used in the pricing. A landlord whose land has been partially expropriated cannot acquire rural property to exceed 750 hectares for six years. Farms producing at 40% above the regional average are exempt from expropriation. Those on which approved reclamation or efficiency reorganization are being undertaken are not taken over.

The present reform plans are creating family units of 3.7 to 4.0 hectares. Dwellings, barns, roads, and potable water supplies are furnished by the Agency. Tree plantations are also established by the government. In the dry land areas, the village pattern of settlement is being forceably changed because so much work time is lost in travel.

The Reform Authority estimates it is spending 124,680 lira per acre for expropriation, financing, redistribution, and reclamation.

38% of this is paid through legislative appropriations and the rest by the recipient.

148,804 hectares have been taken and 122,336 distributed to peasants. About 741,234 more are to be expropriated in the near future. The total land for expropriation will be about 8% of all Italy's cultivated land.

JAPAN

Before and during the war, the government made some attempts to improve the lot of the farmer in Japan. Although the programs were not carried out completely, agricultural credit aided tenants in purchasing land, improvement in the terms of tenure was ordered, and the government paid tenants more for their rice than the landlords. The Diet (Congress) passed a reform measure shortly after the surrender but the American Occupation found it unsatisfactory and worked with the government officials to produce a better one.

Under the new law, all land owned by absentee landlords, all but 2.5 acres of tenant-operated land of resident farmers except that 10 was allowed on Hokkaido Island, and all but 7.5 acres of land belonging to owner-cultivators except 30 could be kept in Hokkaido, were confiscated. 3000 yen (1 yen equaled \$.25) per acre was paid for rice land and 1800 yen for upland. In addition, the government paid the landlords a subsidy of 880 yen for rice and 520 yen for upland. Payments were made by annuity bonds with 3.65 percent interest maturing in 24 years. Tenants who got land could pay in one or up to 30 annual payments at an interest rate of 3.2 percent.

Local prefecture and national land commissions were created to administer the reforms. The local commission determined the purchase and sale of land and to whom it should be sold. It consisted of three landlords, two owner-farmers, and five tenants. No attempt was made for the complete elimination of tenancy. The provisions for the tenants were as follows: All rent must be paid in cash and could not exceed 25 percent of the value of the rice crop or 15 percent of the value of other crops; all contracts must be written, and a landlord may not take back rented land for rental or his own use without approval from the local commission.

Many difficulties were encountered in carrying out the land reform plan. Thirty million plots had to be bought and resold in 12,000 communities, dealing with thousands of individual owners. The landlords were not eager to give up their holdings and some raised serious opposition to the reform. They attempted to impede the program by illegal eviction of tenants, lawsuits, charges of unconstitutional action by the government, and propaganda to discourage tenants from purchasing land. However, the courts ruled the law constitutional and in most cases the tenants refused to be

moved from the land by the threats. The fact that the Occupation had backed the reform helped to overcome the opposition, but the fact that the farmers wanted the reform was the most important factor in its success.

Shortly after the reform was completed, the yen dropped to one-fiftieth of its former value. Although there was considerable agitation for adjustments in the payments to the former landlords, nothing was done and they thus lost their investments. The new owners, of course, benefitted tremendously and many paid for their recently acquired lands in two or three years.

Many observers of the land reform in Japan have been skeptical of the progress, maintaining that as soon as the occupation troops were gone the landlords would come into power again. So far, little of this has happened. The only post-occupation legislation concerning land was an act in 1952 which froze the system of land tenure as it had emerged. Rents are still controlled, making landlordism unprofitable. The landlords receive only about 1 percent of their investment at the present land prices and out of this he has to pay taxes.

PHILIPPINES

Long before agrarian unrest had become a major social problem in the Philippines, public policy had been expressed as favoring the development of a broader base of land ownership, with the object of developing a large population element of independent working farmers instead of tenants. This principle was early expressed by the U.S. Congress in the Organic Act of 1900, regulating the disposal of the public domain. It provided for homesteading and it limited the size of agricultural public lands which could be acquired.

Immediately thereafter came the Friar Lands Purchase, to relieve discontent among the tenants on land owned by various religious orders. Over 153,000 hectares were included in this purchase, and practically the entire area has been sold and the Friar Lands Purchase Bonds paid off. Public land distribution became more strictly limited under the Jones Law and the new Public Land Law adopted later.

