



LAND REFORM IN POLAND

by

Prof. Dr. Z. DASZYNSKA-GOLINSKA

Translated by

HARRIETTE E. KENNEDY, B. A.

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INTRODUCTION.

A political revolution during a period of democracy and of the enlightenment of the masses must be accompanied by a social revolution. So it was with the revolutionary movement of the year 1848, and since the Great War overturned a series of thrones in Europe a transformation of the structure of society has been taking place, and this transformation is carried out either by means of bloodshed or by means of social reform.

The restoration of Poland, which might be called one of the greatest of the world's political revolutions, has also been accompanied by a reconstruction of social relations on the territory constituting the Polish State. This reconstruction is being carried out peacefully, it is accompanied and preceded by legislation which creates the new structure of society. Immense difficulties for the young organism of the State result from this — difficulties such as no government of either free or subjugated states has met with. For Poland had her resurrection after more than a hundred years of bondage, during which she was divided into three parts each of which was organized and ruled by a different State with a different legal code. Hence every reform which from the very nature of things breaks down the resistance of hitherto privileged social groups, must also count with the legislative code and pre-war social structure of Russia, Germany and Austria. Hence until

such a reform is completely carried into practice, we must, in each part of Poland, adapt ourselves to pre-war laws and make use of the existing institutions. The art of governing in Poland at the present moment consists of the reconciliation of social tendencies with the possibility of carrying them into effect, and of the proper use of the former administrative apparatus until the new one is organized. Social questions have become the most important in present-day life. The mass of the population which took an active part in the expulsion of the invader after the Central Powers had been defeated by the Allies, demands far-reaching reforms. These reforms must reach their greatest extent as applied to rural relations, for Poland has had, up to the present, an immense majority of rural population over urban population. Now, as the independence of Poland has been confirmed, by the miracle on the Vistula and by further military operations, the moment has come to carry out an agrarian reform as well as to bring into practice a social policy in the department of industries.

The Polish State at once began to carry out bold and far-reaching social reforms and has thus avoided a bloody revolution and anarchy such as exists in unhappy Russia.

The Sejm (Diet) which was chosen on the most far-reaching democratic principles¹⁾ and which is principally composed of representatives of the peasants and of the working classes, is the highest authority in the Polish State. This Sejm,

¹⁾ The elections to the Sejm in Warsaw took place on January 27, 1919, and thus 3½ months after the expulsion of the occupying Germans and Austrians and at a moment when the country had as yet no frontiers. By degrees as these frontiers are determined supplementary elections are held in the new territories according to the principles fixed from the beginning, which are as follows:

since the first months of its existence, has been occupied with the land question and in July it passed a bill concerning land reform which changes the conditions of land ownership and turns Poland into a country of small proprietors. The significance of this reform can only be estimated if we consider the existing state of things in Poland with regard to population and division of the land.

THE POPULATION AND THE DIVISION OF RURAL PROPERTY.

Poland has been famous for centuries as an agricultural country, formerly a regular granary, supplying the West of Europe with corn. This was caused by its geographical position, as it lies on a plain. The fruitful earth has been under cultivation since the earliest ages. The smallness of the population which became, in the opinion of Korzon ¹⁾ the historian, the cause of the fall of Poland, permitted of export. Against neighbouring Prussia, the population of which quickly increased, Poland was unable to defend herself, and she could not gather a sufficiently large army to oppose the might of the Russian giant.

The existing state of things with regard to population has fundamentally changed since the partitions, which, though they put a stop to political life, by no means cut off economic or cultural life. To-day Poland belongs to the more densely popula-

Every citizen of the State who has attained the age of 21 years, either man or woman, may be elected and may vote.

Soldiers do not vote. Voting in elections to the Sejm and to all autonomous corporations is equal, secret, universal and direct, and the elections are proportional. One deputy is, on an average, elected by 50,000 electors. The Polish Sejm consists of 400 deputies and has been debating since February 9, 1919.

¹⁾ Internal History of Poland — I.

ted countries, but the type of her population has remained as before chiefly agricultural. In connection with this, we must take a look at the separate districts of Poland, for a century of separation has given each a different character.

According to the computations of the Head Statistical Office in Warsaw, (which have not yet been published) the state of population and its density was, at the beginning of 1920 as follows:

Total territory and agricultural territory — population and its density.¹⁾

Districts	Extent in thousands of sq klms.	Population in thousands	Density of population per sq km.	No. of population in rural districts in thousands	% of town population	Area under cultivation in thousands of hec.	Ploughed land in thousands of hec.	This include woodland in thousands of hec.
Poland at the beginning of 1920.	250	23629	94	17766	24.8			
Former Russian Poland	128	12631	98	9274	26.6	12284	6920	2.217
Town of Warsaw.	0.121	895			100.			
Provinces of: —								
Warsaw	29	2503	85	2056	17.8			
Lodz	19	2587	136	1763	31.9			
Kielce	25.7	2757	107	2327	19.2			
Lublin	31	2507	80	2155	14.0			
Bialystok	23	1381	60	1072	22.3			
Little Poland (Galicia).	78	8025	102	6430	19.9	7849	3806	2.015
Former Prussian Poland	43	2972	69	911	30.7			
Province of Posen	26.6	1978	74	660	33.4	2897	2151	573
Polish Pomerania (formerly West Prussia).	16	993	60	251	25.3			

Total territory and agricultural territory — population and its density.

Districts	Extent in thousands of sq klms.	Population in thousands	Density of population per sq klm	No. of population in rural districts in thousands	% of town population	Area under cultivation in thousands of hec.	Ploughed land in thousands of hec.	This include Woodland in thousands of hec.
Plebiscite territories:								
Upper Silesia . .	10.8	1937	178	1435	24.9	3437	2532	734
Kwidzyn	2.4	161	66	101	37.1	—	—	—
Teschen Silesia .	2.2	434	191	283	34.9	515	323	176
Spisz and Orawa.	1.7	85	49	—	—	—	—	—
Eastern Territories occupied by Polish troops at the beginning of 1920.	199	9065	46	—	9.8	*)	—	—

The borders of Poland on the East have not yet been fixed. Hence my figures are limited to those touching the former Kingdom of Poland. The plebiscite has not yet decided to whom Upper Silesia is to belong. For this reason I have divided the table into two parts and I can speak chiefly about the first part

¹⁾ According to the Statistical Annual for 1920 (now being printed) the frontier line marked on the German Staff map with a scale of 1 : 100,000 on the foundation of the respective articles of the Versailles Treaty.

Very many villages have a population of 5,000, for example in the Lodz district — Lazisko 14.95, Dobra 10, Popien 7; Warsaw District — Brudno 62, Młociny 19, Karczew 12, Skorosze 15, Wilanow 12 etc.

*) In consequence of the changes in the frontier the cultivated area is not yet ascertained statistically but it does not equal the same area in Posen and West Prussia.

which is constituted of undeniable Polish State territory. Only five states in Europe exceed Poland in density of population ¹⁾, and none of them has such a high percentage of rural population. It is true that among Polish villages there are settlements which have fifteen thousands inhabitants, but their character is rural and agricultural. Thus it is nothing wonderful that in Poland as in Italy the chief social question is the life and requirements of the rural population. Whilst Little Poland (Galicia) has the densest population, it has the highest percentage of persons living in the country and maintaining themselves by agriculture. The greatest land hunger is evident there and there also emigration for the sake of earning a living is the most frequent.

Austria treated Galicia as an agricultural colony, a convenient surplus market for the products of the industries of her Bohemian and German provinces. Native industry on a large scale, in spite of the wealth of the country, only began to develop in the XX century, and field work was an absolute necessity for 78% of the inhabitants. This led to such a dividing up of the land that a typical peasant property in that part of the country has not an area of as much as 5 hectares. Of more than a million of agricultural settlements (1,004,000 farms) 813,000 are little possessions, the owner of each of which must seek further earnings either in his own country or as an emigrant. The possessors of large properties must not be blamed for this, for such properties (including woods) in Galicia to-day constitute scarcely 35% of the whole territory. In the West these properties only constitute 26%; but the slight development of the towns and the artificial restraint of the industries

¹⁾ Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Italy and Germany. I am not counting here such small States as Monaco, San Marino and Luxemburg, which hardly amount to districts and which were made into States because of special political circumstances.

caused overpopulation in the country, where work was a waste of the energy of too many people who had no other way of getting their bread. As soon, however, as the peasant of Galicia learned to go beyond the borders of his country for earning purposes, hosts of peasants went every year chiefly to Germany, but also to other countries, to Austria, to Denmark, to Sweden and to France and they settled in America. The savings of the Polish and Ruthenian peasant, who, returning to his own country, bought land belonging to some manor, flowed in from all these countries. Spontaneous piecemeal buying-out of the manors by the peasants was quickly progressing. Medium sized properties disappeared, whilst the huge estates of the noblemen remained untouched.

