

LAND REFORM IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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LUCY ELIZABETH TEXTOR

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**LAND REFORM IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

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BY

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FOREWORD

ONLY he who has tried to get at the truth of land reform in Czechoslovakia can have any idea of the difficulties involved in the work which he has undertaken. It may be said that there are no absolutely trustworthy sources except the laws themselves. This is not intended to be a reflection upon the Land Office. That institution labours under the great disadvantage of not being held to strict accountability to a higher authority. No pressure has been put upon it to publish accurate and comprehensive reports. Nor do the landowners always furnish reliable material. They are biased by the circumstance that the land reform is working to their disadvantage. Their conclusions are sometimes based upon false premises because they have no way of getting complete data. Again, there are certain facts which it is difficult to evaluate. A case in point is the amount of land expropriated from the Germans. Often a landowner is either German or Czech according to the aspect of the

6 LAND REFORM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

question which is emphasized. He may be of Czech blood, but so wholly German in his orientation and sympathy as to be unable to speak the Czech language. This is frequently the case. Such an one is claimed by both camps, and who shall decide to which he belongs?

Courtesies without number were extended to me during the seven months I spent in Czechoslovakia studying the land reform. The President of the Land Office, Dr. Karel Viškovský, the Secretary, Mr. A. Pavel, and the Director of the Technical Section, Mr. W. Špitalský, rendered me every assistance in their power. Many others in the Land Office, too numerous to mention, gave me freely of their time. Dr. A. Zedtwitz, Dr. Eugen Ledebur-Wicheln and Dr. W. Medinger, of the Union of German Great Landowners, and Dr. A. Mayer, Secretary of the Union of Czechoslovak Great Landowners, placed much material at my disposal and rendered me very real service in helping me to understand the attitude of those whose estates are being expropriated. Various members of the Cabinet most kindly explained to me the Government point of view. I am under the greatest possible obligations to Dr. Josef Macek. He gave me the full benefit of his wide and accurate knowledge of the subject, and of his many connections

with those who could furnish me information. Without his assistance I should often have been lost in a maze of self-contradictory material. I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Edvard Vondruška, the learned redactor of the laws dealing with land reform. Although an extremely busy man, he spent many afternoons explaining obscure passages of the laws to me, and verifying translations. The gracious and generous help of Dr. Macek and Dr. Vondruška rendered pleasurable the performance of an arduous task.

Lastly, there is President Masaryk. He always gave me the impression of being in the battle and still above it. If, as I hope, I have succeeded in writing this study without bias, it is at least partly because I have been influenced by his calmness and utter absence of prejudice. I thank him for his interest in my work, and for the hours which he snatched for me from days that are altogether too full.

LUCY ELIZABETH TEXTOR,

LONDON.

February 24, 1923.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE laws and decrees used in this study of the land reform in Czechoslovakia have been gathered from a great variety of sources, some of them unofficial. At this writing the later decrees have not yet been published by the Government. All the translations, whether literal or in substance, have been examined by the redactor of the laws and are sponsored by him. In every case the reference in the foot-note is to the section of the given law and will serve wherever the law is printed, and whether in the original Czech or in translation. The number attached to the law is sufficient to identify it. This number and the full translation of the title are given when first the law is cited. By the time this study appears in print, the Government will have issued the legislation having to do with land reform in three volumes. This is soon to be followed by an official German translation.

Four of the newspapers cited are Czech. *Venkov* speaks for the Agrarians, *České Slovo* for the Czech Socialists, *Právo Lidu* for the Social Democrats, and *Národní Listy* for the National Democrats. *Bohemia* is a radical and rather nationalistic German paper, and *Prager Tagblatt* is liberal.

Pozemková Reforma is the official organ of the Land Office. It is a monthly publication which

10 LAND REFORM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

began in June, 1920, and is confined to reports of work accomplished or in progress and to articles concerning land reform. The point of view of the great landowners is to be found in *Mitteilungen*. This term connotes two different publications, but they are easily distinguishable. The Svaz Československých Velkostatkářů, or Union of Czechoslovak Great Landowners, issued a translation in German of portions of their Czech monthly for the benefit of those of their members who could not read Czech. This was called *Mitteilungen* and was unpagged and undated, but each issue bears its own number and is referred to by that number. The need for this sheet fell away when three unions of landowners decided to issue a joint monthly in German. The name *Mitteilungen* was taken over by the new publication and is referred to under a definite date. The full name is *Mitteilungen des Verbandes der deutschen Grossgrundbesitzer Böhmens in Prag, des Svaz Čsl. Velkostatkářů in Prag und des Verbandes landwirtsch. Unternehmungen in Schlesien und Nordmähren in Troppau*.

All other references in the foot-notes are self-explanatory. It need only be said that it has not seemed necessary to indicate that a cited passage is translated, since this would have meant endless repetition, no English material having been used.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	5
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	9
CHAPTER	
I. THE HISTORIC AND ECONOMIC BASIS	13
II. POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE LAW PROVIDING FOR EXPROPRIATION	20
III. LONG-LEASE FARMERS, DISPERSED PARCELS AND COMPULSORY LEASE	36
IV. THE LAND OFFICE	50
V. MISMANAGED ESTATES	61
VI. THE LAW OF ALLOTMENT	68
VII. THE QUESTION OF COMPENSATION	92
VIII. COMMASSATION	110
IX. THE OPPOSITION	116
X. CONCLUSION	139
APPENDIX—GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF DATA CONCERNING THE ESTATES SUBJECT TO EXPRO- PRIATION	151
INDEX	153

INDEX

NOTE.—An asterisk indicates that the reference will be found in the footnote to the page indicated.

