

The Land Reform in Hungary*

By FERDINAND MERÖ

WE NOW ARE in a position to give a full account on the land reform in Hungary up to the middle of 1948.

Hungary was a country of big landed properties up to the present reform. The October revolution in 1918 took steps towards the distribution of the large holdings but the counter-revolution following it put an end to this endeavour. For this reason the Hungarian land question remained practically unsolved until the end of the second World War.

According to the statement of the National Land Office the system of large estates was changed into a system of small estates by this land reform. 5,599,645 cadastral acres were used for the purpose of land reform, comprising 34.8 per cent of the area of the whole country which is 16,081,844 cadastral acres.

The area subject to land reform is shown in the following statement by the branch of cultivation:

Table I

Branch of cultivation	cadastral acres	per cent
1. arable land	2,879,112	51.4
2. garden	42,056	0.8
3. meadow	345,133	6.1
4. vineyard	46,045	0.9
5. pasture	550,060	9.8
6. forest	1,406,210	25.1
7. miscellaneous (including barren land)	331,029	5.9
Total	5,599,645	100.0

* For background, see F. Merö, "The Land Question in Hungary," *AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO.*, 6, 4 (July, 1947), p. 564.

Table II

Branch of cultivation	cadastral acres	subject to reform in per cent of branch
1. arable land	9,762,974	29.5
2. garden	219,083	19.2
3. meadow	1,104,306	31.3
4. vineyard	355,127	13.0
5. pasture	1,700,632	32.3
6. forest	1,922,458	73.1
7. miscellaneous (including barren land)	1,017,264	32.5
Total	16,081,844	34.8

The total of land holdings by the branch of cultivation is as follows:

The areas of arable, garden, meadow and vineyard land subject to land reform, (Table I, numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4) comprising 3,312,346 cadastral acres, were distributed among 642,342 individuals, making an average of 5.16 acres per head; the subrect areas of pasture, forest and miscellaneous land (numbers 5, 6 and 7), comprising 2,287,299 cadastral acres, were given to communities. The castles and other buildings (1,500 in number) of the large holdings were also appropriated by the government for use as schools, hospitals, health resorts and so on.

The effect of the Hungarian land reform is shown by the following tables:

Table III
Holdings before the Land Reform

Class size in acres	number	per cent	total acreage in class	per cent of national total
0-5	1,184,783	72.5	1,631,246	10.1
5-10	204,471	12.5	1,477,376	9.2
10-20	144,186	8.8	2,025,946	12.6
20-50	73,663	4.5	2,172,300	13.5
50-100	15,240	0.9	1,036,162	6.5
100-200	5,792	0.3	805,164	5.0
200-1000	5,202	0.3	2,124,801	13.2
1000-3000	768	0.1	1,250,599	7.8
above 3000	302	0.1	3,558,250	22.1
Total	1,634,407	100.0	16,081,844	100.0

Table IV
Holdings after the Land Reform

Class size in acres	number	per cent	total acreage in class	per cent of national total
0-5	1,406,325	68.1	2,871,958	17.9
5-10	388,179	18.8	3,388,857	21.1
10-20	175,428	8.5	2,789,353	17.3
20-50	71,164	3.4	2,359,004	14.7
50-100	14,864	0.7	1,295,506	8.1
100-200	5,525	0.3	714,512	4.4
200-1000	4,034	0.2	1,352,728	8.4
1000-3000	504	0.0	796,007	4.9
above 3000	91	0.0	513,919	3.2
Total	2,066,114	100.0	16,081,844	100.0

It should be remarked that in the class of 200-1,000 acres there are only 21 individual holdings making 5,670 acres altogether, the rest, viz. 4,013 holdings in 1,347,058 acres belonging to the communities; in the classes of 1,000-3,000 and above 3,000 acres there are only communities' holdings exclusively and no individual holdings.

The manner in which the land reform was carried out in each of the size classes of the holdings, is shown in the following table:

Table V
The Effect of the Land Reform in Each Class

Size of holdings in acres	total acreage of class		Difference in acres after the land reform
	before the land reform	after	
0-5	1,631,246	2,871,958	+ 1,240,712
5-10	1,477,376	3,388,857	+ 1,911,481
10-20	2,025,946	2,789,353	+ 763,407
20-50	2,172,300	2,359,004	+ 186,704
50-100	1,036,162	1,295,506	+ 259,344
100-200	805,164	714,512	- 90,652
200-1000	2,124,801	1,352,728	- 772,073
1000-3000	1,250,599	796,007	- 454,592
above 3000	3,558,250	513,919	- 3,044,331
Total	16,081,844	16,081,844	- 4,361,648

An explanation is also necessary why the difference between the areas of the large estates and that of the small ones is only 4,361,648 acres, whereas the cadastral acres subject to land reform actually totalled 5,599,645. It is, however, easily understood that in the course of the land reform there were also movements between the large categories in themselves and also within the range of the small landholders. Furthermore, large holdings remained practically untouched but were taken away from individuals and granted to communities. This happened especially with the pastures and forests, as mentioned above.

Table V shows clearly that Hungary became a country of small holdings by this land reform. The total acreage of the holdings of 0-100 acres was 8,343,030 cadastral acres before the land reform. In this size class there are now 12,704,678 acres. Correspondingly, the acreage in large holdings has dwindled from 7,738,814 to 3,377,166 acres. The growth of peasant holdings up to 10 acres by 3,152,193 acres is very obvious, accounting relatively for 72 per cent of the whole change.

Budapest, Hungary