The great landlords in Galicia, like the non-Polish noblemen in Teschen Silesia possess immense tracts of land. Landlords who own each of more than 10,000 hectares possess in Galicia 461,000 hectares of land, in Teschen Silesia 130,000 hectares. The state of things in Galicia, on the background of feudal Austria, was thought nothing extraordinary. 18% of the ground in Bohemia belongs to the Bohemia magnates, whilst to the Galician magnates (counting the great properties belonging to the Habsburg Archduke Charles of Zywiec) there does not belong quite 6%. On the other hand the properties belonging to the noblemen in Teschen Silesia were some of the greatest even in former Austria; a quarter of the country belonged to four owners.

In former Russian Poland the division of the property is much more normal, although not satisfactory. There was in force an order ¹⁾ forbidding the division of peasant pro-

¹⁾ Issued with the law of 1864. The owner had to leave himself at least 6 acres of ground. Any new settlement (farm) could not have less than 6 acres. Peasants only could purchase ground belonging to peasants.

erties of less than 6 "morga" in extent ¹⁾). Peasant families often disobeyed the law and divided up their properties amongst their families, but in spite of this the law somewhat hindered division. On the other hand it caused the creation in Congress Poland of an extremely numerous landless proletariat. Statistics before the war gave the number of landless persons living in the country as 1,220,000. The economist, Ladislas Grabski, even raises this number to two millions.

Let us consider this population, for it constitutes the majority of those who demand land. The author quoted above counts that there are 148,000 peasant families which have money and are looking for land to buy.

226,000 farm servant families also require land, as well as 218,000 families of occasional labourers, who work at intervals on farms belonging to other, go abroad to look for work and live in hired cottages.

These are all people who wish to possess their own piece of ground. If industry develops strongly their number will decrease. But here also we must count the owners of farms of a less area than 5 hectares, and the number of these in Congress Poland is given by statistics as 832,000.

These are such large numbers that the Land Reform law even if it assigned all the land to be bought by the peasants, would not be able to distribute to all. Hence this reform must be considered as the first step. At the same time agriculture must be industrialized, and this will bring with it a rise in and agricultural skill and knowledge among the peasants, and at the same time will give work to a larger number of workers upon the same piece of ground.

Things look better in former Prussian Poland, but

¹⁾ 1 Polish morga equals 0.56 hectare.

here also statistics for the Posen province and for West Prussia reckoned about 200,000 small farms of less than 5 hectares.

In the circumstances obtaining in Poland we may reckon as a farm which can maintain a peasant family and which constitutes a field of work for it, not sufficing for refined life but sufficient to ensure a living, a farm of from 5 to 20 hectares. This would fall out as follows in Poland:

Different districts of Poland	No. of farms of from 5 to 20 hectares	Their area in thousands of hectares
Congress Poland	365,051	3,663
Galicia	188,530	1,704
Teschen Silesia	5,658	51
Province of Posen.	51,000	657
West Prussia (Polish Pomerania) .	36,000	509
Upper Silesia	30,000	338

And among these peasants there is a majority of such as wish to round off their possessions, and since just these have funds with which to buy land, as well as suitable buildings, tools and harness, it was necessary to so draw up the statute concerning land reform that they could not buy the land intended for the poorest.

EMIGRATION AND SEASONAL-MIGRATION.

All the countries of Europe except France have passed through a period of wholesale emigration beyond the ocean. This emigration from Poland gave the United States from three to four millions of Poles who live there. In the nineties

of the last century the wave of Polish emigration also overflowed into South America, giving a considerable number of emigrants to the State of Parana (Brazil) and to the Argentine.

The seasonal emigration was still much greater than the oversea emigration. Poland principally supplied German agriculture with labour through this migration. The beet-root plantations in the North were chiefly cultivated by Polish seasonal workmen. The industrious workmen from Galicia and Congress Poland flowed into Germany. There are no exact statistics of this seasonal migration into Germany, but it may be reckoned at between 600,000 to 700,000 annually. The Germans realised that such an influx of the Polish element might strengthen their eastern borders and cause a reinforcement of the Polish population which would be undesirable for them.

There also existed exceptional laws (promulgated in 1890), according to which a season-immigrant of Polish extraction was obliged to leave Germany at latest by the 20th December. He was not allowed to come to Germany before the 1st February. This law did not apply to the Ruthenians; it was directly aimed at the Poles. The Polish educated classes understood quite well that the working masses were strengthening the economic force of the enemy. There were, within recent times, efforts to direct the Polish workmen into France, Bohemia, Polish workmen went to Denmark; but in none of these countries was the need for workmen so great, as to ensure the restraint of the season-immigration to Germany.

The German social policy went still further.

As the industries in Germany developed an effort was made to have the hardest and simplest work done by Polish workmen. Hence Poles from the provinces of Posen and West Prussia were directed towards the West of Germany. The census taken in Westphalia and the Rhine country in 1910 gives

304,000 Poles, and in 1913, this figure had risen to 400,000¹⁾ although there existed a prohibition against employing Poles from Galicia or from Congress Poland. There are some parishes there which are chiefly Polish.

In this way the German workman, replaced in agriculture and mining by the persecuted Polish element, directed his labour to manufacture (Veredlungsindustrie) and in a short time created that power of German industries which lay as such a burden upon the fate of Western Europe. The fall of Germany in the last Great War would no doubt have taken place much sooner if her economic strength had not so considerably been supported by the Polish workmen's labour.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

To-day, when Poland is again a sovereign state, it cannot permit that its citizens, male or female, should be obliged to leave their country and seek work from enemies. The first and most effective way of keeping the population in the country, is to distribute the land between it. It is necessary to give the opportunity to the greatest possible amount of the rural population to stay in the country, and hence to give them the ground which is so desirable to them. The second [step will be standard of cultivation of the land, to educate the farmers in a suitable manner, to aid the peasant farmers to cultivate the fields intensively and to breed cattle and poultry in a rational manner. Simultaneously the industrialization of Polish agriculture and the commercial use of Polish agricultural production must be carried out.

This can only be achieved by the national policy of the country. The usurping governments in each of the partitions

¹⁾ I. Okołowicz, Polish emigration and settlement, p. 257 and 258.

of Poland carried on an economic policy in accordance with their own interests. The public had absolutely no voice in the matter and even less could the ignorant masses of the people which were cut off from taking any part in political life have anything to say. Now, in independent Poland, when the peasants and workmen, by reason of their number, have come into the foreground, the Sejm passes the Land Reform Bill. There is hope that it will satisfy the just demands of the peasants and of the agricultural proletariat, and will increase the number of citizens of the State who are prepared to defend their country. For the Polish peasant is industrious, enduring, and loves the land, he is an excellent workman where he sees that he is working in the interests of his family.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE POLISH PEASANT.

The peasants, who constitute in Poland a class of small freeholders, are to-day fully qualified citizens. But it was only in the XIX century that the peasant was made personally free, liberated from all burdens which he bore to benefit his landlord, and was also allowed to own land. This was carried out in each partition according to a different legal code and at a different time. But since usurping governments decided as to the relations between the gentry and the peasants, agricultural land reforms were nowhere carried out with a view to the prosperous development of the country population and amicable relations between the manor and the cottage. The different system of the form of possession in every district, which is shown above by figures, is also the result of agrarian reforms originating in three different ways. During the last period of the existence of the former Polish State, the peasant question continually occupied the thoughts of thinkers and reformers.

It also, as an actual social question, became the most important of all problems during the first 60 years of the XIX century. Poland twice promulgated official acts which were intended to give liberty and land to the peasants.

Thaddeus Kościuszko when he proclaimed his war of liberation issued the so-called Połaniec Manifesto (proclaimed in the village of Połaniec) on May 7th, 1794. In this manifest he gave personal freedom to the peasants, lessened the burden of socage, and guaranteed the hereditary possession of the land which the peasants till then held on condition of performing socage. With the fall of the Kościuszko insurrection this proclamation lost its meaning.

