

# Japan's Post-War Land Reform

Don Le Vor

Wolf Isaac Ladejinsky is not the name of someone known by Georgists as one very active in the history of land reform yet his life activity, his teaching and his lifetime of "doing" and "creative pursuits" bear remembrance by us all in this new century.

Ladejinsky was born in Russia one year before the turn of this past century, in a land that had just recently thrown over the yoke of serfdom. He left Russia in 1920 with his family's blessing and arrived in the United States of America.

In 1922, after a passage through Europe, Mr. Ladejinsky arrived on our shores, penniless and without the ability to speak English. It was a typical immigrant's story: he washed windows, made button holes and then mattresses, and sold newspapers on 6th Avenue in New York City. He became a United States citizen in 1928. In 1934 he received a master's degree in agricultural-economics from Columbia University. In 1935, during the depression and the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, he accepted a position with the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., specializing in Asian problems. He earned a salary of \$2,000, which was typical of the time. He wrote widely in technical and popular journals, particularly about the collectivization policies of the Soviet Union under Stalin, who was enslaving and destroying the farmers and peasantry of that country, much as had been done long before under serfdom and the Czars of Russia.

In 1945, following the end of World War II, U.S. Army General Douglas MacArthur called him to Japan to over see the land reform program of the occupying Army. Land reform was a top priority with the General, just as it had been with his father forty five years earlier. MacArthur's father had served as the General



MacArthur with Emperor Hirohito, 1945

of the Army in the Philippines under the direction of future president William Howard Taft who was governor of the island empire at the time. The two men disagreed and the country's land policies returned to the old Spanish landlord traditions of land privatization which the Philippines are subject to today and for which reason they are still mired in poverty.

With MacArthur's blessings, Wolf Ladejinsky was given the rank of a Brigadier General and housed in the Hotel Imperial in Tokyo, much to the objection of the "Gold Braided Generals" who considered themselves the exclusive inhabitants of the said institution. He was a "favored son" of the General/Supreme Commander, which likewise rankled many of the military and civilian advisors. Ladejinsky advocated agrarian reform which entailed the acquisition of large private estates by the government, and their sale to tenant farmers on easy credit terms. Also encouraged was the idea of buying tools, equipment, and seed from the merchants and bankers. It was a "hands on" supervised agricultural reform program. Classroom studies were instituted and reviews

of rice paddy and orchard growing methods, as well as animal growth and development and the importation of milk cows and other live stock,

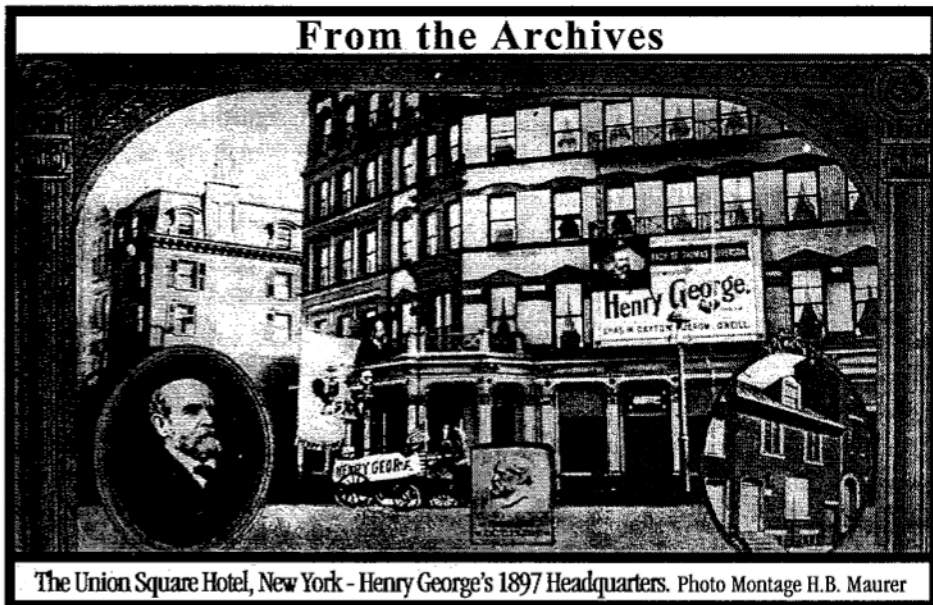
**He advocated agrarian reform: the acquisition of large private estates by the government, and their sale to tenant farmers.**

was introduced. Over 5,000,000 hectares of land were redistributed, and the former landlords of Japan's ages - old feudal system and their rent collectors were paid off. Without this land reform background, Japan's Liberal Democratic party would never have been able to establish itself as the major political party it has been during the last thirty - plus years.

After his stint in Japan, Ladejinsky served President Chiang on mainland China, and then on Formosa, where his reforms led to a new, prosperous country known today as one of the "Asian Tigers". Reflecting on the success of land reform in Japan, Ladejinsky was proud to state that if his land reforms had been enacted ten years earlier throughout mainland China (i.e. 1938-1939) "there could have been a different story."

*Don Le Vor has recently been elected to the HGS Board of Trustees*

## From the Archives



The Union Square Hotel, New York - Henry George's 1897 Headquarters. Photo Montage H.B. Maurer