

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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Antonio Ledesma, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 28, no. 3 (1980) 305–343

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Land Reform Programs In East And Southeast Asia: A Comparative Approach*

ANTONIO J. LEDESMA, S.J.

INTRODUCTION

"Search for the root cause and it will be found in the land."¹ Perhaps in no other part of the modern world has the land problem been so closely associated with the development or underdevelopment of sovereign nations than in East and Southeast Asia.² Nowhere else either has there been such a spectrum of land reform programs based on a variety of national goals, means, and competing ideologies.³

In general, two periods of land reform programs corresponding to the two Asian regions under study can be outlined. The first

*This essay derives from the author's work as an annotator for the forthcoming bibliography on land tenure and agrarian reform in Asia, produced by the library staff of the Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The present study, a revised version of the mimeographed LTC Research paper No. 69, attempts to include the principal studies or to cite representative works of major writers on land tenure and agrarian reform in the region.

The first two chapters of the essay are included in this issue; the last two will appear in the next issue of *Philippine Studies*.

1. Sein Lin, "Political Importance of Land Reform in Southeast Asia," in *International Seminar On Land Taxation, Land Tenure, And Land Reform In Developing Countries*, ed. A Woodruff, J. Brown, and S. Lin (1966), pp. 379-411.

2. "Underdevelopment" in the current literature has three connotations: (1) in the neutral sense, meaning "less developed countries" (LDCs); (2) among dependency theorists, meaning literally *under-developed* — i. e., under the domination of the developed countries; and (3) more dynamically, meaning *under-developing* — i. e., the "development of underdevelopment."

3. "Land reform" has been defined in multifarious ways. As used throughout this study, it means land *tenure* reform and refers primarily to land redistribution. In a broader sense, this topic provided the focal point for the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, 12-20 July 1979.

period, taking place immediately at the end of the Second World War, witnessed sweeping land reform programs in the East Asian countries of China, Japan, Taiwan, North and South Korea. In addition to affecting some of the most ancient civilizations in Asia, land reform in these countries took place in the Asian areas of high population density where the land problem was most acute.

The second period of land reform activities has taken place in the countries of Southeast Asia since the mid-1950s, when land reform in East Asia had already been substantially completed. Among the eight countries of island and mainland Southeast Asia, there has been more diversity in the initiation, formulation, and implementation of land reform programs — a reflection of the region's own complexity, situated at the crossroads of the Indian and Chinese civilizations, and colonized at various times over the last four centuries by competing Western powers (the Portuguese and Spaniards, followed by the Dutch, British, French, and Americans), and more recently by the Japanese during World War II.⁴

The Philippines and South Vietnam have had a voluminous history of land reform legislation, accompanied by substantial attempts by the government to implement reforms. Two major efforts in the mid-1950s and late 1960s have characterized these two countries' history of land reform. North Vietnam, following the model of agrarian revolution in mainland China, has initiated a radical land reform program earlier than any other country in the region. Burma in the contemporary world, following the "Burmese road to socialism," has carried out its own pattern of land nationalization and redistribution.

Malaysia and Indonesia, though not engaged in wide-scale redistribution of land, have acknowledged their land problems in areas of high population density and in the foreign-owned plantation sector of their agricultural economies. Land settlement has been the preferred policy for these two countries, as well as for Thailand which has only begun to acknowledge the spread of tenancy relations in its Central Plain.

4. Though extremely important for a proper appreciation of various land reform programs, the historical background for each country's unique experience in the evolution of its land problem has not been attempted. Emphasis has rather been laid on drawing the broad outlines for a comparative study of contemporary land reform programs in the region.

The two remaining countries of Cambodia and Laos, former provinces of French Indochina, are probably the least developed countries in the region – and also the least studied in terms of land tenure problems. Recent political events since 1975 have further shrouded the mystery regarding these two countries' development, but should indicate that Cambodia and Laos will henceforth be adopting at least the broad outlines of the Communist pattern of land reform.

Rural Southeast Asia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, like East Asia in the earlier decades, has begun to feel the increasing pressures of population growth with its consequent repercussions on land tenure problems. Coupled with population growth, however, has been the advent of the seed-water-fertilizer revolution, dubbed the Green Revolution since the late 1960s, which has dramatically increased the food-production potentials of the region.⁵

Land reform programs in East and Southeast Asia today, despite the diversity in historical and cultural backgrounds, are therefore intimately linked and confront basically the same twofold issues of equity and productivity.⁶ The working models for land reform – exemplified by Japan and Taiwan on the one hand and mainland China on the other – have exerted a profound influence on the pattern of land reform in neighboring countries. And as the countries with earlier experience in land reform implementation have begun to confront second-generation problems (usually productivity questions) brought about by the reforms, the later countries have tried to cope with their first-generation land problems (usually equity questions) while seeking for longer-term solutions that would not incur similar future problems.

It is in this light that our comparative survey of the socioeconomic and political dimensions of land reform programs in various Asian countries will be undertaken – keeping in mind the uniqueness of each nation's experience, yet trying to note some underlying similarities and historical links.

5. Joint FAO/ECAFE/ILO *Report on Land Reform Implementation in Asia and the Far East*, Manila, July 1969 (Rome: FAO, 1969), p. 4.

6. Vernon Ruttan, "Equity and Productivity Objectives in Agrarian Reform Legislation: Perspectives on the New Philippine Land Reform Code," in *Readings In Land Reform*, ed. Sein Lin (Hartford, Conn.: John C. Lincoln Institute, University of Hartford, 1964), pp. 280-302.

Table 1 presents a simplified chart of land reform programs in East and Southeast Asia after the Second World War, evaluated by the writer according to the scope and degree of implementation.

Table 1. Scope and Degree of Implementation of Land Reform Programs in East and Southeast Asia

Land Redistribution Completed:		
<i>Communist</i>	<i>Non-Communist</i>	<i>Socialist</i>
China (1950-52)	Japan (1947-49)	Burma?
North Korea (1946-48)	South Korea (1950-)	
North Vietnam (1954-56)	Taiwan (1953-)	
Partial Reforms Consisting Primarily In:		
<i>Land Redistribution</i>	<i>Land Settlement</i>	<i>Minimal Efforts</i>
South Vietnam (1957-) (1970-75)	Philippines (1954-57)	Cambodia
Philippines (1963-date)	Malaysia	Laos
Indonesia (1962-65)	Indonesia	
	Thailand	

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS OF LAND REFORM ON VARIOUS SOCIAL CLASSES

Because land reform is such a complex process, it is difficult to isolate its various social, economic, and political dimensions. In this section, we shall deal primarily with the socio-economic aspects of land reform in East and Southeast Asia. Six indicators have been selected to provide some guidelines for a comparative study.⁷ These are:

- 1) Tenure change — in terms of either tenancy regulation or tenancy abolition;
- 2) Landlord compensation and retention limits — including questions of land valuation, the legal formula for compen-

7. See Peter Dorner, *Land Reform and Economic Development* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972); Peter Dorner and Don Kanel, "The Economic Case for Land Reform," in *Land Reform in Latin America: Issues and Cases*, ed. P. Dorner (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1971), pp. 39-56; William Thiesenhusen, "Employment and Latin American Development," *ibid.*, pp. 57-76.

- sation, and tenants' amortization payments;
- 3) Distribution of income and wealth – pertaining to consumption, savings, and capital formation;
 - 4) Production and productivity – per unit area and per worker; investments for production and technological innovations;
 - 5) Employment creation – in terms of on-farm work and the creation of rural-based industries;
 - 6) Structural changes – i.e., the effects of land reform on other sectors of the economy, particularly industry, and on the formation of new social classes.

In examining several or all of these socio-economic indicators for each country, we shall try to follow the chronological order of modern-day land reform programs, as they occurred first in East Asia, then in Southeast Asia.