When the Polish revolt of the year 1863 broke out the National Government issued on January 22nd "The Decree bestowing land upon the Peasants". This decree granted to the peasant without purchase all landed property which he lived upon at the moment when the decree was issued, together with the farm-buildings. It abolished all tribute and socage, whilst promising compensation from the national funds to the owners whose properties had been granted to the peasants. This statute included the peasants on private properties, government properties, church properties and all others. Besides this landless soldiers of peasant origin were to receive from the national properties three "morga" (four acres) each. This decree however, after the failure of the revolt, was not applied, but it forced the Russian Government to grant the peasants land as property in 1864.

The unhappy fate of Poland thus brought it about that the peasants received their rights and their land from foreign hands. The Code Napoleon which in 1807 was brought in in the Principality of Warsaw, created by the great Emperor, gave the peasants in what became later on Congress Poland and the

Province of Posen personal liberty, the right to change their place of habitation and liberation from patrimonial jurisdiction.

With the change of political circumstances, when, after the Vienna Congress, the Posen province was incorporated with Prussia, the status of the peasants was regulated by a Patent in 1823. The effort was made here to create farms which would be likely to prosper, inasmuch as the peasants were assigned much larger areas than they had before by paying rent or performing socage. Simultaneously concentration of the peasants property was introduced, serfage and socage were abolished. The Prussian Government actually did something to forward peasant proprietorship, but on the other hand, for a great number of years weakened larger Polish proprietorship. But the larger proprietors managed to hold on. To-day Polish agriculture in the former Prussian partition excels that in other parts and equals in productiveness German production.

In Congress Poland circumstances got into a muddle because of the difficulties which were made for private proprietors who wished voluntarily to put the peasants into possession or to rent the land to them. When the Russian Government granted the Polish peasant personal liberty it took away his right to the land, the consequence of which was the creation of a landless population running into millions. It was only in the year 1846 that the Russian Government paid any attention to the fate of the peasants. The decree of June 7th forbade farmers to be turned off their land, if they possessed more than three acres. The government also ordered that farms vacated by peasants should have new peasant families settled upon them within two years.

Nearly 20 years passed again when, in 1864, by its order of March 2nd, after the suppression of the Polish revolt, the Russian Government, forced by absolute necessity, proclaimed

the so-called Bestowal of the Land upon the Peasants. This order gave the peasants the land which they cultivated to be their property without purchase. The property owners were to receive compensation from the treasury of the Kingdom of Poland. The land was granted to all peasants, whether they held their farms through paying rent for them or by socage. The order did not regulate disputes between proprietor and peasant. Therefore even to-day, in many places, the peasants have conserved the right to utilise, to a limited extent, the manorial forests and pastures, which gives rise to frequent quarrels.

Galicia, which was the earliest separated from Poland was already legislated for by the Emperor Joseph II. The patent of April 5, 1782 refers to the Galician peasants and abolishes serfdom. Hence the peasant became personally free and only depended upon the landlord in so far as concerned his land for which he performed socage. After the reforms brought in by Joseph II, which were only partially carried out, there follows a break in peasant legislation until 1846. It was only the revolution of 1848 which induced Austria to abolish socage in Galicia. The edict to this effect was issued on April 17, 1848 and hence earlier than in the other countries making up Austria, for it was hastened by the government's fear that the Galician gentry were about to bring in peasant property themselves. The land was given to the peasants as property — that land upon which they were settled at the time of the proclamation of the edict; the rent due on peasant holdings was abolished and compensation was given to the owner. The peasants were obliged to buy themselves out of socage duties. Since it was allowed to divide and sell farms, peasant property in Galicia was very much divided up as the population increased.

The Polish Government now wishes to correct the reforms

which were thus brought in, also to level and raise the condition of the population in the different provinces.

AGRARIAN QUESTION.

The evolution of industry which has so remarkably placed large establishments in the first place, misled during the XIX century the views upon agricultural questions. It seemed during the first half of the last century that large farms must also have the upper hand in agriculture, farms which would be served by machines and worked by hired workmen ¹⁾. The conviction prevailed that, here as in industries, far-reaching specialization would take place. As an example and a proof of the direction evolution was taking American farms were pointed to. The disappearing large estates, which in fact were relics of feudal society, were expected to turn into undertakings depending upon the capital sunk in the land and a big current capital and to produce directly for distant markets.

Wheat farms, sheep farms, milk cattle farms, poultry farms on the American model were to replace the former farms where different kinds of farm stock were bred at the same time and where the needs of the owner's family and the nearest market were chiefly considered. It was forgotten that the land is a commodity, the amount of which cannot be increased, that its productiveness, when cultivating only one plant or breeding only one kind of live stock can only be increased to a certain extent. This being so, every particle of ground should be taken advantage of and this can perhaps best be done,

¹⁾ Karl Kautsky in Germany and Ludwik Krzywicki in Poland were advocates of this view.

under present circumstances, by the owner himself who is at the same time a worker on his own fields.

The greatest amount of agricultural products and not the greatest income is the motto of present-day agriculture since the war, and it is consistent with the interests and the wishes of the agricultural class. Humanitarian and political considerations tend in the same direction as agricultural ones.

In England, the classic country of industrial capitalism, the small farm of the independent farmer was gradually disappearing. But when, about the middle of the XIX century, this process seemed to be accomplished, the greatest of contemporary economists, J. S. Mill, raised his voice eloquently in defence of the small properties. The following decades confirmed the justice of Mill's apprehensions: the productiveness of English agriculture proved to be lower than the productiveness of the agriculture in Belgium and Denmark, the country parts were depopulated with alarming swiftness and for 80 years past there has been a cry for the nationalization of the land.

This idea has been called by one of the English Fabians, Henry D. Harben, an ideal, the fulfilment of which is so far on in the future that present day land policy need not take it into account¹⁾. On the other hand, since 1887 parliamentary acts have tended towards the translocation of some the population from the towns into the country and the creation of small farms. On the foundation of the statute of 1908 (Small Holdings Act) there were created within the few following years 15176 farms between 15 and 20 acres in extent. That is the beginning of reform, but at the same time it was the recognition of small individual property in a country where such

¹⁾ The Rural problem — page 47.

property had almost disappeared and where it was necessary to look in the towns for those who were to receive the land.

H. D. Harben, whom we have quoted above, expresses himself thus concerning the aims of the reform:

"Such a policy to be complete must give free access to the land to all who desire it, and a fairer opportunity to all who have the access now; must create order out of the chaos and muddle that cramps the production and distribution of our agricultural produce, and must organize and bend to the service of the nation the full energies of the labourer, the small holder, the large farmer and State as well" ¹⁾.

The more Poland, which is a country with overpopulated country parts, and with a peasantry who since decades is striving to satisfy her craving for land by buying up parts of the larger estates, must also commence systematical land reform. Because of the millions who possess land we are far from a cry for the nationalization of land. Yet we have also millions of landless men who, having no land at home to work upon, every year go to look for work abroad.

It is hence towards giving them land and not towards abolishing landed property that the Polish Government and Sejm tended. Even Polish Socialists supported the Land Reform (The Polish Socialist Party, P. P. S.), in spite of the fact that in theory they have another land reform programme.

Although this programme of theirs was not approved by the Sejm I shall give it here in a few words as the most far-reaching land programme:

The Polish State should get together a store of land formed of all the land which is public property, hence of State

¹⁾ Page 52.

domains, properties belonging to members of former reigning dynasties, the properties of the Russian Peasant Bank and of the Prussian Colonization Commission, Church estates, former Church and convent estates confiscated by the Russian authorities, as well as entailed estates created by the Russian Government. Besides this all private properties of more than 100 morga ¹⁾ should become the property of the State. The owners would not receive compensation. The forests would come under the exclusive administration of the State, the arable land would be either administered by the State or let out. There would be two categories of tenants: cooperative farming societies, in which only members could work and persons or families belonging to the landless population or to those who had but little land. Both categories would pay rent the amount of which would be revised every ten years." Counting with the tendency of the Polish peasant to the possession of land the programme states that the possession of national land is for life, and the family of the user has the first right to the land after his death. Such land could not be sold, handed over to others or divided. Neither would towns or communities be allowed to sell their land.

