

Summary

CENTURIES divide the peasant Egyptian farmer, turning with a heavy iron hoe the soil on a small plot of land he rents for an exorbitant price, and the modern American farmer plowing across his field with shiny new tractor.

On the farms of Europe and the Middle East are lessons that we can learn if we but take the time to look. The principles that apply to the farm economy in many a backward country are but a piled up effect of the same principles which operate in our own land. In other lands we see them accented.

Eighty-five per cent of the people in overcrowded southern Italy must make their living from the land. There are nearly 500 people for every square mile in Italy. Regardless of how well the Italian farmer may be able to farm or how much he can grow on every acre of land, there are just not enough acres to go around.

Land cannot continue forever to absorb surplus farm people. Here in America, and to a lesser degree in western Europe, surplus farm people have moved to the cities to work in offices and factories.

The first lesson we can learn from these crowded countries is that a modern, prosperous agriculture must depend upon an expanding industrial economy. Just as we cannot afford peasant agriculture in this country, so we can never hope to have prosperous farming in a country covered with dead factories. Economically as well as politically, we are Americans first, farmers second.

The people in the older parts of the world have roots deep in the traditions and history of their own communities. Frequently it is a lack of education that holds back the youngster from doing a better job of farming than his father or moving to a new region. He continues like his father, not necessarily because he doesn't want to do better, but because he doesn't know how to do a better job of farming. Uneducated, he would find it difficult to work at any other occupation.

A prosperous agriculture, as well as a prosperous country, depends upon mass education of its people. Educated farmers can change readily from one type of farming to another. They can adopt new farming methods, and when necessary they can change to another business to better their living standards. It is a lesson that we must not forget.

By now you are probably leaning back contentedly thinking, "My, we are really ahead of those foreign countries when it comes to education."

True, most of the younger people in some sec-

tions of our country graduate from high school. Many go to college. But when you examine our country as a whole, it doesn't look so good. What about your hired man who drifted up from the south? Any one of the northwestern European countries, like Holland, Scandinavia, or even Germany has less illiteracy than we; and when you consider the countries as a whole, they've done a far better job of mass educating their people.

I saw farms in Norway clinging to the sides of steep fjords. It would take these farmers nearly a half day to get over to their nearest neighbor's farm clinging to the other side of the fjord. Not much chance for education there? Guess again. On the more thickly settled areas, the school boat comes along. In the less densely settled regions, roving teachers go from farmhouse to farmhouse teaching the youngsters.

Over the past few years we have sent many agricultural experts to Europe to tell the European farmers better ways of doing things. This program has now been expanded under Point Four. There is little question that these programs of technical assistance have and will continue to help the farmers of other lands. But there should be a two-way bridge with information going both ways.

It is pretty easy to come to the point where we believe that all that is good must be in America; that there is nothing more that we can learn from anyone else. Self-satisfaction is always a dangerous philosophy.

The European farmer confronted with small acreages and not infrequently ungenerous soils, has learned to make the best use of the tools that he has had to work with.

An Englishman visiting this country once said, "I think your best farmers are better than our best farmers. But I think our average farmer is better than your average farmer." I tend to agree with him.

Using heavy applications of fertilizer and manure, as well as good soil management, the good European farmer gets tremendous yields. His livestock frequently out-produces ours. With today's high land prices and our increasing population, we could well tear this page from the European farmer's notebook. Farm account records in this country have definitely shown that profit is closely tied in with high yields of crops and livestock products.

With our hills and mountains covered with forest land, in the past we have been able to waste this vital natural resource and get by. If we are going to continue to have an adequate lumber supply, and what is equally important, a good living for farmers in areas where much of the land is in forest, we must start taking care of our forests. Here the farmers of Germany and Scandinavia are far ahead of us.

Today our attention is turned more and more to grassland farming. It is one way to use profitably much of our land too rough and sloping for

continuous crop production. Here again the European farmer is heads above us. I just haven't seen pastures in America like they produce in Europe. Faced with a shortage of protein feed, the European farmer gets much of his protein from his grass. We could well afford to send a delegation of American farmers to Europe to find out how to grow good grass.

There are also lessons we can learn from Europe on things that we do not want. Far too often these countries have settled into the comfortable habit of passing laws rather than getting down to the fundamental job of educating their people so that they may correct the evils themselves. These laws, adopted for the emergency of the moment, have continued to exist long after their original needs were forgotten.

At first it may look much easier to pass laws to enforce soil conservation or wise land use than head down what may look to be the rough road of education. Even in this country we have drifted farther and farther toward the idea "there ought to be a law." Yet these laws bring with them the arbitrary decisions and the handicaps on individuals which always follow when people try to use a single magic formula for solving all of their problems. Practices of soil conservation and even good land use differ widely from state to state and even from community to community.

We in this country are faced with the problem of choosing between the seeming expediency of

law and the longer, more permanent method of education. I vote for education.

Everywhere I have traveled, I have met young men and women who want to come to America. There was the student in Istanbul, the Arab refugee in Cyprus, the street urchin in Rome, the mechanic in Paris, the farmer's son in Holland.

When I asked them why they wanted to come to America, they all gave me the same answer. "There is opportunity there."

To me this is the essence of our greatness. This is the one thing we have that few other countries possess. Opportunity has been the very breath of America. Maybe we should call it the fifth freedom, "The freedom of opportunity."

We are still a new nation. It has been said that we work too hard, that we do not know how to enjoy ourselves. This, no doubt, is an outgrowth of the tremendous faith that we have in ourselves. If there is a job to do, let's do it, and in a hurry. During the war we said, "The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer."

It is this drive, this urgency, that European countries seem to have lost. We can lose it too.

Sometimes I am disturbed at the parallel between the regulations that have been passed in this country in recent years and the creeping paralysis that slowly engulfed Great Britain and the other socialistic countries of Europe.

Today government has the power to tell your banker whether or not he can lend you money. It

can tell me what wage I can draw. It can tell the farmer how much he can get for a bushel of soybeans or a pound of beef.

Government has the power to tell the farmer how many acres of corn or wheat he can or cannot plant. It probably would be doing so if it were not for the Korean war. The irony of it all is that these regulations were written to meet the emergencies of depression.

We have learned that regulations, along with the inevitable bureaus to enforce them, continue to live on long after the emergency for which they were created ceases to exist.

All over the world young men and women dream of America because "there is opportunity there."

Let's keep that opportunity alive!