Japan: Ironically, Japan, which set off the whole chain of events leading to major land reform programs throughout Asia in the aftermath of the Second World War, is credited today as having undertaken one of the most effective post-war land reform programs. Actually, Dore distinguishes two stages of land reform in Japan based on two types of landlords – the first attaining power through military conquest or by infeudation, and the second by economic means within an established political order. The Meiji Restoration in the 1870s dispossessed the Type I landlords, the *daimyo*, leaving the field clear for the Type II landlords, the smaller village landlords who remained the dominant influence in the countryside until Japan's Stage II land reform in 1947-49.⁸

By 1950, a total of 1,742,000 hectares, comprising one-third of the total area of Japan's cultivated land, had been purchased and transferred to tenants, including owner-tenant cultivators. As a tenure class, owner-operators increased from 31 percent of total farm households in 1945 to 70 percent in 1950, reaching up to 80 percent in 1965. Several factors have been cited for this rapid change of tenure: (1) ceiling prices of land had been officially fixed since the war, so that by the end of 3 1/2 years of severe inflation in 1945-49, the real price of the land was only 6 percent

8. Ronald Dore, "Land Reform and Japan's Economic Development," *Developing Economies* 3 (1965): 487-96.

of the annual yield in 1950; this made it unnecessary for small farmers to make long-term installment payments over 24 years; (2) while not abolishing tenancy altogether, land reform placed severe restrictions against tenant eviction, and money rents were fixed so that by 1965, the controlled rent represented less than 3 percent of the estimated average yield converted to money. In 1967, however, this rose to 10 percent of the average yield.⁹

Clearly then, the direct results of land reform were on land tenure change and a concomitant distribution of agricultural income, due to the real reduction of land rent and purchase price for the land. "As far as the influence on the development of Japanese agriculture after the reform is concerned," remarks Ouchi, "it is this fact, the fact that the reform was carried out in a manner which was *virtually a form of expropriation*, which was of greatest significance, rather than the mere fact of the vast scale of the reform" (emphasis added).¹⁰

The economic impact of land reform on consumption, savings, investment, and productivity has also been well documented. Kawano, for instance, concludes for the 1951-54 period in Japan's agricultural sector:

The economic significance of the Land Reform in Japan lies, for one thing, in the fact that it raised both the average consumption level and the average propensity to consume of farmers, resulting in a big expansion of the domestic consumption market, and for another, that by converting tenanted land to owner-cultivated land it expedited long-term investment in agriculture, and thus combined with technological progress brought about positive effects in increasing agricultural productivity. It seems to us, however, that in the period under review, the Land Reform cannot necessarily be said to have raised agricultural productivity explicitly.¹¹

A decade after land reform, however, Japanese scholars and other observers have noted second-generation problems, arising particularly since the stage of high economic growth in the aftermath of the Korean War. Undersized holdings and small-scale farm management have created a gap between the agricultural

9. Takekazu Ogura, "Economic Impact of Postwar Land Reform on Japan," in *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, ed. James R. Brown and Sein Lin (Taipei: University of Hartford, 1968), pp. 223-27.

10. Tsutomu Ouchi, "The Japanese Land Reform: Its Efficacy and Limitations," *Developing Economies* 4 (1966): 129-50.

11. Shigeto Kawano, "Economic Significance of the Land Reform in Japan," *Developing Economies* 3 (1965): 139-57.

and industrial sectors in terms of productivity and income. A significant increase in part-time farming has been noted, indicating the need of most farm households to supplement their incomes from non-farm sources.¹²

In terms of the impact of these structural changes on small farmers, Uehara has investigated the uneven differentiation of the peasantry by 1960 along two lines – the semi-proletarianization of the bottom peasants who remain resident part-time farmers; and the increasing difficulty for the top and middle strata of the peasantry to develop as rich peasants. He expects an increase in the ranks of the “half-proletarian poor peasantry” who already constitute from 72 percent to 82 percent of all peasants in the districts of Tohoku and Kinki.¹³

South Korea: In terms of tenure change, South Korea's land reform can compare favorably with those of Japan or Taiwan. Owner-operators constituted 14 percent of all farm households in 1945, 17 percent in 1947, and 70 percent by 1965. However, aggregate figures alone may not reveal other relevant data. For instance, the area actually redistributed by the reform constituted only 56 percent (470,000 *chongbo*; 1 *chongbo* equals about 1 hectare) of the tenant farmland area, with the other 44 percent being sold earlier in the intervening four years prior to the promulgation of the Farmland Reform Law in 1949.¹⁴

The fact that most tenant or former tenant farmers are still poor has been ascribed to several reasons: (1) the inability of many tenants to pay for their lands due to the short repayment period of five years, the high monetary interest rate of 24 percent per annum, and the stipulation of repayment in kind;¹⁵ (2) an indirect effect of accelerating the trend to small farms – i.e., the average size for all farms fell from 1.62 *chongbo* in the late

12. See Shiro Tohata, “Land Reform – Results and Problems,” *Contemporary Japan* 27 (1963): 673-84 and 28 (1964): 83-97; Masaru Kajita, “Land Policy after Land Reform in Japan,” *Developing Economies* 3 (1965): 88-105; Ronald Dore, “Beyond the Land Reform: Japan's Agricultural Prospect,” *Pacific Affairs* 36 (1963): 265-76.

13. Nobuhiro Uehara, “Differentiation of Peasantry and Character of Social Classes in Rural Community of Present Day Japan,” *Tochiseido Shigaku*, No. 25, 7 (1964): 1-25.

14. Ki Hyuk Pak, “Economic Effects of Farmland Reform in the Republic of Korea,” in Brown and Lin, eds., *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, pp. 102-3.

15. *Ibid.*

1930s to 0.8 chongbo in 1960;¹⁶ and (3) the government's neglect of the agricultural sector, following a dualistic model of development that is biased toward an export-oriented industrialization program.¹⁷

The extreme fragmentation of landholdings and continued pressures on the land (due partly to the influx of war-time refugees from the north), coupled with the official abolition of tenancy, have led to disguised forms of tenancy arrangements which have become all the more difficult to control. A widespread form of disguised tenancy, called *Ko-ji*, has become prevalent particularly in the densely populated rice-growing regions of the southwest. Under this system of semi-permanent contract farming, a laborer and his family agree to a given set of farm tasks, receiving from the landowner payment in kind, usually rice, prior to the crop season.¹⁸

Compounding the problems of dwarf farms for many and landlessness for a growing number has been the small farmers' limited access to credit, to new types of farm technology including high-yielding varieties, and to extension assistance.¹⁹ South Korea thus represents an instance where drastic tenure changes were made in favor of the small farmers but were not integrated within a wider scheme of government support services for rural development.²⁰ The political actuations of the South Korean elite in the 1950s indicate that the Korean farmers have been made passive objects, not subjects, of reform. The socio-economic repercussions have therefore remained ambiguous and, on the whole, may even have become more pernicious to the small farmers if only because official statistics do not reveal the extent of the problem.

16. Ki Hyuk Pak et. al., *A Study of Land Tenure System in Korea* (Seoul: Korea Land Economics Research Center, 1966), p. 220; Robert Morrow and K. H. Sherper, *Land Reform in South Korea* (Washington: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1970), p. 44.

17. Edward Reed, "The Impact of Politically Motivated Land Tenure Reform: The Case of South Korea," Seminar paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975.

18. Ibid., pp 20-21; Robert Morrow and K. H. Sherper, *Land Reform in S. Korea*, p. 43.

19. Robert Morrow and Paul White, *Farm Credit In Korea* (Seoul: USAID/Korea, 1972).

20. This is similar to what occurred in the Bolivian land reform of 1952 when widespread land redistribution took place, but the peasants' welfare did not improve due to lack of infrastructure support.

Taiwan: Like Korea, Taiwan was a colony of Japan for several decades before the war. Innovative agricultural technology and an economic infrastructure under the colonial regime had made the island a highly productive agricultural region even if most of the surplus was earmarked for the mother country.²¹ The retrocession of the island with this infrastructure to China after the war, the arrival of a new elite – the Kuomintang leaders – from the mainland without landed interests to protect on the island, and the offer of U.S. support in the ideological battle against the giant across the strait, constituted unique preconditions for the success of the land reform program that followed.