In 1936, when the Philippine Constitution came into effect, public policy was even more clearly expressed as to land tenure. This policy was not one suggested by the United States; it was a clear indication of public opinion. It took cognizance of the growing socio-economic problems which flowed from the antiquated tenancy relationship which failed to meet the needs. Provision was made for the expropriation of landed estates for resale and for the limitation in size of agricultural lands of private ownership.

Shortly after the Commonwealth came into being the Rural Progress Administration was organized. In 1939, Congress established assessed values as the prima facie value for expropriation purposes. When the Rural Progress Administration was dissolved in 1951, it had acquired only 27 estates which, however, totaled 43,318 hectares. Some of this land has been sold to small farmers and laborers, but most of it has been used for schools, experiment stations, and special projects.

The Rural Progress Administration was replaced by the National Land Settlement Administration and it has been changed to LASEDECO. So far, extensive reforms have not been carried out. Government has not been financially able nor necessarily willing to implement the act. Some estates going through receivership or involved in other

types of court cases have been taken over. Considerable effort has been used to convert formerly unusable lands into arable areas. Irrigation and other types of reclamation projects have provided some relief for the nation. Increased industrial opportunities have given work and a higher standard of living to many farm workers. All of these factors have probably delayed the reform which yet may come to the huge farms on Luzon and nearby islands.

PUERTO RICO

Up to June 30, 1943, land reform in Puerto Rico had affected a perceptible but not considerable area of farm land. The activities of all public land reform agencies, plus one privately sponsored project, had resulted in the acquisition for distribution or in the supervised redistribution of about 108,000 cuerdas (a cuerda is equal to 0.9712 acre). This area constitutes 5.7% of the total area in farms reported by the 1940 census. Of large sugar estates belonging to sugar companies or related interests, 35,000 cuerdas have been included in the land reform program. This constitutes 8.8% of the estimated 400,000 cuerdas operated by sugar companies and related interests before the programs affecting these landholders were initiated.

Land reform commenced in Puerto Rico very modestly in 1921 with the establishment of the Insular Homestead Commission. That agency purchased farms, usually from private persons, in some cases isolated from the general settlements and in areas of medium or low productivity, divided them into small farms and assigned them to agricultural laborers either on a rental basis or on the basis of gradual acquisition through the amortization of the value of the farm. The Homestead Commission established 2,074 farms aggregating a total of 24,000 cuerdas.

The setting up of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration by the federal government in 1935 gave a great impetus to the land reform movement in the Island. By June 30, 1943, that agency had created 995 farms and 10,026 subsistence farms, redistributing a total area amounting to over 44,000 cuerdas.

In 1938 the Farm Ownership Program, known as the Tenant Purchase Program of the Farm Security Administration, was extended to the Island. From then to the present, that agency has created 491 farms, each capable of sustaining a family at a satisfactory level of living. The land area involved aggregates 17,800 cuerdas.

In 1941 the Insular Legislature enacted a forceful piece of legislation which created a public instrumentality to carry out the long-desired enforcement and implementation of the prohibition on corporations to operate land in excess of 500 acres imposed by the Congress of the United States. The enforcement of that limitation which had existed and had been ignored and openly violated since 1900, became the principal aim of land reform.

On lands acquired from the violators of the tenure limitation or from other sources, the Land Law authorized the creation of small farms from 5 to 25 cuerdas in size and proportional profit farms. The right of all landless workers with families to a piece of land from $1/4$ to 3 cuerdas in size is proclaimed, and to that end the Authority is empowered to create home settlements. To date, the Land Authority has acquired from various landowners 7,200 cuerdas for these settlements. It has purchased 9,350 cuerdas formerly belonging to a corporation found guilty of violating the 500-acre landholding limitation. The Land Authority concluded by 1942, the creation and assignment of 4,199 home plots ranging from $1/4$ to one acre.

The biggest problem confronting the Land Authority is the successful operation of proportional profit farms, a form of tenure having the characteristics of individual management and profit sharing, and designed to harmonize the need for efficient operation of fertile level lands by large scale farming and a more equitable distribution of the net profits among the laborers working on those farms. Many home plots and small farms have been abandoned as Puerto Rico has moved forward with its "Operation Bootstrap" industrialization program. A satisfactory method for redistributing these lands has not yet been devised.