The State would give help to all tenants of national lands and would fix the extent of newly formed farms.

The Socialist programme leaves the peasants their land. Peasant properties in Poland never exceed, except in the East or in the mountains, 100 morga. As I have shown above, they are even a long way off from this maximum. In this respect then there would be no resistance from the masses of the peasants. On the other hand a peasant in possession of national land would not

¹⁾ 100 morga equal 56 hectares or 140 acres.

trust that it would not be taken away from him so long as he is only a tenant and not an owner. The expropriation of the squires without compensation would be a revolutionary act which the widest spheres of the Polish nation would look upon as violence and as an injustice.

The land programme of the Polish Socialists does not on the whole differ from the programmes of the Western Socialists, in so far as Western Socialists have a programme, for the watchword of nationalization is not yet a programme. There remains the question to be settled which land is to be nationalized.

AGRARIAN REFORM IN BOLSHEVIST RUSSIA.

On the other hand the Russian Bolshevists proclaimed and carried into practice a supposed socialist land programme. I shall describe it here since this programme expresses the most extreme tendencies of the present moment, which led to results quite different from those expected. I wish also, on the background of Bolshevist land reforms, to bring into relief the reforms projected by the Polish Commonwealth.

The Bolshevists, as soon as they came into power (October 26th 1917), proclaimed a decree concerning the land, which decree was signed by Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin, and which, without any purchase handed over to the nation the following kinds of landed property:

Crown lands, the estates of the Imperial family, church property and ecclesiastical property as well as all large private estates. The administration of the land is by this decree entrusted to agricultural local committees and to the district peasant councils. It is true that the carrying into practice of the decree was to be entrusted to the legislative assembly, but the peasants did not wait. The peasants began to take

forcible possession of the land and to destroy the manors and buildings as well as the farm stock, both live and otherwise. Instead of the landless and the cottagers getting the land, as the reform intended, the land was principally taken possession of by the wealthier peasants. The efforts of the poorer peasants who wished to get their part, and even the creation by the government of "Committees of the Poor" was of no use. No efforts to take the land away from the rich peasants were successful. The Government was afraid of peasant revolts, which might have an unfavourable result for them and, instead of abolishing private ownership of land, even confirmed it. On the other hand the differences between the classes of peasants became sharper, and agricultural production fell to a terrible degree.

The result of this state of things is the terrible condition of provisioning in Russia, the famine in the towns, the population of which is dying for want of supplies, and besides this, oh wonder of wonders, the dislike of the peasants to the Soviet Government! For the peasant, not being able to get manufactured goods, salt and coal in exchange for his products, come to understand that money is of no value and that it is of no use to work more than it will supply the needs of his family. He scorns a government which can carry nothing through. The principles of the land reform have failed.

In spite of this the Soviet Government continued to observe them. And thus we read in the Constitution (July 10th, 1918) a declaration of the rights of the people who are working and who are exploited, and this declaration proclaims:

"For the purpose of socializing the land, all private ownership in land is abolished and all the land, being the property of the nation, is handed over to the workers without

any purchase, on the principle of an equal right to use the land (art. 111)."

It would be hard to conceive a more doctrinaire formulation of the matter; in a general declaration, however this may seem justifiable. But we meet the very same principles in a statute promulgated some month earlier.

This statute concerned the Socialization of Land and was promulgated on February 19th, 1918. Here are its chief postulates:

"All proprietorship of the surface and contents of the earth: water, woods and living forces of nature is forever abolished within the bounds of the Republic of the Federated Councils. (Art. 1).

The land passes without purchase into the hands of the whole working population for its use. Only the man who works upon the land may possess it, and this independent of nationality, either citizens of the country or foreigners. All buildings and fittings become the property of the working population. When the land is distributed the precedence belongs to landless men and to cottagers in any given village, and then to the same categories of people from other villages. The area of possessions in any district will be fixed, and these limits will be defined by the Government in accordance with the number of persons who live in a given farm and are capable of work."

As we see, there is no question here of socialization. The realization of such a reform must be a primitive communism, continually regulated by officials, since the formation of the families changes. But in order to realize the programme of collectivism the statute goes on to speak of the development of collective farming, saying that it is more advantageous for

the economy of work and of products (Art. 11 D). This collective cultivation of the land is promised by the State all kinds of help both material and spiritual, precedence being given to communist colonies, to cooperative societies and workmen's guilds, over individual farmers, and this for the purpose of attaining to the Socialist ideal (Art. 35).

Even if we take up the position of the Soviet ideologists, who explain all divergencies from Socialistic principles as temporary, only to last until the new state of things becomes settled, yet we must wonder at the inconsequence and the incapability shown to think out the whole conception. Whoever knows the low intellectual level of the Russian peasant, the want of technical education of the farmer, the primitive manner of cultivating the ground, must know that this would-be communistic reform could only lead to anarchy and improverishment. It destroyed for many years the idea of socialization and even undermined the ancient Communism of the Russian village. This so-called reform should be recognized for what it is — not a social reform, but an effort to satisfy the peasant, and to defend the Government against counterrevolution, which, as is known, always comes from the country and not from the towns. Whether, however, some reactionary government confirming the established division of the land, will not be able to draw the Russian peasant on its side, the near future will probably decide.

THE POLISH LAND REFORM.

The Polish Land Reform Scheme is infinitely more appropriate to the needs of the country and of the community.

First of all it is the result of the tendencies of the organized masses of the peasants and arose out of the programmes

of the popular parties. The German Occupying Powers unwillingly and gradually handed over to the Polish State, which had been proclaimed by them on November 5th, 1916, particular departments of the administration. The Polish Ministry of Agriculture only arose in August 1918, when it received from the Occupiers the liberty to deal with landownership, the abolition of the remnants of coproprietorship between squire and peasants, the creation of small holdings, agricultural improvements and agricultural credits, the protection of private woods and technical education. As to the State forests, the Germans and Austrians reserved them to themselves, in order to carry away as quickly as possible the immense riches which they constituted. The Ministry was obliged at once to take up a definite position in respect to Land Reform, which the peasant parties had been demanding for some months. The Government rejected a reform which touched the greater landed properties, explaining that production on them would suffer, that the towns would be famished and the amount of ground obtained in this manner would not be enough to satisfy all demands. On the other hand the Ministry promised the foundation of a Land Bank, with a capital of some millions, which was to take up the matter of the parcelling-out of the larger properties and would gradually carry it out. The purchase of such properties by the peasants of Galicia and of the Congress Kingdom was very frequent even before the war, but the division was carried out without a plan, destroying the results of culture, such as manors, parks, progressive farming, and did not lead to the creation of really independent farms. The process of the passing of the larger properties into the hands of the peasants by purchase [and division is a healthy and natural evolution. It was never carried out in any country so quickly as in Poland,

and that in all its provinces. The amount of land possessed by the peasants in the Congress Kingdom rose between 1870 and 1909 according to Russian statistics from 4,546,000 hectares to 6,015,000 hectares, which means that it increased by almost 1,500,000 hectares. In spite of this, on account of the increase of the peasant population the average size of the farms was lowered from 8.4 to 6.4 hectares.

In Galicia between 1902 and 1910, 489 estates were parcelled out either altogether or partially, 44¹/₂ thousand hectares of which passed into the possession of peasants.

In Prussian Poland the system instituted by the Government policy of colonization, having bought up 309,500 hectares of land, created, up to 1913, 21,886 peasant and workmen's holdings within the regencies Posen, Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Kwidzyn and Danzig¹).

In this way there might have taken place by a natural process the transference of the greater part of the larger properties into the hands of peasants. But this process destroyed medium sized estates, the owners of which were obliged to sell because of debts, or were tempted by the prices paid by the peasants for the land, whilst the larger estates remained untouched. Besides, this spontaneous cutting up does not solve the agricultural question since the ground is generally bought up by rich peasants. But the number of landless men does not decrease and the number of dwarf holdings increases, owing to poor labourers buying tiny patches of land. The attitude of the Government was, therefore, wrong.

The Government, however, took into consideration those State lands which were fit for the creation of small holdings

¹) Ad. Prager — The Prussian Colonization Commission 1886/1918. The Economist 1920/II.