Three general features can be cited. First, there was a logical three-stage progression, starting with the 37.5 percent farm rent reduction in 1949, followed by the sale of public lands, and culminating in the Land-to-the-Tiller Act of 1953 which set a maximum retention limit of three hectares of paddy land and six hectares of dry land.²² The first step enabled tenant farmers to increase their incomes, making it relatively easier for them to eventually pay the amortization payments during the final stage of land redistribution. Likewise, the interim sale of public lands lessened the population pressure on tenanted lands, preventing the miniscule fragmentation of what would eventually be converted into owner-operated lands.

A second salient feature of the reform was the manner of landlord compensation which was pegged to commodity prices instead of fixed money prices, thus providing a partial hedge against inflation. Moreover, the formula for compensation provided a built-in mechanism for ex-landlord capital to be channeled to industries. Comparing the relative merits of landlord compensation in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, Steele has pointed out the following features:

In Taiwan, compensation took the form of 70 percent in commodity bonds in terms of rice or sweet potatoes, and 30 percent in stocks of government enterprises. Although the prices of rice and potatoes increased at about the same rate as the wholesale

21. Ramon Myers and Adrienne Ching, "Agricultural Development in Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule," *Journal Of Asian Studies* 23 (1964): 555-70.

22. Shih-ko Shen, "Administration of the Land Reform Program in Taiwan," in Brown and Lin, eds., *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, pp. 380-432.

price index, the price of the stocks dropped considerably. In Japan, landowners received only a fraction of the original value of their lands since no protection was provided against the severe inflation of 1945-51. Finally, in Korea, compensation was in commodity bonds payable in cash at the current official price. It is not known, however, how much lower the official price was in relation to the market price, and whether or not it followed the general rise in the price level.²³

A third characteristic of the Taiwanese reform has been its integrated model for rural reconstruction where land tenure reform was a necessary but not the only element in the total uplift of the small farmers' welfare. Several studies have given high scores for Taiwan's reform experience in reference to the socio-economic indicators we have earlier indicated — i.e., income distribution, productivity, employment creation, and structural changes.²⁴

Another group of studies has examined the repercussions of land reform on rural social leadership in village Taiwan. Noting the initial social disorganization undergone by many villages during the post-reform period, Gallin has noted the withdrawal of many landlords from their traditional leadership roles and a trend toward equalization of social status in the villages.²⁵ Disagreeing with Gallin's findings that land reform caused a "leadership vacuum" in rural Taiwan, Pasternak nonetheless agrees that new kinds of leaders are emerging with a diffusion of influence

23. John T. Steele, "Compensation for Expropriated Land and Degree of Protection against Inflation: Taiwan, Japan, and Korea," (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1964).

24. See Anthony Koo, *The Role of Land Reform in Economic Development: A Case Study of Taiwan* (New York: Praeger, 1968); T. H. Shen, "Land Reform and Its Impact on Agricultural Development," in Brown and Lin, eds., *Land Reform in Developing Countries* pp. 347-66; Kang Chao, "Economic Effects of Land Reform in Taiwan, Japan, and Mainland China: A Comparative Study," LTC Reprint No. 80 (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1972).

In a study of land reform programs in Taiwan, Japan, and mainland China, Chao concludes that there was a decline in the productivity of aggregate input immediately after the change in land tenure. However, in the long run, tenure change induced farmers to marshal more inputs for production, and increased the consumption of the rural population — which might retard the commercialization of farm products, but would also expand the home market for industrial goods.

25. Bernard Gallin, "Land Reform in Taiwan: Its Effect on Rural Social Organization and Leadership," *Human Organization* 22 (1963): 109-12; and "Rural Development in Taiwan: The Role of the Government," *Rural Sociology* 29 (1964): 313-23.

and power in the Hakka village that he observed.²⁶

China: Land reform on the mainland of China is better understood within the larger context of the agrarian revolution that was foreseen, fomented, and brought to fruition by the Chinese Communist party (CPP) during a tumultuous period that reaches back to the early 1920s, and up to the present day. Mao's forecast in 1927 was but an apocalyptic prelude to what would constitute by far the world's most massive rural movement, involving a farming population of half a billion:

In a very short time, in China's central, southern and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back . . . There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticizing? Or to stand in their way and oppose them?²⁷

In retrospect, the CPP's Agrarian Reform Law that was promulgated in June 1950 and officially concluded in October 1952 represented merely the extension to the rest of the country of a process that had already begun in the liberated areas of Northern China during the period 1945-49. Earlier than this, throughout the late 1920s and 1930s during the Kiangsi and Yenan periods, the Communist leadership under Mao and rival factions had experimented with various agrarian strategies to mobilize party, army, and peasants together.²⁸ It is with this background in mind that Wong observes: "The Chinese land reform was very original: it was not derived from the past experience of any other country but evolved through the Chinese Communist Party's own trial-and-error method during its struggle for power."²⁹

If the period of widespread land redistribution in 1950-52 was not the beginning of the agrarian revolution, neither was it the

26. Frank Bessac, "Some Social Effects of Land Reform in a Village on the Taichung Plain," *China Society Journal* 4 (1965): 15-28; Burton Pasternak, "Some Social Consequences of Land Reform in a Taiwanese Village," *Eastern Anthropologist* 21 (1968): 135-54.

27. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Readings From The Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), p. 24.

28. K. C. Yeh, *The Chinese Communist Revolutionary Strategy And The Land Problem, 1921-1927* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1970); Tso-liang Hsiao, *The Land Revolution In China, 1930-1934* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1969).

29. John Wong, *Land Reform In the People's Republic Of China* (New York: Praeger, 1973).

end. Two further stages establishing cooperatives (1953-57) and finally communes (1958-61) would complete the institutional transformation of the Chinese countryside. Within the space of a decade, China underwent three large scale reorganizations in the countryside unparalleled by any other period in more than five thousand years of its continuous civilization. In assessing therefore, the socio-economic repercussions of China's land reform program in 1950-52, one has to recognize the specific objectives of the reform itself, which were more socio-political than economic. Three distinctive features can be pointed out:

First, the differentiation of rural classes was entrusted to the peasants themselves. Five categories were generally adopted: landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, and agricultural laborers. In marked contrast to the practice of land reform in other countries, the Chinese revolutionary leaders recognized the crucial importance of distinguishing among peasant sub-classes in the continuous task of discerning potential friends and foes during a period of revolution, external aggression by Japan, and civil war.³⁰ Nonetheless, the specific criteria for class analysis based on such factors as landownership, labor exploitation, personal cultivation, and political activities continued to defy uniform application.³¹ Still it was the Party's conviction that tenure status, being chiefly a matter of socio-economic relations within a village, could be more accurately defined by the peasants themselves. In this manner, it fell upon the peasants, aided by the cadres, to decide whose property was to be expropriated and who were to be the beneficiaries of the reform. A classic account of the process of transformation in a peasant village in revolutionary China is Hinton's *Fanshen*.³²

A second striking feature of the reform was its lack of strict egalitarianism. On the contrary, only a partial reshuffle of agricultural resources was actually carried out — involving the transfer of only the landed properties of the landlords to the poor

30. Geoffrey Shillinglaw, "Land Reform and Peasant Mobilization in Southern China, 1947-1950," in *Peasants, Landlords And Governments*, ed. David Lehmann (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1974).

