

## *One Step Forward-Two Steps Back*

By Dr. Eugene Friedberg

Among the many problems which the European countries are attempting to solve at this time is the age-old land problem.

In Poland, the government is attempting to divide the large estates into small holdings of from 9 to 16 acres each, and is distributing these to individual families. According to an article in the Toronto (Canada) STAR WEEKLY, plots have already been deeded to more than 300,000 families. An area of 731,100 acres is in process of distribution, and another 1,500,000 acres will be available for distribution when it is cleared of German mines. Sentiment among Polish farmers seems to be strongly in favor of individual private land owning and against collectivism.

Recipients of land must pay for it, or contract to pay for it, on receipt of the deeds. The price is 15 hundredweight of rye—or the cash equivalent at \$75 per hundredweight—for every three acres received. Ten per cent of this is to be paid in cash or in kind on receipt of the deeds and the remainder in ten to twenty years. Recipients are not entitled to sell, let or mortgage their land, except in "particularly deserving cases."

Yugoslavia also has a land reform program, designed to redistribute estates on the principle that the land must be settled by those who work it. A new bill will

limit the size of farms to 20 to 35 hectares in valley lands. Mountain areas will have larger maximums. (A hectare is 2.47 acres.) All land-

holders who do not till the soil themselves will have their property expropriated without compensation. Bona fide farmers whose lands exceed the legal maximum, however, will be reimbursed for their losses.

Today, Hungary is in the midst of a revolution which is trying to make landowners out of the masses of peasants who lived in virtual serfdom on vast estates. These large estates are being broken up into parcels of 15 acres to a family to be distributed among the landless.

The principle of land reform in all these countries is the same. It is the division of large estates into small holdings which are then distributed as private property to individuals, usually former peasants. There is, apparently, no recognition of the fundamental right of the community as a whole to the land. Industrial, trade and professional workers are denied any share in the land or in the return for its use, i. e. rent. Those who are promulgating this type of land reform fail, too, to recognize the fact that the land problem in urban centers is at least as acute as it is in farming areas.

In other words, the old system of land ownership, with all its inherent evils, is perpetuated. The fact that a hundred men now own a piece of land that was formerly

owned by one man does not alter the fact that the rent still reverts to the landowner, to the detriment of the entire community.