In the year 1909 the State land in Congress Poland amounted to 708,000 hectares, including 698,000 hectares of wood. The area of "donations" (estates handed over by the Russian Government to Russian politicians and generals) amounted to 373,000 hectares, $\frac{1}{3}$ of which (126,000 hectares) was woodland. Besides this there passed into the possession of the Polish Government 92 properties belonging to the Russian Peasant Bank, the total area of which amounted to 43,909 hectares. If we add 302 Russian entailed estates, the area of which amounts to 365,000 hectares, the total amount of land available would reach $1\frac{1}{2}$ million hectares (1,490,000) of which, however, the greater part, in some domains up to $\frac{9}{10}$, is the woodland unfit for cutting up.

I give this figure as an example, refraining from making computations touching the other provinces which, considering the present condition of statistics, would necessarily be inexact.

Later computations of the amount of available land took into account expanses on the East, on the territories of the ancient Poland, where the State land alone is very considerable, for example the Government property in the province of Vilno amounts to 368,000 hectares, in the province of Grodno 397,000 hectares, in the province of Minsk 786,000 hectares, in the province of Volhynia 523,000 hectares, and in the province of Podolia 89,000 hectares. 90% of this, however is, woodland. Besides, this land is disputed territory, nay part of it lies beyond the frontier line and cannot be reckoned with the available land in Poland.

THE HISTORY OF LAND REFORM.

The Populist parties went in their programmes much further. Both in Galicia and in the former Kingdom of Poland,

at the conferences of these parties, the following resolutions were passed a few months before the institution of the Ministry:

1) That a law should be passed ordering the forced purchase by the State, at a fixed price, of large estates.

2) That such estates should be limited to an area which makes it possible for the owner to carry on intensive farming, that is, to from 150 to 200 hectares, held on the condition that this land should be kept whole and that all institutions and industrial fittings, as well as such institutions as fishing, gardening, hop-growing, etc. should be kept up.

3) That there should be compulsory buying out of the forests, and that these forests should become the property of the State.

4) The small holdings to be created should have a sufficient area for independent farming, without exceeding 5 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ hectares. The State should favour in the first place the landless and cottagers. Well-off peasants should buy land for ready money. Understanding that the land reform must take a long time to carry out, the Populist parties put off the buying-out of private estates, demanding for the time being the imposition of a tax on. Russian entailed estates and government domains were to be parcelled out first, and this was to be done under the superintendence of a Land Bank.

As we see, the peasants, whilst they insisted upon a radical transformation of the condition of things with regard to land, tended towards this reform by means of legislation, that is by legal and quiet reform. It would be difficult to deny these peasants, then, great superiority as regards their conduct over the Russian peasants.

The peasant representatives in the Sejm followed the principles mentioned above. Their motions were brought forward as soon as the Sejm was constituted. The peasants did

not forget for a moment about their most immediate interests. There are several Populist fractions in the Sejm, but each of them brought forward their demands for Land Reform, forcing other parties to busy themselves with this question, even against the common interests of the country, the most important question for which ought to have been the passing of the Constitution.

THE LAND BILL.

The peasants impatiently awaited the reform, pressing their representatives to busy themselves about it. On July 10th, 1919, the Sejm voted the principles upon which the reform was to rest. The most important postulates of the peasants parties were agreed to, as we see from the resolutions of the Sejm. Hence there were passed: the private ownership of land, the maximum and minimum of area to be owned, forced expropriation by purchase and the handing over of the new holdings in the first place to the cottagers and to the landless men. The law, as voted by the Sejm, provides for the creation of a stock of available land from the same sources, which were indicated by the former programmes of the Populist parties, amongst these sources being also the expropriation of large estates.

It may be imagined that the above postulates met with heated and obstinate opposition. Since the majority in the Sejm stood firmly by its principles there began bargainings about the minimum to be possessed. At the last moment the supporters of the large property principle made such far-reaching reservations that the whole statute would have been only an illusory reform had they been assented to. There followed more or less justified compromises, so that for the former Prussian province, where there is the least demand for land and

where the level of agriculture is the highest, a maximum of 400 hectares was agreed to. The principle was also agreed to that the land to be purchased should be at the service of the local population. A similar maximum was accepted for the territories in the East, since the cultivation there is less intensive and requires larger areas.

It was not easy to define what was the part played by the State in the above-mentioned reform. The Polish State was in such difficult financial circumstances that it was difficult to speak of the purchase by it of the land connected with this law. The State by this law does not become the permanent owner of the land, but it is to regulate both the acquisition and the sale of land. The State has to conduct the registration of lands which are to be sold, has to superintend that the new farms should be such as will furnish independent work on the land and that they should above all become the property of cottagers or pass into the possession of farm-servants, whom the Land Reform Bill deprives of their means of existence, etc. The resolutions of the Sejm were, as we see, the logical expression of the will of the majority of the community, which majority is constituted by the peasants. They did not depart from the former fixed principles of purchase, they maintained the right of private possession of the land, but only for those who personally work. On the other hand the resolutions were very general, somewhat chaotic and could not serve as a base for the reconstruction of the condition of things in the country. Hence there was a great deal of criticism, arguments were brought forward warning against the lowering of the standard of the cultivation and of the intensity of production, the urban parties and the towns protested, and the Land Office created for the carrying out of the resolutions had only government lands at its disposal.

The opponents of land reform triumphed, not realizing that after the resolutions in the Sejm which bound the Government, there would come a statute which would be based upon the needs and wishes of the peasants. Thus it happened: — On July 15 and 16, 1920, when the country was already in the midst of a war, a statute concerning the carrying out of the Land Reform was passed. At the same time it was decided to assign for the purpose of carrying out of this reform a sum of half a milliard of marks.

THE BILL FOR THE CARRYING OUT OF THE LAND REFORM.

The Statute of July 15 is the product of ripe consideration and settles many doubtful questions which were brought up by former resolutions, and by its sensible, gradual execution it is capable of making Poland a State based upon the broad foundation of peasant democracy.

I take the liberty of considering it at greater length, assuming that it makes the tendencies of the newly-formed Polish State, which have so often been misunderstood, clear and plain.

If a Land Reform is to be carried out a store of land is necessary. The State does not buy this land, but must have it registered. Hence the Chief Land Office takes charge of everything connected with the land reform. The difficulties and the work are immense because the whole of the building must be begun from the foundations. Here is a small example: — it was necessary to have the land surveyed and divided, yet Poland has at the present moment too few land-surveyors for the task, and the work must be begun by arranging classes to prepare the necessary officials. And the resolution of the Sejm requires that 200,000 hectares should be parcelled out every

year, which means the formation of about 10,000 new farms. The difficulty of this task is very obvious, in comparison with the task of carrying into practice the English Small Holdings Act.

When estimating the worth of the Land Reform Bill it ought to be remembered that it is a child of the war, and that it is an expression of the greatest readiness to defend the country. I do not say that it was drawn up to the sound of artillery firing, for that would not be a very good recommendation of it. On the contrary, the Government and the Sejm Commission were drawing up the Statute and considering it for a whole year. But it has not only economic but also political considerations to deal with. The peasant to whom the statute hands over Polish land constitutes the enormous majority of the community in Poland, which means that he constitutes a majority in the army which defends Poland. The abstraction of love of the country and defence of the state had to be backed up by something real, by the sense that he was defending his own existence and the inheritance of his children. Deputy Kiernik emphasized this in his speech in the name of the Polish Peasants' Party, and he brought out the duties of all those who were to gain by this statute: — "I turn with an appeal to all those who are now to take the land over into their hands. Let this Statute be for them a signal for a holy war in the defence of that land. The State gives the land, it gives the best it has into the hands of the great masses of the peasants; so it must be their duty not to give over that land into the hands of the enemy, to defend it like their mothers with their own lives".

The Sejm passed the statute without objection.

Here are main points of the rest of the statute:

The following lands are assigned for parcellation:

a) Properties which belong to the State. These include State

domains and the so-called "donations", which are unknown in other countries. These are entailed estates, formed out of royal estates and private properties by the Russian government. These estates served to reward imperial dignitaries both civil and military for special services to the government, especially for suppressing Polish revolts, exterminating Polish patriots and stamping out the desire of Poland to separate itself from Russia. Properties were confiscated and the owners were sent to Siberia. These confiscations were specially numerous after the revolts of 1831 and 1863. 992 farms were taken away during this period from the Polish gentry. Thus arose great entails such as the entail of the Princess Paskevitch-Erivansky near Warsaw, the one of the Grand Duke Michael Romanoff in the district of Czenstochowa and others.