31. Tso-liang Hsiao, *Land Revolution in China*.

32. William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Random House, 1966). Also see Jan Myrdal, *Report from a Chinese Village* (New York: Random House, 1965).

peasants and agricultural workers.³³ To several observers, the CPP's Agrarian Reform Law of 1950 represented the policy of "making both ends equal without touching the middle." The slogan used was: "Rely upon the hired farmers and poor farmers; protect the middle farmers; neutralize the rich farmers; watch the landlords."³⁴ In sharp contrast to the Russian revolution, the outcome of the Chinese Revolution depended in many ways upon the protagonists' policy toward the middle peasants who as an ill-defined group were "too large to be liquidated as a class, too sensitive to incentives to be bullied, and too economically important to be dispensed with."³⁵ In a similar vein, commenting on one of the early Communist attempts to carry out a land revolution in Kiangsi during the early 1930s, Elvin notes:

Land reform in the Kiangsi Soviet area was thus not the abolition of a manorial or 'feudal' order. It was the economic and sometimes physical destruction of the class of better-off smallholders, many of whom were also engaged in trade or money-lending, to the benefit of the less well-off smallholders and hired labourers, while those in an intermediate position (the 'middle peasants') were largely left alone.³⁶

This same policy was to be re-affirmed by the Communist leaders during the land reform phase two decades later in the early 1950s. Reporting on the whole course of the reform, a high official of the CPP claims that 47 million hectares of land changed hands from the landlord class to some 300 million peasants.³⁷ However, despite its absolute size, the expropriated area is calculated to be only about 43 percent of the known total cultivated land in China at the time.³⁸

A third feature of China's land reform stage was the very process itself — characterized by pragmatism, avoiding "the grotesqueness of land reform in a court room,"³⁹ and the sequencing of land reform as a necessary first step to confirm the principle

33. John Wong, *Chinese Land Reform In Retrospect*, LTC Reprint No. 113 (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1974).

34. Louis Gen, "Land Reform in Communist China," *Eastern World* 5 (1951): 19-20.

35. Jack Gray, "Political Aspects of the Land Reform Campaigns in China, 1947-1952," *Soviet Studies* 16 (1964): 209-31.

36. Mark Elvin, "Early Communist Land Reform and the Kiangsi Rural Economy: A Review Article," *Modern Asian Studies* 4 (1970): 165-69.

37. Tse-hui Teng, *The Outstanding Success of the Agrarian Reform Movement In China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1954).

38. John Wong, *Chinese Land Reform*, p. 18.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

of peasant ownership and with it peasant power. As the first step, land reform in terms of radical land redistribution was also meant to demonstrate eventually before peasant owners the uneconomic limitations of very small holdings, and the need for establishing mutual-aid teams, leading to cooperatives and ultimately, people's communes.⁴⁰ In this regard, some observers have commented that the land reform stage would have taken more time had it not been for the outbreak of the Korean War which forced China to hasten the process toward socialized agriculture in the face of an external threat.

More than a quarter of a century after the start of China's agrarian revolution, the Chinese pattern for rural development has become clearer, characterized by a social revolution followed by a technological revolution.⁴¹ The stage of land reform belonged to the first period of institutional or social transformation. From this has followed the more recent socio-economic advances in food production, increased peasant welfare, and profound structural changes within the commune system that has made the Chinese model an object of heightened interest among Western and Asian scholars.⁴²

North Vietnam: Agrarian revolution in North Vietnam has followed the general outline of the Chinese example with the notable exception that advanced cooperatives have been the final stage instead of the more complex system of communes. As in China, the issue of land reform was used by North Vietnamese leaders to transform an anti-colonialist struggle into a peasant-based Communist regime.⁴³ White more accurately talks of the country's "two land reforms" since independence — the first one replacing the "feudal" system of landlord control with private peasant landownership; and the second one abolishing "capitalist"

40. Lu-yen Liao, "Collectivization of Agriculture in China," *Peking Review* 6 No. 44 (1963): 7-14.

41. John C. H. Fei, "Chinese Agriculture Under Communism: A Review Essay," (New Haven: Economic Growth Center, Yale University, 1974), pp. 80-85.

42. S. B. Thomas, "Communist China's Agrarian Policy, 1954-1956," *Pacific Affairs* 29 (1956): 141-60; Benedict Stavis, *China's Green Revolution* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell, 1974); Shigeru Ishikawa, "Agrarian Reform and its Productivity Effect — Implication of the Chinese Pattern," in *The Structure And Development In Asian Economies* (Tokyo: Japan Economic Research Center, 1968), pp. 314-58.

43. Van Chi Hoang, *From Colonialism To Communism* (New Delhi: Allied, 1964).

private landownership and instituting collective ownership of land by the cooperatives.⁴⁴

The various steps in the land reform process have been pointed out – the Land Rent Reduction Campaign in 1953-54, followed by the Land Reform Campaign Proper in 1954-56. This second phase touched off some peasant revolts due to excesses committed by political cadres, forcing the Party to undertake a “rectification of errors.”⁴⁵ An enlightening document from the state-supported National Farmers’ Liaison Committee enunciated the major guidelines for the land reform program. It was intended to wipe out the feudal system, encourage greater productivity, and was vital for the war resistance. The three methods to be employed by the government were: confiscation, requisition, and forced sale. Land distribution would be based on the need of the people, the farming situation prior to the reform, the number of family members, productivity of the area, and village population.⁴⁶

Again as with the Chinese example in initiating land redistribution only to be followed by collectivization, divergent interpretations have been forwarded by observers. Representative of the critical view are Larsen and Gittinger who maintain that collectivization of agriculture has failed to attain its goals and that resort to repressive programs is not a requisite to significant agricultural production increases.⁴⁷ More sympathetic views are expressed by Shabad who describes the economic rehabilitation of North Vietnam three years after the Geneva agreements of 1954. By the end of 1956, a land reform program had transformed agricultural tenure into three kinds of farms: small owner-operated, experimental cooperative, and state.⁴⁸ Toward the end of 1960s, Van Dyke can point out the development and consolidation of cooperatives, which according to the North Vietnamese

44. Christine Pelzer White, *Land Reform In North Vietnam*, Spring Review Country Paper (Washington: Agency for International Development, 1970).

45. Van Chi Hoang, *From Colonialism to Communism*.

46. National Farmers’ Liaison Committee, “From Whom Are the Lands Taken? To Whom Are the Lands Given?” In *Planning For Land Reform, Pamphlets And Articles In Translation* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1954).

47. Marion Larsen, *Agricultural Economy of North Vietnam*, ERS Foreign 123 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1965); James Price Gittinger, “A Note on the Economic Impact of Totalitarian Land Tenure Change: The Vietnamese Experience,” *Malayan Economic Review* 5 (1970): 81-84.

48. Theodore Shabad, “Economic Developments in North Vietnam,” *Pacific Affairs* 31 (1958): 36-53.

press, cover from 91 to 97 percent of all farmers.⁴⁹

Assessing the precise socio-economic consequences of land reform in North Vietnam is made difficult by the paucity of reliable sources. However, two salient features should be kept in mind: (1) as in China, the land redistribution phase was meant to be but a brief prelude toward collective cooperativization and was intended to spark off the social transformation that was deemed necessary before any technological transformation could take place; and (2) more so than in China, North Vietnam's agricultural production was carried out over the past thirty years under war-time conditions which required more regimentation and less margin for experimentations.⁵⁰ The fact that North Vietnam has been able to adapt the cooperative as a rural social structure according to its own people's needs and quite distinct from either the Soviet collectives or the Chinese communes bears testimony to the imagination of its leaders:

The cooperative has some of the characteristics of the traditional Vietnamese commune. The cooperative provides basic social security, making sure that everyone in the village has food and housing, even though it may be at a very low standard of living. Inequality of wealth is minimized, and thus the major cause of agrarian unrest is removed.⁵¹

South Vietnam: In contrast to North Vietnam's two-stage blueprint for a total transformation of the countryside, South Vietnam's attempts at land reform (first in 1956 under President Diem, and finally in 1970 under President Thieu) were characterized by half-hearted efforts in the beginning when there was still time, and frantic distribution of land titles toward the end when it was too late to stem the Communist tide. Whether or not Thieu's Land-to-the-Tiller (LTTT) program would have worked had it not been overrun by the victory of the north, or whether political events took the shape they did because of the failure of land reform in the first place is now a moot question. The fact is South Vietnam lost the war, and it was principally a peasant war.⁵²

49. Jon Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy For Survival* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Pacific Books, 1972).

50. *Ibid.*

51. White, "Land Reform in North Vietnam," p. 64.

52. Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars Of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969).

