

# Land REFORM

The land reform after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, though underrated and almost forgotten, was in fact an important act, affecting for decades the Czech landscape with numerous small heritage sites, sacral buildings and first-class architectural works of aristocratic residences. The reform changed the ownership of land in the area of approximately half of the country's size.

The land reform, understood in the social context of its era as the completion of the national liberation and rectification of 300 years old injustices from Habsburg times, resulted in the expropriation of land over 150 ha (agricultural soil) or 250 ha (in total), and its redistribution to small owners. (The Act of Expropriation of Large Sites, passed on April 16, 1919, was followed by the Redistribution

Act on January 30, 1920, and by the Compensation Act on April 8, 1920, setting compensations for the expropriated land. The reform was finished in 1935).

For big land owners, usually aristocrats, the land reform meant the reduction of their property and wealth; therefore, they could not afford costly reconstructions of large chateaus, maintenance of parks and care for large natural areas, or even reconstructions of churches and other rural minor buildings.

The efforts of small owners could not replace the care of aristocratic houses, who “collected the wealth over centuries”. Similarly, public care can't replace “love and reverence that the aristocrats had for the legacy of their fathers”.

The purpose of the reform was to strengthen the economic structure of the country, yet in effect, it put “the beauty and nobility of the Czech landscape, and historic and cultural heritage sites” at risk. Without realizing this fact, we cannot grasp the current conditions of heritage care, especially when it comes to small architectural works in the landscape. After the 1989 revolution, original aristocratic or church owners were replaced by local communities. Their involvement is an important positive element of the current heritage in the Czech Republic.