The "donations" were also intended to introduce a Russian element into the Polish gentry. This absolutely failed, for those who received the donations did not live in Poland, for the most part did not wish to manage their estates there and could not do it and sold their estates to Russian officials or let them out. The Polish tenants, who managed these estates on very good conditions, would like to put off their parcelling out as long as possible. Some of those persons to whom these properties were "donated" have come to Poland, but their rights to the estates cannot be recognized just in the same way as we cannot recognize the rights of the possessor of a horse which he has bought from a thief.

b) Estates belonging to members of the formerly reigning usurping dynasties, even should they be at the present time citizens of the Polish State. This is in accordance with international treaties and may apply to the estates of the Tsar of Russia (for example Spala in the Kingdom of Poland),

the estates of the members of the Habsburg family in Galicia and Teschen Silesia, and others.

c) Already in the year 1916, in the times of the Council of Regency, these estates were handed over into the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and of State Properties. This was a first timid step. There followed it a Statute issued on the 25th of July 1919, on the strength of which the "donatoin" estates, which came under the Entail Law of 1835 "returned into the possession of the Polish State as its property". For the purpose of administering these estates four districts were constituted in the Kingdom of Poland and in Galicia.

The Russian Government, in the year 1891, opened in the Kingdom of Poland the Peasants' Bank which lent money for the purpose of buying peasants' land to associations and to peasants, and also bought up estates for parcelling out. Of such estates which were not parcelled out the Polish Government took over from the Peasant Bank 29, which constitutes a store of 44,000 hectares of land.

The Prussian Government also parcelled out land by means of the formation in 1886 of the Colonization Commission, which was endowed with immense Government funds. The purpose of this action was to buy up land from Polish squires and peasants so as to settle German colonists upon it. Because of the unwillingness of Poles to sell their land to persons of a hostile nationality, the buying-up of Polish land went on slowly, since public opinion branded Polish sellers as traitors to the national cause. In the years between 1886 and 1913, the amount of land bought from Polish squires and peasants was 125,000 hectares for 95,000,000 marks and from Germans 314,000 hectares for 338,000,000 marks. The Polish government took over the estates not yet

parcelled out by these two institutions, assigning them for being parcelled out now.

d) The "mortmain" lands, used by the clergy, as well as by convents, chapters, churches and denominational communities, as well as the estates which remained behind after the former institutions, both clerical and monastic which the Russian government expelled from the country. These estates constitute a part of the property of the clergy or of ecclesiastical institutions, which must be compensated in another way. It will even be necessary here in some cases to come to an understanding with the Apostolic See. The property of Orthodox convents and churches, however, increases the store of government property.

e) The estates belonging to public institutions, the existence of which must be secured in some other way.

All these categories of estates are at the disposal of the Government, and their assignment to the purposes of land reform goes along the line of least resistance. But even here the interests of the tenants of the "donated" properties are touched as well as those of the tenants of State domains and of the clergy. It is also a matter for regret that by parcelling out the State domains the government gives away the property of the State and lessens the bases of its own credit. On the other hand "all forests, to whatever category of estates they belong, with the exception of forests belonging to Local Government institutions and small private woods, which would not be suitable for state cultivation," pass into the possession of the state. (Article 7 of the Bill passed by the Seym).

The forests constitute from 30% to 99% of the Treasury and "donation" estates. A considerable part of such estates will hence remain in the possession of the State. There will also fall to its share the whole of the forests belonging to private

persons, which in the Kingdom of Poland alone amounts to more than a million of hectares. The forest law of December 1918 hands over to special offices which are now at work all over the country, the duty of supervising the management of the Government forests and private forests.

It is only when the Government lands in a district are exhausted, or if there are none, that the turn comes of private estates to be expropriated. This is an immense breach of the views held as to property up to the present, and it was the subject of much hesitation. Its determination was preceded by a Statute concerning the cultivation of fallow land (March 1 and July 1, 1920), which became necessary because of the considerable amount of uncultivated land. For the owners who were ruined by the hostile armies and by military operations are frequently in no condition to cultivate the whole extent of their estates. Such land is let out to the peasants, chiefly to those who want to buy land and who are considered as future holders. The forced purchase of private land is based on the principle that only those persons who personally conduct the cultivation of the land, or their heirs ought to be its owners or possessors. Squires or their kinsmen are not, hence, excluded, provided they administer the land themselves. Hired labour is also not excluded, and even the inheritance of land is left in existence. On the other hand, in consequence of the lack of land for those who work upon it the State is reducing the extent of private property and is forcing the sale of such estates which are not sufficiently useful to the community. The following are subject to forced purchase: — a) First of all badly cultivated estates. b) Estates bought during the war by persons who are not farmers. The Statute proclaims that such estates belong to speculators (profiteers) or to owners, who seeking an investment for their money, bought land for it so as to secure them-

selves from loss through the fall of the currency. To this category also belong estates which have been bought with the profits of profiteering, and also those which changed their owner through sale or exchange. c) In consequence of the growing acuteness of the housing-question, which will have to be very soon settled by the building of new quarters, estates situated near industrial centres have been recommended for forced purchase.

The 1st article of the Statute mentions the above accumulation of land. Only after the exhaustion of this does the statute recommend the voluntary or forced purchase of well-cultivated private estates. Since the same order is to be kept to in the course of carrying the statute into practice, a good ten years may pass before they are purchased.

Article 3 expressly declares that the above mentioned order is to be kept to in dealing with private estates. But in case of the lack in any given district of estates of an earlier category, the purchase of the succeeding categories is ordered: since the Reform is to be carried out simultaneously in all districts, the turn of the well-cultivated estates to be purchased may come, in districts which have not been devastated by the war, fairly quickly and their owners may be subjected to undeserved repression. Similarly it may seem strange that the same price is to be given for estates which were voluntarily offered for sale as for estates purchased through forced sale (Art. 7). Buildings belonging to the farm and which are connected with it are to be bought according to their value at the time of building, in case they have been erected before August 1st, 1919. The compensation for improvements will be paid on the same principle. (Arts. 14 and 15). As all expenses have risen immensely since 1914, and every item costs continually more and more, it will be difficult to apply the above-men-

tioned regulations. This also necessarily applies to the principle laid down that the live stock and farm fittings and machines are not to be subjected to forced purchase. Hence the peasants and the cooperative farming societies would receive land which they might not be able to cultivate should the above-mentioned regulation not be changed.

In spite of these mistakes and various other ones, which, in the opinion of those who have to carry the Bill into practice must be corrected, the Bill has great merits. There must be some faults, for the Land Reform, like every other statute, was a compromise between the different requirements of warring social groups. The putting off, for example, for some years of the compulsory purchase of private estates seems to me to be justified, for two reasons. The present condition of provisioning in Poland makes it necessary to avoid all danger of a decrease of agricultural production. Now the larger estates, or those of them which do not serve the purposes of speculation but which serve the ends of real agriculture, have hitherto produced more per unit of land than the holdings owned by peasants. The second reason is that it will be in this way possible to raise the standard of agricultural knowledge among the peasants during the time that passes before the land of these farms comes into their possession. This period might also be utilized for the development of peasants cooperative societies which are indispensable for the supplementing of individual peasant farm management.

In accordance with the resolution of the Sejm, private proprietorship of land may not exceed 60 hectares in suburban districts and in industrial neighbourhoods. On the rest of the territories of the Commonwealth the private owner may possess at most 180 hectares. Estates composed of as much as 400 hectares will be allowed to remain as they

are in districts specially designated by the Cabinet in the former Prussian Poland or in the east. Expanses of land exceeding this maximum are to be subject to forced purchase if they do not constitute estates which have a high industrial and agricultural value. In this the principles which were laid down by the peasant parties have been wholly adhered to.

But on the other hand, when the estates are parcelled out, a plan must be made according to which memorials of the historical past, as well as architectural treasures, natural beauties, land which contains mineral wealth, lands which are necessary for road-making, for the concentration of fields belonging to one owner, for the regulation of peasants' rights on manorial land, for the straightening of frontiers, for division and regulation, should be excepted from parcelling out. This plan should also provide for the suitable use of valuable buildings and fittings, and should include a project for building villages or settlements and providing them with water.