SYRIA

Agrarian reform in Syria is considerably different from that of most. First, the country is an underpopulated one in terms of land in proportion to people, despite the fact that some provinces are suffering from serious crowding and injustices in rentals and in wages. Large areas of potentially productive land are available, however, but capital, skills, and the desire to enter the new lands has kept them from becoming taken up.

The reforms have basically taken two forms: the conveyance of absolute title to individual owners, begun in 1926, and the opening and aid in investment of new lands, begun in 1949. The nebulous title regulations discouraged improvement or investment in land except by those in high political standing during the Ottoman Empire. The French added real individual titles, property for charitable and corporate entities, property belonging to the nation (not the ruler) and to municipalities, and land held by the state but available for settlement by those who could improve it.

Government reclamation and irrigation projects, agricultural credit, encouragement of long-term leasing by corporate and other business firms, and a type of homestead law have assisted resettlement. The number of hectares affected is not known due to the incomplete land surveys, the confusion of land laws, and the vastness of some of the territory.

One of the effects has been to take the ownership of tribal lands from the sheiks and register it directly to the members of the tribes. Only a few of these tribesmen, however, have actually settled on their little hunks of ground. An educational program on a small scale is currently operating to teach many of these nomads how to become settled farmers. The increase in sedentary agriculture among these people is due largely to this factor.

While no legal limit has been set on ownership, government and social pressure have discouraged too much land grabbing. Those lands belonging to the government have been generally leased to the large companies rather than sold, expecting that when vocational and general education becomes widespread, a great number will want to move to the new areas and the land will then be available to them.

In principle it seems unwise to put any obstacle on the size of properties, however, for to do so might negate the efforts to get private investment to do much of the land improvement which the government cannot afford. There is a real weakness in the new farming that is being practiced in the developing area --that of failure to keep up soil fertility. It is felt by most experts that limitation of property holdings would not remedy this situation.

CONCLUSION

While there have been some good results from all of the land reforms, there have also been some that were not desirable. The chief ones were:

- (1) Inadequate compensation and subsequent loss of investment capability;
- (2) Excessive treasury disbursements for compensation leaving other programs poorly financed;
- (3) Diminution of national production and resulting food shortages or dollar-draining imports;
- (4) Inability of recipients to make land payments and loss of newly gained property;
- (5) Social upheaval from the breaking of patterns and customs.

Degrees of all of these are found among the fourteen described reforms. Any area contemplating redistribution should plan carefully to avoid these pitfalls.

Probably the severest example of inadequate compensation was Japan, where inflation devalued the money received to an insignificant figure. Payment for 10 acres would not have purchased one after the inflation. On the other hand, those paying for their grants were able to discharge their debt in a very short time.

Excessive treasury disbursements occurred in Mexico during the Cardenas regime. Many other government programs suffered, and one that should have been advancing simultaneously with reform, education, suffered drastically. While some countries extended elementary education to nearly all the children during the 30's and 40's, Mexico has not yet been able to complete the task.

Most expropriations have reduced national production, chiefly because the smaller farms did not have the necessary elements of production --capital, techniques, and management. Too, less product is ordinarily put on the market after reform because the families of the new, small farmers consume more than previously. Formosa, Burma, and Mexico all experienced these problems.

Some of India's states failed to give sufficient training or provide suitable credit for the farmers, and former landlords have regained their property through money lending. While the reform has not been negated over the entire nation by this malfunctioning, too many losses have occurred. Most governments have granted extensions when recipients were having trouble meeting payments.

Probably no country has escaped social upheaval as a companion to land reform. It is doubtful that any one class can be uprooted in a society without unbalancing, at least temporarily, the general structure and affecting nearly everyone. "Japan's first two years following reform exhibited marked symptoms of social disorganization", Ladejinsky said in a February, 1949, article in Foreign Agriculture, "particularly noticeable in the smaller villages but apparent in every rural area." The landlords had served not only in that capacity, but also as councils, managers, bankers, and the heads of the communities. They and their former tenants felt the shock of the change. In some cases, government has taken over these functions and this has probably softened the shock.

Agrarian reform is a many-faceted action that affects many people in many ways. Whether these effects are just economic or just social or both is vital to the welfare of the nation. Like Shakespeare's "sow's ear purse," it may contain pearl-wise developments for a people or it may be just the sow's ear and the bitterness of this discovery may influence a country for decades to come. Detailed scrutiny of the purported purse before its purchase can eliminate or alleviate many painful discoveries later.

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