The land question was recognized early enough by Diem when Ordinance No. 57 was promulgated in 1956 to initiate land reform involving approximately 320,000 cultivators and a rice area of 760,000 hectares.⁵³ However, legislative compromises (e.g., the landlords' retention limit was set at 100 hectares) and delays in implementation virtually negated any socio-economic impact that could be hoped for from the program. It was even stressed by field researchers that the Diem government lost much of its political credibility in the eyes of the peasants by taking back the land previously distributed to them by the Viet Minh forces prior to the partitioning of Vietnam in 1954.⁵⁴

Evaluating the consequences of the Diem reform program in a village in the Mekong Delta, Hendry observed that only about one-quarter of the village households benefited directly from the reform, and that there were no significant changes in the size of farming units, agricultural methods, nor productivity. Due to the absence of sharecropping, farm tenancy may not have been as onerous as in other areas, but neither were there any indications of productivity increases.⁵⁵

The second land reform program under Thieu had as its objectives: (1) the distribution of the remaining lands acquired by the government in the 1950s; (2) the LTTT program which would transfer free of charge all privately tenanted and communally owned ricelands to actual tillers, and (3) a Montagnard land tenure project which issued titles to lands farmed by the highland tribal peoples.⁵⁶ On the third anniversary of the signing of the LTTT law, the government claimed that 1,003,353 hectares of land had been distributed to 858,821 former tenant farmers.⁵⁷ Earlier surveys among military personnel indicated that a majority of the soldiers completely approved of the LTTT program. In at least one military region, however, more than half of the soldiers had

53. James Price Gittinger, "Vietnamese Land Transfer Program," *Land Economics* 33 (1957): 173-77.

54. Robert Sansom, *The Economics Of Insurgency In The Mekong Delta Of Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1970).

55. James Hendry, "Land Tenure in South Vietnam," *Economic Development And Cultural Change* 9 (1960): 27-44. For a more comprehensive study of the impact of Diem's land reform program, see Stanford Research Institute, *Land Reform In Vietnam* (Menlo Park, Calif.: S.R.I., 1968).

56. MacDonald Salter, *Land Reform In South Vietnam*, Country paper (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1970).

57. U.S. AID. "Press Releases" 1973 n. p.

failed to apply for or declare their land.⁵⁸

Other studies on small landlords revealed what was perhaps the principal obstacle to the LTTT program: although absentee landlord power had been greatly reduced, resident landlord influence was still strong.⁵⁹ Investigating the lack of LTTT implementation in the crowded coastal plain of Central Vietnam, in contrast to the delta region, Bush noted that 30 percent of all tenants, sharecroppers, or squatters on privately owned land had not been affected. In addition to the expected reasons — such as inability to apply, fear of landlords, ignorance, and moral taboos — he concludes: “The unwillingness of small landlords to transfer land and accept compensation is *the* barrier to distribution.”⁶⁰

If small landlords were adversely affected by the projected reforms, other groups were being bypassed. Thus, for instance, commenting on Diem’s partial land reform program, Hendry showed how land redistribution was far from being egalitarian, and noted dissatisfaction among landless laborers and tenants who did not benefit from the redistribution but who still comprised a majority of the village population.⁶¹ A later study on the LTTT program likewise indicated grievances from the 10-15 percent of landless and tenants farming on worship land because they were not included as beneficiaries of the program.⁶²

When the LTTT program was thus abruptly ended by the military denouement of April 1975, two principal questions remained unresolved by the Thieu regime: (1) How overcome the opposition of small landlords who saw themselves as being adversely affected by the reform program? and (2) How include marginal groups in rural society — such as the landless agricultural workers, tenants

58. Roger Russell, *Soldiers And The Land To the Tiller Program In Military Region 1 Of Vietnam* (Vietnam: USAID, 1971); Larry Newberry, *Soldiers And The Land To the Tiller Program In Military Region 4 Of Vietnam* (Vietnam: USAID, 1971); Henry Bush and Larry Newberry, *Farmers Who Own Their Land And The Land To The Tiller Program* (Vietnam: USAID, 1971); Gordon Messegee, *Soldiers And The Land To The Tiller Program In Military Region 3 Of Vietnam* (Vietnam: USAID, 1971).

59. C. Stuart Callison, *The Economic, Social And Political Effects Of The Land-To-The-Tiller Program In South Vietnam: A Progress Report*, Paper No. 86 (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1973); Henry Bush, *Small Landlords' Dependence on Rent Income in Vietnam* (Vietnam: USAID, 1970); Richard Eney and Henry Bush, “Small Landlords’ Survey,” (1971). Typescript.

60. Henry Bush, *Obstacles To The Land-To-The-Tiller Program In Coastal Central Vietnam* (Vietnam: USAID, 1973).

61. James Hendry, *The Small World Of Khanh Hau* (Chicago: Aldine, 1964).

62. Bush and Newberry, *Farmers Who Own*.

on exempt lands, or cultural minorities on the highlands — as beneficiaries of a land reform program? The same questions are still being asked in the Philippine setting today.

Philippines: With the ending of South Vietnam's final effort at land reform, the Philippines remains as the only nation in South-east Asia with an ongoing agrarian reform program. Certain parallels, however, with South Vietnam's reform experience should not be lost sight of. As with the Diem reform in 1956, the Philippines' initial attempt at land reform in 1954 under President Magsaysay failed to be implemented, principally due to landlord obstruction in Congress.⁶³ In 1963, the Agricultural Land Reform Code was passed under President Macapagal. This too, however, resulted in minimal implementation and had to be amended in 1971. The current agrarian reform program is a continuation basically of the 1963 and 1971 measures, although much more emphasis has been given to its implementation ever since the imposition of martial law in 1972 and President Marcos' declaration that the agrarian reform program would be "the cornerstone of the New Society."⁶⁴

Since then, three interrelated programs have been introduced by presidential decrees: (1) Operation Land Transfer, which like South Vietnam's LTTT program stresses the land-to-the-tiller principle and has been designed to distribute certificates of land transfer (CLT) to all eligible tenant farmers on rice and corn lands; (2) the *Samahang Nayan* (Barrio Association) program, which organizes potential reform beneficiaries in the barrios into pre-cooperatives, eventually leading toward an integrated network of areawide cooperatives servicing the various needs of its members; and (3) the *Masagana-99* program, designed to increase rice productivity by providing for the credit and input requirements of small farmers adopting the new rice technology.

Tenure change, structural reorganization, and productivity increases have therefore been fully articulated as specific goals within an integrated agrarian reform program. Recent empirical findings, however, have begun to show discrepancies between program designs and actual accomplishments.

63. Frances Stanner, *Magsaysay And The Philippine Peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Hung-chao Tai, *Land Reform And Politics: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

64. Conrado Estrella, *Agrarian Reform In The New Society*, 1974, n. p.

(1) *Tenure Change*: From the original one million tenants to be benefited by the agrarian reform program, more than 600,000 tenants are no longer eligible for land transfer proceedings with the current seven-hectare retention limit granted to small landlords of twenty-four hectares or less.⁶⁵ This means that only 39 percent of all rice and corn share tenants are included within the scope of Operation Land Transfer. The rest will only be able to shift to permanent leasehold status (i.e., with a fixed rental of 25 percent of the average yield of the three previous normal years). In effect, tenancy would not be abolished; at best, it would be regulated for the majority of rice and corn tenants.