The Statute also stipulates for the use of suitable land for experimental stations and agricultural schools as well as for model farms of all types. Such farms are to be let on a long tenancy to qualified persons or to professionally agricultural associations and cooperative societies under the superintendence of the Ministry of Agriculture and Public Property. (Articles 24 and 25).

The Statute, providing for the extension of the towns, leaves them the neighbouring lands. These lands extend for Warsaw for fifteen kilometres round the capital.

Since the great landed proprietors for the most part possess numerous farms, the statute expressly states that they have only a right to keep one each, if these farms were not already divided before January 1st, 1919. This is obviously rather

unsatisfactory for those families which wish to see their descendants also landed proprietors.

As we have already said the land will be bought up. The Statute fixes the price of immovable property at half the average market price, but buildings, improvements, sown land and other items are to be valued according to what they were worth when they were finished. (Articles 13 and 15).

All the land in question will be placed at the disposal of the Land Office which will fix the time when it is to be purchased. For there exists a danger of considerable portions of it being sold otherwise than in accordance with the plan of the Government. So as to prevent this there was issued September 1st, 1919, a Veto on the Sale of Land without the permission of the State authorities. All the larger estates are subject to this Veto, and permission to sell may only be obtained if the transaction is in accordance with the resolutions of the Sejm. Hence the new purchaser must be a native of Poland, must either be a trained farmer or have worked professionally on the land, and must bind himself to personally farm the land. Larger expanses of land may also be sold to agricultural unions. On the other hand it was necessary to count with the fact that the expectation of the Statute might induce the lawless occupation of manor lands. Not only the law but also the generality of the peasants will prevent such a simplification of the procedure, for these latter will not allow that the new possessor should get the land for which they themselves had to pay, by an easy method. And in the new law, article 28 excludes from the right to purchase land "such persons as lawlessly took over the land belonging to other people".

The lands bought are to serve for the formation of farms not larger than 15 hectares in extent. "Neighbourly parcellation" or the buying of additional land will be allowed to small

holders, provided that their holdings do not by this means exceed 23 hectares. As most of the small holders wish to extend their possessions, there exists the necessity of securing areas for the landless men.

So as to prevent the excessive purchase of land by well-off peasants, the statute designates only 20% of the total parcelled out land to be sold to small holders who wish to extend their possessions.

Because of the immense number of peasants who wish to buy land, it was necessary to decide who was to have precedence. And here appears the war-time character of the statute.

Disabled soldiers, if they are capable of work in the fields, and such former soldiers, who were for a long time at the front and volunteered into the army, have the first right of all. The State is to supply them with means to buy land, and to carry on its cultivation if they have specially distinguished themselves. But those who acted to the disadvantage of the State, or who committed the crime of desertion, are to lose the right to acquire land. The above resolutions are not only intended as a temporary encouragement and as a motive for military deeds, but they are the expression of the honour with which a Pole surrounds the land. The land is to belong to the best citizens of the State.

The second group is composed of agricultural workers who have been deprived of work by parcelling out and of the owners of dwarf holdings. The statute adds, that those purchasers who have passed through an agricultural school will have precedence. So that this law should not remain a dead letter, the Sejm passed simultaneously with the Reform Bill a second Bill for the Founding of Agricultural Schools for the peasants.

On the basis of the above law disabled soldiers and specially deserving soldiers, in the first place those who volunteered, will receive land without paying for it. All other soldiers can buy it either individually or collectively in a company, paying during 30 years, beginning with the year in which they commenced farming, 30 to 100 kilograms of rye annually per hectare. Each individual share can amount at most to 45 hectares. Farms cannot be divided or sold for 25 years. The Polish State gives help also in the form of building material and loans, and forms special offices, Distribution Committees which are to deal out the land, and are dependent on the Chief Land Office and on the War Office.

This law will be chiefly applied in 22 sub-districts in the east, though soldiers in other parts of the country can also acquire land.

Farms formed through parcelling out cannot be divided for at least 25 years and remain permanently under the care of the Land Office. The promise of rewarding the Polish soldier will very soon be carried out under the superintendence of the War Office and in connection with demobilization. We cannot, however, close our eyes to the fact that this will considerably diminish the amount of land to be disposed of as there will be tens of thousands of meritorious soldiers.

THE AGRICULTURAL CREDIT.

In the question of reform the most important place is occupied by the problem of supplying the new purchasers with the necessary grant of money. The question of the Land Division Bank has not yet been quite settled. For the time being the State Land Bank which was founded in April 1919, and hence before the passing of the Land Reform, serves the purposes of the Land Bill. The purpose of this

institution was the granting of long amortising credits in cash for the purpose of buying land. No precocious repayment of such loans can be claimed. The Bank also grants loans for the colonization and parcelling out of estates, as well as for the carrying out of improvements. The Bank has not sufficient capital to carry out its tasks, for the concentration of all the financial operations connected with the carrying out of the Land Reform has been entrusted to it. It was only when a sum of half a milliard had been voted for the carrying out of the Land Reform that the funds of the Bank were increased and its connection with the Chief Land Office became closer. This Office, through the Bank, has a right to buy up estates for 4⁰/₁₀₀ State land loan.

The State Land Bank also has at its disposal a foundation capital of 70,000,000 as a credit for the purchase and for the leasing of land, and to help the Settlement Office in Posen. It is worth while to remark, that 10,000,000 out of that fund have been assigned to the purpose of supporting public undertakings, which have as their object the enabling of Polish disabled soldiers and landless peasants, as well as cottagers, to build and to start farming.

The fund assigned for the purpose of enabling the soldiers to buy land will be increased from sums deducted from the amounts paid to squires for their estates, and this deduction will begin from sums of half a million marks paid for purchase. This deduction will rise progressively from 5⁰/₁₀₀ to 30⁰/₁₀₀ (the last percentage being on sums of more than 5 millions).

For the purpose of purchasing land there will be granted long-term loans of from 5⁰/₁₀₀ to 90⁰/₁₀₀, and for farming loans of from 50⁰/₁₀₀ to 75⁰/₁₀₀. Such loans will also be granted to the landless and to the cottagers. The above credit will be adjudi-

cated by the Land Bank which the Polish Government is at present creating.

All who benefit by the Land Reform have a right to benefit by the State Land Bank. Their farms are to remain until the loans are paid under the superintendence of the Land Office. They cannot be leased out or burdened with new debts.

PREPARATIVE WORK.

It would seem that a reform conceived on such a large scale would require whole decades for carrying out. And actually there is no use in imagining that it can be carried out in one or two years. But the first resolution of the Sejm requires, that at least 200,000 hectares should be parcelled out every year. But it is in the interests of the peace of the country and the contentment of the peasant population that the land should be bestowed upon the peasants as soon as possible.

This can only be done if we give up the idea of the State building all the farmhouses and outhouses and making fixed plans for the farming. On the other hand we cannot renounce the regulation of the fields to such a degree as will make them suitable for the carrying on of efficient cultivation and will improve the standard of life of the peasant families. Hence the Polish Government has energetically commenced to carry out the most indispensable improvements such as the concentration into one compact area of the fields belonging to each peasant.

The peasant holdings are not only too small in extent, but because of their repeated division between heirs, of the buying of additional fields, and the defects of the old Land Reform of 1864 these holdings often consist of several or even of between twenty and thirty parcels of ground separate from

each other, without means of communication, condemned to be badly cultivated, and not to be properly looked after by the owner. The concentration of these parcels was commenced before the war in Congress Poland and Galicia, and was completely carried out in the province of Posen. Since 1820 an effort has been made to concentrate the peasant holdings, but the Russian Government hindered this. In 1862 Wielopolski, the then Viceroy of the country, made a law which would have settled this business within a short time. But the reform of 1864, whilst turning the peasants into freeholders, made the form of their holdings inalterable and thus stopped the work for a long time. It was only in the year 1912 that the efforts of the agricultural associations obtained a law allowing the work of concentration to be continued. This work had assumed considerable dimensions before the war. Up to the beginning of 1913,—20,689 holdings had been concentrated over an expanse of 207,500 hectares. In Lithuania and White Ruthenia, in accordance with Stolypin's great reform which was begun in the year 1906, there were concentrated before the war about 2,000,000 of hectares of peasant lands.

As the war interrupted the work the Central Agricultural Association tried in 1916 and 1917 to continue it. The German authorities preferred not to leave the carrying on of this work to the Poles and took it up themselves. This is one more proof of the "extensive liberty" the occupiers gave Poland which was proclaimed by them to be an independent state.

