

The Land of Iran

Iran and its people are fortunate in having as their ruler so enlightened a monarch as their Shah, Reza Pahlevi. He is intellectually gifted, strong in character, and ambitious for his country's development. "We intend," he has said, "to attain a standard of living equal to that of Europe." Iran's average per capita income has already reached over \$500 per year, which is high for a developing nation, and its goal is to reach \$1000 per year per capita income within five years.

This interesting country, which centuries ago enjoyed great glory as Persia, is blessed with a mineral potential geologists describe as "fantastic," including enormous oil deposits and what may prove to be one of the world's greatest deposits of copper. The exploitation of these natural treasures, hopefully for the benefit of all Iranians, should raise Iran to a high place among all nations. But the development of these resources, and of the land, was preceded by a long struggle to break the powerful hold of the "Thousand Families," the traditional establishment of Iran, who owned the land and thus the bulk of all the country's wealth.

~~After a bitter political conflict, the Shah wrested~~ their holdings from Iran's feudal landlords, and turned them over to 2,500,000 rural families. As a result, agriculture has been given top priority in the current five-year economic plan. "Under our sweeping land reform," says the Shah, "no peasant in Iran today works for a landlord. We have introduced cooperatives, our own unique farm corporations, and modern business practices." Among other national assets regained from the landlords were the rich oilfields and the petroleum industry, one of the most productive in the Middle East. A stable supply of oil for 20 years has been assured.

With the best of intentions, however, it is questionable whether the plans the benevolent Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi has made for his people will come to fruition. In distributing land to them, he helped them mightily — but for how long? By making them landowners, replacing the "Thousand Families," he has "sown the dragon's teeth." Inevitably, by fair means or foul, the farmers' lands will be gradually absorbed by clever operators, and future generations will be in rent thrall to the survivors. This can be prevented only if Iran's lands are made common property, under a system of location value taxation.

—L. M. G.