(2) *Landlord compensation and retention limits*: Government policy in recent years has shifted back and forth between seven and twenty-four hectares for the retention limit for landlords. Likewise the compensation formula has been made more attractive for landlords, particularly the small landlords of seven to twenty-four hectares, by increasing the cash payment from 10 percent to 20 percent. Amortizing peasant owners are given fifteen years to pay by yearly installments for the assessed value of the land. Considering the various options in terms of cash and bonds offered as compensation, Harkin has calculated that the landlord would be able to receive an effective rate of compensation of 92 percent, while the tenant would be paying 68 percent of the agricultural value of the land, the difference being made up by a subsidy from the Land Bank — ultimately, from the general public. Indeed because of these modifications, big landlords would be better off being compensated for their lands than medium and small landlords who would not be compensated at all under a permanent leasehold arrangement with their tenants!⁶⁶

(3) *Distribution of income and wealth*: Reform beneficiaries are still saddled by a number of financial obligations: (a) amortization payments over fifteen years or permanent fixed rentals; (b) repayment for the Masagana-99 loans; and (c) three automatic contributions under the Samahang Nayan program for the mem-

65. Philippines, Ministry of Agrarian Reform, "1978 Year-end Report as of 31 Dec. 1978," mimeo.

66. Duncan Harkin, "Philippine Agrarian Reform in the Perspective of Three Years of Martial Law," (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1976).

bership fee, the barrio guarantee fund, and the barrio savings fund. Despite the replacement of usurious credit rates by government legalized rates, the probable lightening of the lessee's fixed cash rental with continued inflationary trends, and the long-term goal of building up a cooperative system for small farmers, it is extremely doubtful whether peasant farmers can fulfill all these financial obligations all at once, much less perceive the long-range advantages in store for them.

Indeed, a nation-wide study has revealed that land amortization payments have become financial burdens to CLT-recipients, resulting in 80 percent of the respondents being saddled with overdue payments. Among the reasons cited for the defaults in payments are: crop failures, low net farm incomes, and other outstanding debts.⁶⁷ Thus, from his household income situation, the tenant is still asked to pay substantially for the promised land as well as for the government's service infrastructure.

"Before-and-after" studies of selected agrarian reform areas, based on benchmark years, add some crucial insights into the redistributive impact of the reform program. In the Bicol River Basin, over a three-year span (1974-77), income has increased among all tenure groups. However, this has been accompanied among tenure shifters (i.e., reform beneficiaries) by a more unequal income distribution, whereas nonshifters evidenced a greater equality in income distribution as evidenced by their Lorenz curves.⁶⁸

More critically, in the pilot municipality of Plaridel, Bulacan, a resurvey of farmers for crop year 1974-75 after eleven years of the agrarian reform program revealed both vertical and horizontal inequalities — i.e., a widening income gap between the poorer group and the richer group, and a higher dispersion of incomes within each income class. Despite the positive effects of the program on productivity, rising costs of production have brought about a decline in net profits from farming. The study suggests that net income increases, whether resulting from increased productivity or

67. Jesus Montemayor and Eva Escueta, *A Sociological Study on the Economic and Non-economic Burdens of the Recipients of the Certificate of Land Transfer* (College, Laguna: Agrarian Reform Institute, University of the Philippines at Los Baños), pp. 47-48.

68. Ricardo San Andres and Jeanne Frances Illo, *Beyond Share Tenancy: A Socio-economic Study of the Effects of Agrarian Reform Programs in the Bicol River Basin, Camarines Sur, 1974 and 1977* (Quezon City: SSRU/IPC, Ateneo de Manila University) pp. 70-73.

reduced rentals, were discernible only among those who were already more affluent farmers.⁶⁹

(4) *Productivity, labor absorption, and structural changes:* Although several studies have indicated modest production increases in reform areas,⁷⁰ by and large share tenants, lessees, and amortizing owners have not shown significant differences in productivity. In a socioeconomic survey conducted from 1970-73 in the pilot province of Nueva Ecija, a multidisciplinary group of social scientists derived as some of their main conclusions that: tenure change *per se* does not raise productivity; and amortizers exhibit unsatisfactory performance in fulfilling financial obligations.⁷¹

If tenure change does provide incentives for increased production, as with the Bulacan lessees observed by Takahashi, it also means that lessee farmers are becoming full-time farmers and utilizing more family labor instead of hired help on a cash basis or payment in kind.⁷² A probable outcome would be the growing displacement of landless rural workers who used to help tenants in their work, but have not been included in the list of reform beneficiaries.

On the other hand, other researchers point out the continuing and even increasing role of hired labor in the rice production process, an indication that reform beneficiaries may be devoting more time in other more gainful occupations outside of rice farming. Moreover, where agrarian reform has effectively set a ceiling to the legal rental for land, several sub-tenancy arrangements have begun to arise between reform lessees and landless workers.⁷³

69. Josephine Angsico, *Socioeconomic Changes After Eleven Years of Agrarian Reform: A Resurvey of Plaridel (Bulacan) Farmers* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University), pp. 171-73.

70. Pedro Sandoval and Benjamin Gaon, "Some Effects of Land Reform in the Philippines," *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development* 11 (1972): 235-42; Akira Takahashi, *Land and Peasants in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1969).

71. Mahar Mangahas, Virginia Miralao and Romana P. de los Reyes, *Tenants, Lessees, Owners: Welfare Implications of Tenure Change* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1974).

72. Akira Takahashi and Brian Fegan, "Two Views of the Kasama-Lessee Shift in Bulacan: An Exchange," *Philippine Sociological Review* 20 (1972): 129-41. In Takahashi's analysis, hiring wage laborers and being hired in turn was a disguised way for sharecroppers to increase their net incomes, at the expense of landlords.

73. See Randolph Barker and Violeta Cordova, "Labor Utilization in Rice Production," *Philippine Labor Review* 1 (1976): 48-91; Joyotee Smith and Fe Gascon, "The Effect of the New Rice Technology on Family Labor Utilization in Laguna," (Manila: IRRI Research Paper Series No. 42, 1979); M. Kikuchi, L. Maligalig-Bambo, and Y. Hayami, "Evolution of Land Tenure System in a Laguna Village," (Los Baños: Report No. 1, Project "Dynamics of Agrarian Change," IRRI, 1977).

There are no exact figures for this group of landless workers. But in aggregate numbers, it has been estimated from available census figures in 1970-75 that there may be as many as 3.4 million landless rural households – i.e., those without any ownership nor tenancy rights to the land.⁷⁴ On rice and corn lands, the number of landless workers may even be comparable to the number of agrarian reform beneficiaries. Village-level studies indicate that their relative size may range from 3 percent to 51 percent of the total number of households in different localities.⁷⁵

This class of landless workers could further be subdivided into: (a) a rural proletariat – those who work as agricultural wage-earners in large plantations, exempt from the present land reform program; and (b) what may be termed as a “lumpen-peasantry” – those who have the right neither to own the land, to till the land as tenants, nor to earn a living wage in agricultural plantation economies, but must somehow live off the land.

Thus, seen from the bottom end of Philippine agrarian society, the truly marginal groups are still left outside the effective scope of the land reform program, and Griffin's observation is corroborated: “those in the lowest deciles of the income distribution . . . are unlikely to improve their relative share – or to increase their political influence.”⁷⁶ From the other end, the big landlords of fifty hectares or more are no longer found in rice and corn lands, but rather in plantation lands exempted from land reform and devoted to the more lucrative export crops. Redistribution of income will not affect those in the highest deciles. The shock troops therefore in any projected redistribution of income and wealth will be small landlords pitted against middle peasants!

74. Cf. Germelino Bautista, “Socio-Economic Conditions of the Landless Rural Workers in the Philippines: the Landless of Barrio Sta. Lucia as a Case in Point,” in S. Hirashima, ed., *Hired Labor in Rural Asia* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1977), pp. 106-25; Rene Ofreneo, “The Philippine Labor Force: A Class Analysis,” *Philippine Labor Review* 1 (1976): 93-111; Lorna Peña-Reyes Makil and Patria Fermin, *Landless Rural Workers in the Philippines: A Documentary Survey* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1978).

75. Cf. M. Kikuchi, N. Fortuna, L. Bambo, and Y. Hayami, “Polarization of a Laguna Village,” (Los Baños, Report No. 2, Project “Dynamics of Agrarian Change,” IRRI, 1977); Geronimo Dozina, Jr., “Agrarian Adaptation to Demographic and Technological Changes in Two Central Luzon Villages,” (Los Baños: IRRI Agric. Econ. Dept. Paper No. 78-18, 1978); A. J. Ledesma, S. J., “Landless Workers and Rice Farmers: Peasant Subclasses Under Agrarian Reform in Two Philippine Villages” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980).

