

with the plutocratic monopolists we are told to condemn.

Mexicans could readily understand that the laws which gave virtually all their lands into the hands of a few men were unjust. But can they understand, at a later date, when the shoe begins to pinch, that the principle is equally wrong, even though the land be monopolized by many instead of few, so long as there are some born into a land who yet have no land they may call theirs?

We are all familiar with the platitude, "If all the money in the world were confiscated and divided equally among all the people, it would be only a short time until it gravitated back into the hands of a few, and the rest would be poor again." That argument may as well apply to a division of land such as that in which Mexico has engaged.

THE PEASANTS IN POLAND

A SPECIAL article in *The Times* (22nd March) from a "correspondent lately in Poland" alleges that "pressure of population is at the root of most of Poland's social and economic problems at the present time." In support of this it is said that the population has increased from 27,000,000 to 34,000,000 since 1921. The agricultural population averages 79 per square kilometre of agricultural land.

It appears, however, that the distribution of land is extremely unequal. While there are many people without land there are also great estates.

"The growth of a landless proletariat in the country districts has led to an ever more insistent demand for a drastic measure of land reform through the gradual expropriation of the large landholders. This demand is warmly sponsored by M. Poniatowski, Minister for Agriculture in the present Government. M. Poniatowski is regarded as the most progressive member of the Polish Administration. He started his political career by organizing a strike of the peasants on his father's farm; and it is reported that on a recent tour of the countryside he pointed to the farm buildings of a large estate and remarked to the members of his entourage. 'Those are the castles we have got to storm.' His radicalism makes him the arch-enemy of the Right Press."

Another difficulty arises from the fact that the three-field system still prevails over a large area of Poland. The holding of one peasant may be divided into as many as 50 strips. This primitive method of endeavouring to preserve equality of land-holding prevents initiative, wastes labour and discourages improved methods of cultivation.

"In England the process of consolidation—the Polish expression is *commassation*—was carried through at the instance of the large landowners, by the simple, if somewhat brutal, expedient of compelling the smallholders to enclose their land and of buying them out if they proved unable to do so. In Poland, where the aim is the promotion of smallholdings rather than their extinction, the problem cannot be solved in this drastic way. Land must be measured, its relative fertility must be estimated, and new villages must be planned in which the individual peasants have holdings corresponding to the size and value of the scattered strips formerly held by them. The process is both long and costly, and often the actual hostility of the peasants has to be overcome before *commassation* can begin. But once successfully carried through, its results are greatly valued by the peasants, who have a heightened feeling of self-respect when their property has been formed into

Another disturbing feature of the Mexican situation is that, instead of drawing its necessary revenue from the natural source for such revenue, land values, industry is being heavily penalized to support expanding governmental plans. Capital is afraid of Mexican investments, and business is shaky.

Mexico is in an evolutionary, as well as a revolutionary, stage, and, with the rapid spread of literacy and education, we may hope for happy results. Mexico is a ripe harvest—but the Georgian labourers are pitifully few.

Mrs Truehart, the writer of this article, is resident in Del Rio, Texas, just across the river dividing that State from Mexico. She visited Mexico City last summer and has made the land question in Mexico a special study. She writes: "I have discussed the enclosed article with our local Mexican consul and vice-consul, a Mexican editor, and others well informed, and believe you will find it at least authentic."

a single unit and they have removed their homes from the village street to the new holding."

The existence of servitudes—rights of pasturage and of gathering firewood in the forests of the large landowners—has also led to friction between the large and the small landowners. Steps are being taken to commute these rights, but the writer does not explain on what basis.

An illustration of the enormous size of some of the great estates is given in a note in the *Daily Telegraph* (5th March) relating to Prince Henry of Pless who died in Paris recently.

"His vast estates were divided after the war, Pless becoming part of Poland while Fuerstenstein and Waldenburg remained in Germany. For the last years of his life he was involved in constant difficulties with the Polish authorities over taxes.

"Last year the Polish Parliament passed an Act to enable overdue tax claims against the estate to be collected in kind.

"I hear that the State-owned Rolny Bank has already seized over 50,000 acres of arable and forest land on the estate. The inheritance taxes are likely to exceed £1,000,000."

SPAIN

Under the auspices of the International Agrarian Institute in Moscow there has recently been issued in German a book by B. Minlos on the Spanish peasants' struggle for land and freedom. (*Spaniens Bauern im Kampf um Boden und Freiheit*. Verlagsgenossenschaft Ausländischer Arbeiter in der U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1937. Price in Russia, 90 kopeks.) The general statistics of the distribution of landownership accord with those given in our March issue. It is pointed out that the total area of Spain is 50 million hectares of which 45 million are suitable for agriculture, but only about 20 million are cultivated. The large landowners hold about 30 million hectares, and it is mostly their land which is left idle. Hence of the large landholdings something approaching two-thirds is not cultivated. Much valuable information is given about the system of landholding and the condition of the landworkers, as well as of their struggle for economic freedom.

The value of this paper does not end with YOUR reading it. Your business associate, your neighbour or your fellow worker may not have seen it. . . .