This work of concentration was in the worst condition in Galicia, where it was only begun in 1899, and where it was carried on very slowly.

The Polish State is continuing the work which had been commenced, and which is so necessary whilst the new regulation of things in Poland is being carried out, and it is conti-

ning this work according to the wishes of the peasants. The peasants understand very well the advantage which will accrue to them if they are enabled to farm upon a holding which has been concentrated into one compact whole.

During the winter of 1920 the work of concentration has been completed in 66 villages and on an area of 41,064 morga. The number of farms which have been concentrated is 2,559. Up to the present a very small part of what the peasants feel the need of has been done. I say a small part because 25,635 holdings required concentration on an area of 385,500 morga. The work is being quickly carried on in 209 villages, and the number of applications testifies how necessary is the concentration of the fields for the peasants.

Other reforms are simultaneously being carried out.

Apart from the freehold lands of the individual peasants, the Polish village have got commons. Their area in the Kingdom of Poland amounts to 634,000 hectares and in Galicia to 326,000 hectares. As this land has been on the whole neglected and lay fallow, the Polish government has decided to divide it among the villagers if it is not woodland.

The Land Offices also regulate these peasants' rights to a limited use of the manorial forests and pastures, which in Congress Poland still exist, and which were always a bone of contention between the manor and the peasants. This was indeed the aim of the agents of the Russian Government when at the Land Reform of the year 1864 the right of the peasants to use the manor pastures, to cut wood in the manorial forests, etc. was not regulated. At the present time voluntary negotiations are being carried on for the exchange of these rights for plots of freehold land; where concentration has been carried out, there this exchange is compulsory. Only where there is no available land these rights are to be bought out for money.

LAND OFFICES.

The Land Offices which have been already mentioned are a very important factor in the Land Reform, and we must devote more attention to them. The Head Land Office was constituted by a statute of July 22nd, 1919, "for the purpose of settling affairs connected with the reconstruction of the condition of things in agriculture; the president of this institution occupies a position equal to that of a minister. But he is not a political minister, so that Cabinet changes or the tendencies of the government do not touch the Land Reform. The above mentioned office prepared the statute according to which the land reform has been carried out up to the present; the competence of this office, according to the statute of July 6-th, 1920, extends all over the Polish State. Hence all the formerly existing agricultural institutions in the different provinces of Poland have been subordinated to it. The Provincial and District Offices are the executive authorities for all that concerns the Reform. For the Reform, as we said before, is being carried out simultaneously in all districts. The citizens of the State cooperate everywhere with the Offices, forming commissions nominated by the Land Offices. These commissions are composed of the representatives of all classes in the country, hence of the small holders, of the landless men and of the larger landed proprietors. These commissions exist in every district and in very many communities. 70,000 citizens cooperate with the Government, and actually the whole of the public watches over the carrying out of the reform. The organization is progressing with extraordinary quickness, considering especially the very detailed regulations concerning the formation of that organization and its activity. As the last report of the Head Land Office informs us in all the 83 districts of the for-

mer Kingdom of Poland there have been already organized District Land Offices. In Western Little Poland (West Galicia), these organizations are almost complete, in the province of Przemysl they have made considerable progress. It is only in East Galicia that the work is going on more slowly because here we have to do with the Lemberg province which was so devastated by the Bolshevik invasion. The communal commissions are being quickly formed, sometimes even forestalling the district ones, hence the whole of the rural community will soon be taking part in the carrying out of the Land Reform. The cooperation of the peasants will be much more extensive than the cooperation of the squires. For the statute orders that the commission in each case shall be composed of 3 representatives of the small holders and 2 of the landless men, whilst there will only be one representative of the larger landed proprietors.

The most advanced democracy is, as we see, a feature of our Land Reform, and only such democracy can maintain that reform. For the peasants, that is the interested persons themselves, will come into contact with the difficulties connected with it, and must understand that the amount of land is not sufficient to satisfy all those who would like to settle on their own farming.

And here comes in the actual task of the Offices and of the Land Commissions.

Since in each case there are more candidates who wish to purchase land than there is land to deal out to them, the most suitable ought to be chosen, whilst the persons who are most in need, and who are specially considered by the Statute should also not be passed over.

Unfortunately as it frequently happens in life, the purpose which must be kept in view during the distribution of the land

and with an eye to which the condition of agricultural education or practice was laid down, cannot always be reconciled with social justice, which such a statute should maintain. No doubt the well-off peasant who has been long settled on the land, or his son whose better financial position has given him the opportunity of being educated in an agricultural school, will be a more suitable candidate for the land to be parcelled out than a landless wretch or a farm-servant. According to the statute each of these categories should, for different reasons, have the precedence. The settling of the question between the candidates by the officials themselves would no doubt be felt to be a wrong or an injustice. Here the district and communal commissions, which are composed of the local citizens themselves, must decide.

The choice of the persons to whom the land is to be parcelled out requires an excellent knowledge of the circumstances and is at the same time a trial of the ability of the peasant community to decide about its own fate. It is to the interest of Poland that this trial should give satisfactory results.

The parcelling out hitherto carried out has already given considerable numerical results. According to the last official report (dated October 30, 1920), the Land Offices are carrying on the work of parcelling out the land in 372 State domains which were placed at their disposal by the Ministry of Agriculture and State Properties. The total area of these properties is 156,467 morga.

There have been specially excepted from the above area, in consequence of resolutions passed by the Ministry of Agriculture, 17,077 morga, which are reserved for the purposes of agricultural education.

The remaining area for parcelling out in the year 1920 amounts to 139,380 morga.

This area, with the exception of 10,000 morga in the Su-

walki region where, on account of military operations the work was interrupted, and of 6,045 morga upon which, on account of the lengthening of leases, the work is not being carried out, will be parcelled out.

Thus in the current year of 1920 the Land Offices are parcelling out 123,345 morga, whilst in 1919 the same offices parcelled out 27,139 morga, which amounts altogether to 150,484 morga.

The Holdings' Office in Posen, in what was formerly Prussian Poland, finished up to the 1st of September 1920 the parcelling out of 43 estates with a total area of 15,936 morga.

Beyond this, the public institutions empowered by the Head Land Office to parcel out land under its control, parcelled out, chiefly in the districts of Eastern Little Poland, 41 properties of a total area of 16,607 morga and are continuing their work of parcelling out on 117 estates of a total area of 64,539 morga.

Thus in the current year the total area parcelled out or in course of parcelling out by the Government or by institutions empowered by the Government to parcel out, amounts to 249,566 morga.

If the above parcelling out will satisfy those interested, this will be an immense amount of work accomplished in a wonderfully short time.

For we must realize that in the course of this business many different categories of purchasers offer themselves. Amongst these are peasant proprietors, who buy additional parcels of land suitable to their holdings, in connection with which the holding must be concentrated and means of communication with the new and the old land must be considered. The landless men constitute another category, for these must build and be furnished with the necessary tools and

stock for farming. The Land Office must make it possible for them to get credit and to farm. The cottagers who wish to change their dwarf holding for a larger farm often sell their property and move to another neighbourhood. Their transport and that of their property is provided for, by arranging that they shall pay lower rates on railways.

This all has been done during the state of war which has lasted in Poland until the most recent times, and whilst the rolling stock is in a very bad condition.

CONCLUSION.

The land reform in Poland is a boldly conceived social and political experiment, on a large scale, and I wish to present it to my readers as such. It has also the common features of Polish psychology, and it reflects faithfully the ruling tendencies and ideas.

Hence:

The young state is beginning its existence by improving the conditions of living of the peasant population, and first of all of its poorest classes, in accordance with the old tradition of Kościuszko's Połaniec Manifesto to the peasants and with the example given by the insurgents of 1863 who conferred upon the peasants the freehold of their land.

The Reform which abolished the privilege of possessing large estates, that is, which abolished the remains of the privileges of the gentry, was passed unanimously by the Sejm, in which there sit representatives of all classes and parties. When it was necessary to save the country the privileges were sacrificed.

The Land Reform was made according to the requirements of the peasant parties, which in agreement with the mass of the peasants wished to give the land to those who work upon it. This bestowal, however, must be carried out in accordance with the Statute and with respect for the property rights of the present owners, that is, by purchase. The Reform will be carried out in Poland not by revolution, but with all the majesty of the law.