76. Keith Griffin, *The Political Economy of Agrarian Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 201-2.

From an overall point of view, the socio-economic consequences of agrarian reform in the Philippines have been ambivalent at best, and oftentimes self-contradictory – i.e., beneficial to those who were to be expropriated, and prejudicial to those who were to be the beneficiaries. Despite its already limited scope to tenanted rice and corn lands, the effective applicability of the program has further been curtailed by fluctuating retention limits, and various compensation formulas favoring landlords. For most share tenants, the final objective has been shifted to rent reduction under permanent leasehold – only the first step in the land reform programs of other Asian countries.

Other Countries: In dealing with their land problems, the remaining countries of Southeast Asia have relied more on attempts to regulate tenancy or to start resettlement schemes rather than redistribute the ownership of land. Indonesia witnessed a brief period of land reform in 1962-65, but since then attention has shifted to the colonization of its Outer Islands.⁷⁷ Along with Indonesia, land issues in Malaysia and Thailand have focused more on fragmented smallholdings, land settlement schemes, and plantation economies, instead of tenancy relations. (See chapter 4 for a brief treatment.)

Although Burma's version of a non-Communist type of socialism is probably unique among the countries of the region, an attempt to discuss the socio-economic consequences of its nationalization of agricultural lands has not been made for lack of available data. Likewise, the countries of Cambodia and Laos in the aftermath of the war in Vietnam present a lacuna in our information on land tenure problems.

Concluding Remarks: Some generalization that may be drawn from this brief survey are:

(1) Marginal groups – i.e., those at the very bottom of the social pyramid – have to be identified and included in any reform program. Otherwise, the conditions of the very poor will only be aggravated, and it is likely that the beneficiaries of today will become tomorrow's problems.

(2) The immediate impact of land reform in the short run lies

77. Sediono Tjondronegoro, "Land Reform or Land Settlement: Shifts in Indonesia's Land Policy," LTC No. 81 (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1972).

more in resolving the equity issue. Beneficial socio-economic consequences are more likely to be appreciated only in the intermediate run. In the long run, land reform programs have to be fully integrated with national economic planning. It is not an accident that Japan and Taiwan, the only non-Communist countries considered to have successful land reforms, have also had vigorous industrialization programs.

(3) Paradoxically, complex tenure systems may require simple, uniform, and universal solutions. There is almost general consensus among observers that it is easier to abolish tenancy entirely rather than regulate its various forms.⁷⁸ Likewise, landlordism, whether big or small, runs at cross purposes with the land-to-the-tiller principle. Unless severe restrictions are clearly made, partial solutions to the land problem have a way of being dissipated in the end.

II. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF ELITES AND RESULTS OF LAND REFORM

A. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF ELITES

"Land reform cannot be effectively implemented in the absence of political will, leadership and drive at all levels, to enforce it." (Joint FAO/ECAFE/ILO Seminar 1969)¹

"There is no country in Asia, however underdeveloped, which does not know how to write a reform law, or what its implications might be. They have written them, and many have not been carried out — precisely because the political decision-makers understood their implications and their inevitable repercussions . . . The content and implementation of agrarian reform are a reflection of a particular political balance of forces in a country." (Ladejinsky 1964)²

"Whoever wins the support of the peasants will win China; whoever solves the land question will win the peasants." (Mao in Yen-an, 1936)

Land reform programs are only as good as the elites who implement them; elites are only in power so long as they retain some

78. Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform In Principle And Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969); and Dore, "Beyond the Land Reform."

1. Joint FAO/ECAFE/ILO *Report on Land Reform Implementation in Asia and the Far East*, Manila, July 1969 (Rome: FAO, 1969), p. 4.

2. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 42 (1964): 445-60.

social bases for their regimes. If elites are primarily beholden to the landlord class, then land reform becomes a dress rehearsal. If elites look to the peasants as their main base for power, land reform becomes an agrarian revolution. If elites stay in the middle, trying to reconcile the interests of both landlords and peasants, land reform becomes a balancing act that may never quite satisfy either landlords or peasants.

Although the political reality is much more complex than these generalizations, the experience of land reform programs in the Asian countries under study bears out the convergent observations of such disparate participants as Ladejinsky, U.N. agencies, and Mao.³

It is therefore important to draw some classification of the elites in various countries. Using Tai's categories with some modifications, we have the following groupings (Table 2):⁴

**Table 2. Types of Political Elite during Land Reforms
In East and Southeast Asia**

<i>Elites Separated from Landed Class</i>		<i>Elites Cooperative with Landed Class</i>	
<i>Revolutionary</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Controlled</i>
China	Taiwan*	Philippines (1972)	Philippines (1954)
N. Korea		S. Vietnam (1970)	S. Vietnam (1956)
N. Vietnam	Japan**	S. Korea	Thailand
			Cambodia +
Burma?			Laos +
			Malaysia?
			Indonesia?

* The Kuomintang came from the mainland.

** The decisive elite at the time of land reform were the American occupation forces.

+ Prior to the political events of 1975.

3. Also confer Morre's more complex treatment of the historical relationships between landlords and peasants in the rise of modern isms – democracy, fascism, communism. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 1966).

4. Hung-Chao Tai, *Land Reform and Politics: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 91.

Depending on the type of political elite, land reform programs at various times and places have stressed one or a combination of several of the following political objectives: (1) legitimacy, (2) counter-insurgency and maintaining the status quo, and (3) democracy — either in the Western sense or in the Communist sense. Usually, legitimacy and counter-insurgency are immediate, short-term goals of land reform, while the ideal of democracy constitutes a long-term, if undefinable, objective.⁵

(1) *Legitimacy*: During or after a political upheaval, the issue of legitimacy becomes a matter of survival for the new elites that have gained power. It is not surprising therefore that after the dislocations of World War II, land reform programs were inaugurated by both Communist and non-Communist countries. In predominantly agricultural countries, characterized by population pressures and concentration of landownership, no other program can perhaps claim more popular support and lay a stake to political legitimacy than land reform.

Thus, in China, land reform provided the Communists an instrument to weld together the interests of the peasants, the army, and the party. Recovering from initial failures, the Communist party under Mao arrived at the "grand strategy of agrarian-based, protracted armed conflict, of which the doctrine of land reform was an integral part."⁶ It was perhaps a pointless question among Western writers of the 1930s and 1940s to debate whether the Chinese Communists were really first and foremost "agrarian reformers" or "communist revolutionaries."⁷ From hindsight we now know that they were both: agrarian reform provided the basis of legitimacy for the Communist-inspired revolution.

Similarly, Viet Cong support from the rural areas of South Vietnam rested upon a sustained appeal to peasant discontent with land tenure conditions: "We gave you the land; give us your sons."⁸ The history of other peasant wars in Asia, led by counter-

5. *Ibid.*; Elias Tuma, *Twenty-Six Centuries of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

6. K. C. Yeh, *Land Reform And The Revolutionary War* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1971); K. C. Yeh, *The Chinese Communist Revolutionary Strategy And The Land Problem, 1921-1927* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1970).