- Agriculture, Chamber of, 87
Department of, 20, 62, 63, 64, 81, 91,
115, 116, 130
Minister, Ministry of, 22, 27, 50, 63, 67,
87, 88, 120, 141, 148
- Allies, 70, 133
- Allotment, Law of, 45*, 47*, 48*, 68-91, 102*, 110*,
122, 140
- Army, Czechoslovak, 70
- Assembly, Constituent National, 21, 24
National, 22, 26, 27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 54,
92, 141
Revolutionary, 40, 138, 142
- Auerhahn, Dr. Jan, 17*
- Austria, 15, 21, 62, 112
- Austrian Government, 112
- Austro-Hungarian Empire, 111
- Bohemia*, 9, 21*, 22*, 55*, 57*
- Bolshevists, 24
- Brdlik Tables, 100*
- Buchenberger, 16
- Budapest, 17, 117
- Bulgaria, 15
- Buquoy, 18
- Cabinet, 6, 51, 58, 60, 129, 131, 141
- Capital, Tax on, 100, 101, 101*

154 LAND REFORM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Carpatho-Russia, 15, 16, 48, 49, 67
Catholic People's Party, 22, 28, 37, 57
České Slovo, 9, 27*, 35*
Colonization Fund, 45, 46, 74, 102, 107
Compensation, Law of, 46*, 92-98, 102*, 105, 105*,
106*, 107, 109*, 136*
Constitution, 14, 118
Control, Board of, 33, 54, 55, 57, 59, 119, 123, 143
Credit-help for Applicants for Land, Law of, 104*,
105*

Denís, Ernest, 18, 18*
Domoviny, 68, 69

Elector Palatine, German, 19
Emigration, 17
Ensuring Land to Small Farmers, Law, 38*, 39*,
40*, 41*, 42*, 43, 49
Estonia, 15
Expropriation, Law of, 31*, 32*, 33*, 34, 35, 43, 49,
62, 95*, 118, 126, 126*, 130, 134*, 140

Ferdinand, Emperor, 18, 19
Finance, Department of, 101, 102
Forests, Law Concerning the Provisional Protection
of, 61*, 62*

German landowners, 131-134
Germany, 15, 21
Government, Czechoslovakia, 6, 9, 14, 21, 29, 31,
59, 62, 64, 91, 97, 100, 101, 108, 114, 131, 139,
144
Government decrees, 48, 74, 96, 107, 108, 118
Gustavus Adolphus, 89

- Gutman, Dr. W., 86*, 127
Güterbeamte, Der, 137
- Habsburgs, 20
Habsburg Lothringen, dynasty of, 32, 94
Haná, 115
Huerta, 18
Hungary, 15, 149
Hungarian Law of 1896, 43
- Independence, Declaration of, 21
International Affairs, Minister of, 27
- Jugoslavia, 15, 17
Justice, Minister of, 27
- Kramár, Dr., 25, 29
- Land Office, Law Concerning the, 52*, 54*, 55*
Latvia, 15
League of Nations, 131
Ledebur-Wicheln, Dr. Eugen, 6
Legionaries, 24, 70, 74, 77, 89
Lichtenstein, Estates of, 24
Liechtenstein, 18
Limitation of Disposition of Great Landed Property,
 Law Concerning the, 20
- Macek, Dr. Josef, 6, 7, 15, 17*
Management of Estates Destined to be Expropriated,
 Law Concerning the, 64*, 65*, 66*, 67*, 70*, 71*,
 72*
- Marradas, Balthasar de, 18
Masaryk, President, 7, 26, 33, 59, 120
Mayer, Dr. A., 6

156 LAND REFORM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Medinger, Dr. W., 6

Mitteilungen, 10, 45*, 49*, 100*, 121*, 122*, 123*,
125*, 126*, 128*, 130

Národní Listy, 9, 5*, 19*, 356*, 58*, 135*

Nédil, 69*

Nosek, Vladimír, 21*

Olomouc, Archbishopric of, 137

Orava, District of, 89

Osek Přerov, 115

Pardubice, 85, 87

Parliament, 46, 60, 122, 136

Pavel, A., 6, 30*

Peace Treaties, 94

Poland, 89

Post Cheque Bank, 108, 108*

Pozemková Reforma, 9, 44*, 47*, 81*, 128, 130*, 133*

Prager Tagblatt, 9, 28*, 33*, 136*

Prague, 18

Archbishopric of, 137

Prášek, Mr., 120

Právo Lidu, 9, 23, 24*, 35*, 56

Prime Minister, Dr. Kramář, 25

Protestant, 18

Protestantism, 89

Rašín, Dr. 56, 58*

Reparations Commission, 94

Roman Catholic Church, 137

Rumania, 17

Parliament of, 14

Russia, 17

- Saint-Germain, Treaty of, 94, 132
Saxony, 17
Schwarzenberg, Kingdom of, 17
Siberia, 70
Silesia, 15, 16, 49, 67
Špitalský, W., 6
Šrobár, Dr., 22
Stieber, Dr. Miloslav, 126*
Straka, Count, 94
Sweden, 89
- Thirty Years' War, 89
Tittel, Ig., 98*
Tobitschau, 127*
Traitner, František, 111*
Trenčianské Teplice, 90*
Troppau, 10
- United States, 17
- Večerník, 24*
Venkov, 9, 24*, 25*, 26*, 34*, 69*, 89*
Vienna, 17, 117
Viškovský, Dr. Karel, 6, 130*
Vondruška, Dr. Edvard, 7, 30*
- Wartemberg, 85
Westphalia, 17
White Mountain, Battle of, 18, 18*, 19, 19*, 21, 89
World War, 13, 14, 32, 61, 70, 116
- Zabrány, zábor*, 29, 30, 31, 33
Zedtwitz, Dr. A., 6, 100*

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