

rent of land for public purposes. Correspondingly, by the remission of other taxation, the individual would retain complete ownership in the products of his own labour. Thus true socialism and true individualism are seen in their correct relation. If Mill had made that apparent, his reputation with universities, as well as with working men, would have made it impossible for the economists to ignore his explanation, as they ignored George's. Instead of the barren strife of false socialism and false individualism, social controversy would have revealed truth to avert the succession of catastrophes from which we suffer.

F. D. P.

KOREA LAND REFORM

A major casualty of the war in Korea is the land reform which was proceeding in the Southern half of the peninsula. In the opinion of a correspondent, newly returned from Korea, writing in the *Manchester Guardian*, August 2, but for the attack from the North, full land reform would by now have been carried out throughout the Republic.

With sixteen million people dependent upon twelve million acres of cultivation, pressure on the land was great and constantly growing. The need for reform was urgent. The first steps were taken by the Military Government of South Korea within a short time of taking control. It issued an ordinance restricting farm rentals to a maximum of one-third of the annual production, compared with the former normal rental of 50 per cent. which occasionally went as high as 60 per cent. As the new level of rentals, like the old, included taxation, the ordinance automatically conferred great benefits on the farmers.

In February, 1946, the New Korea Company, charged with administering those lands formally held by Japanese Nationals and by large Japanese corporations, was set up. From the start the directors of the New Korea Company planned the dissolution of the organisation. They used profits made under their administration to complete reclamation projects abandoned during the Second World War, to repair sea-walls and to carry out irrigation schemes. At the same time they worked out methods of transferring the land to those who rented it. These provided that farmers should be given the opportunity of buying their land, by instalments, at the rate of 20 per cent. of the major crop raised on it for a period of fifteen years.

On March 22, 1948, the interim Government issued an ordinance converting the machinery created by the New Korea Company into the National Land Administration. By the end of May the National Land Administration had distributed by sale, deed, or mortgage 448,513 out of 587,974 farm units earmarked for sale. All that was first-rate land, much of it having been the property of the big Japanese Oriental Development Company, the largest single landholding agency in Korea before 1945.

Peasants working land which had never been Japanese property demanded equally favourable terms for themselves as those extended to the tenants of the New Korea Company. Problems of compensation arose and opposition in the National Assembly and elsewhere were encountered, but by June, 1949, they were resolved and the Land Reform Act was promulgated.

It gave the Government power to acquire land, the ownership of which was in doubt, and to buy farmlands

owned by families not actively engaged in farming, farmlands exceeding roughly six acres per farming household, and other minor categories. Thereafter progress was rapid. When the North Koreans struck, land bonds were already printed awaiting issue against the final appraisal of the values of land concerned. The survey of land under the programme had been completed. In most districts determination of lands to be transferred and new ownership had been decided and notifications issued to individual farmers.

Then came the war. At first many of the South Korean peasants, including the majority of the tenantry, welcomed the arrival of the Communists and their promises of land free of all charge for those who worked it. But when the farmers found that the land was parcelled out with preference to party nominees and that they themselves were often allotted plots of about a third of an acre they were less well pleased. Disquiet turned to dismay when the taxes under the Communists proved to be at least half the crop, and frequently far more, because the assessments were wildly and recklessly inaccurate. Taxes were not levied on actual production, but on an estimate fixed beforehand by Communist assessors.

By their policy of confiscation and redistribution of estates among their followers, and their destruction of records, the Communists have left a trail of chaos behind them in the South. The detailed work will have to be done again and by men whom the Communists forced to help them and who are now regarded as suspect by both the Republican authorities and the local people.

In North Korea land was distributed not by any rule of law but at the discretion of people's committees consisting of Communists and their nominees. Instructions issued to the committees on March 8, 1946, laid down that party members, guerillas and other favoured individuals and their families must on no account have their land taken from them. "Those who have served in the national, social and political fields for the establishment of a democratic Korea, and scientists, artists, writers, actors and actresses who have helped in the progress of Korean culture, science and art" received whatever land they wanted and non-party farmers received what was left.

United Nations officials report that North Korean peasants believed they had been given the land, but that their tenure, and indeed their lives, depended upon implicit obedience to orders; so the matter of title was somewhat academic. In spite of assurances that not more than 25 per cent. of crops would be demanded as tax, actual collections ranged from 50 per cent. upwards. In addition, contributions to the farmers' union, "build the tanks" funds, and other official collections pushed living standards far below pre-1945 standards. Able-bodied men who escaped being called up for active service had to devote between forty and fifty days in the winter months to unpaid labour on national projects. All these extra imposts were officially termed "voluntary contributions," but villagers were left in no uncertainty that failure to volunteer would be regarded as proof of hostility to the People's Government and "treachery towards Korean farmers."

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