7. Kenneth Shewmaker, "The 'Agrarian Reformer' Myth," *China Quarterly* 34 (1968): 66-81.

8. Peter Hess, "Land Reform in South Vietnam," *Swiss Review Of World Affairs* 19 No. 8 (1969): 18-19.

elites vying for political power, has been focused on the land problem – and the legitimacy, or justice, of land reform.⁹

In non-Communist countries, sweeping land tenure reforms were carried out in Taiwan and Japan immediately after World War II – partly as a claim to legitimacy of the new post-war elites, and partly as counter-insurgency against the threat of Communism from without or, more imminently, from within. Indeed, it was because of the Kuomintang's failure to solve the crucial problem of land tenure relations that they had lost the "mandate of heaven" to rule the mainland.¹⁰ More recently, in the Philippines, President Marcos has pointed to agrarian reform as the sole justification for the continuation of his regime under martial law: "The land reform program is the only gauge for the success or failure of the New Society. If land reform fails, there is no New Society."¹¹

(2) *Counter-Insurgency*: In many respects, therefore, counter-insurgency is the other side of the issue of legitimacy. To provide stronger claims to legitimacy is to deny the legitimacy of insurgents or revolutionaries. But to utilize land reform primarily for the short-term objective of counter-insurgency may not serve to confirm the long-term legitimacy of the ruling elite. The classic example has been South Vietnam's Land-to-the-Tiller program in the early 1970s – so meticulously prepared in advance with socio-economic surveys and technical assistance, so much more "biased" toward the tenants (in contrast to Diem's earlier reform), yet also so patently designed with the primary goal of counter-insurgency that many intended beneficiaries remained suspicious and did not bother to accept their titles.¹²

9. See for instance the anonymous article, "The Peasant War in the Philippines," which interprets Philippine social history in terms of class struggle between landlords and their foreign allies on the one hand, and the peasant masses on the other. "The Peasant War in the Philippines: A Study of the Causes of Social Unrest in the Philippines – an Analysis of Philippine Political Economy," *Philippine Social Sciences And Humanities Review* 23 (1958): 373-436. For Indonesia, see Justus van der Kroef, "Peasant and Land Reform in Indonesian Communism," *Journal Of Southeast Asian History* 4 (1963): 31-67.

10. Shirley Shui Yee Chan, "The Failure of the Kuomintang and its Government to Appeal to the Peasantry 1923-1937" (M. A. thesis, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1965).

11. SEADAG Reports, "The Rural Development Panel Seminar on Land Reform in the Philippines," (New York: Asia Society, 1975).

12. Henry Bush, *Obstacles To The Land-To-The-Tiller Program In Coastal Central Vietnam* (Vietnam: US AID, 1973).

"Land reform, in the perspective of the past twenty-five years," states a report of the Stanford Research Institute,¹³ "has been a paramount issue in Vietnam." It was perhaps with this realization that an office memorandum considered land reform as "the easiest of all pacification programs to put into effect administratively." A U.S. adviser put it more bluntly. Urging a land reform program that would immediately confer land titles for free to virtually all peasant tillers, while compensating landlords with a guarantee from the United States, estimated at \$900 million, Prosterman observed: "If the land reform shortens the war even by two weeks, it will pay for itself."¹⁴

A diametrically opposite view has been suggested by a controversial study made by Mitchell. Applying linear regression analyses to describe the association between greater government control and greater inequality in land tenure variables, he concludes:

From the point of view of government control, the ideal province in South Vietnam would be one in which few peasants operate their own land, the distribution of land holdings is unequal, no land redistribution has taken place, large French landholdings existed in the past, population density is high, and the terrain is such that mobility or accessibility is low.¹⁵

A pointed rebuttal of Mitchell's celebrated study has been made among others by Paige. Reversing Mitchell's conclusion, Paige contends: "The delta, a region of commercial rice production, large rice estates, extensive tenancy, and inequitable holdings, is the most prone to revolutionary social movements, both political and religious." The author adds, "the fundamental explanatory principle is market penetration rather than inequity or estate size."¹⁶

Though not indicative of official U.S. views nor those of the South Vietnamese government, the Mitchell study indicates how land reform itself may be seen by some as merely a tactical weapon to be used or conveniently shelved in the fight against

13. Stanford Research Institute, *Land Reform In Vietnam* (Menlo Park; Calif.: S. R. I., 1968).

14. Roy Prosterman, "Land Reform in South Vietnam: A Proposal for Turning the Tables on the Viet Cong," *Cornell Law Review* 53 (1967): 26-44.

15. Edward Mitchell, *Land Tenure And Rebellion: A Statistical Analysis Of Factors Affecting Government Control In South Vietnam* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1967).

16. Jeffrey Paige, "Inequality and Insurgency in Vietnam: A Re-Analysis," *World Politics* 23 (1970): 24-37.

insurgency or revolution.

Like Thieu's LTTT program, Marcos' Operation Land Transfer for Filipino tenant farmers has been criticized as simply a stratagem to gain legitimacy for his martial-law government and to deny a mass base for Maoist insurgents. Kerkvliet claims for instance that "the purpose of land reform is to protect the regime from rural unrest rather than to bring substantial reforms for the good of the peasantry."¹⁷

The recourse to land reform simply as a means to stay in power and as a measure of counter-insurgency has been recognized by most political leaders. Their short-term effects may be realizable as with the initial successes of Thieu's LTTT program and with the first years of Marcos' New Society. However, in the long run, the root causes of the land problem still have to be confronted, and it is within this time frame that land reform cannot be used only or even primarily as counter-insurgency.

(3) *Democracy*: The long-run objectives for land reform programs have invariably been couched with the ideals of democracy — e.g., "land-to-the-tiller" (Magsaysay in 1954; Chen Cheng in 1953; Thieu in 1970); "emancipation of the peasants" (Macapagal in 1963, Marcos in 1972); "people's communes" (Mao's China); "wars of national liberation" (Ho's Vietnam); Sun Yat-sen's *Minsen* (People's Livelihood) Principle; etc.

Because democratic ideals are so pervasive, and have been appealed to by elites all across the political spectrum, the objective of democracy in land reform has defied definition — conveniently vague for politicians to make unrealizable promises, yet attractive enough to gain support from peasants and intellectuals alike. At the risk of over-simplification, two general interpretations of democracy in land reform processes are compared in Table 3 reflecting the divergent land reform experiences of Communist and non-Communist regimes.¹⁸

17. Benedict Kerkvliet, "Land Reform in the Philippines Since the Marcos Coup," 1974 (Typescript).

For an elaboration of the radical critique of anti-communist land reform programs, see Gary L. Olson, *U.S. Foreign Policy And The Third World Peasant* (New York: Praeger, 1974); and Al McCoy, "Land Reform as Counter-Revolution: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Tenant Farmers of Asia," *Bulletin Of Concerned Asian Scholars* 3 (1971).

18. See Elias Tuma, *Twenty-Six Centuries Of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 224-25; Doreen Warrimer, *Land Reform in Principle and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 57-76; Sidney Klein, *The Pattern of Land Tenure Reform in East Asia after World War II* (New York: Bookman, 1958).

Although no country quite corresponds to only one of these views of the democratic ideal, several examples can be noted — Japan and Taiwan as approximating the non-Communist view of democracy, China and North Vietnam the Communist interpretation of people's democratic republics.¹⁹

Categorization aside, it is part of history's paradoxes that thorough-going land reform programs, despite their ideal of democracy, have invariably been implemented with un-democratic means. Communist countries have usually been severely criticized for this failure. On the other hand, non-Communist countries have not been exemplars either of democratic methods in land reform. In the cases of Japan and South Korea, the decisive role of U.S. occupation forces as an outside force has been well-documented. Taiwan's land reform was likewise initiated and implemented by the Kuomintang leaders who had come from the mainland and had no landed interests to protect on the island. In none of these three cases was there a genuine democratic process in the Western liberal sense — e.g., of counting electoral votes, peasants being represented in a multi-party system, and legislating reforms by majority rule.

It is part of the ironies of history that by using "undemocratic" means against their war-time foes, the American occupation forces insured the effective implementation of land reform in Japan; whereas, in the Philippines, a colony and ally of the United States, landlords who were often suspected of being war-time collaborators with the Japanese were able to regain their positions of power with the return of American forces, the restoration of the "democratic" electoral process, and the eventual inauguration of the Philippine Republic in 1946.²⁰

In his extensive study of the political process of land reform in eight representative countries throughout the world, Tai is led to conclude that it is much easier for a non-competitive political system than for a competitive one to effect meaningful tenurial reform:

To the developing countries in need of reform it is evident that in those countries where a multiparty or biparty system reigns, the prospect for

19. For the philosophical principles behind Taiwan's land reform, see Hsiao Tseng, *The Theory And Practice Of Land Reform In The Republic Of China* (Taipei: China Research Institute of Land Economics, 1968).

20. Cf. Hernando Abaya, *The Untold Philippine Story* (Q.C.: Malaya Books 1967).

prompt, effective, and drastic land reform is generally not bright. In countries where political power is concentrated in one political party or a small group of leaders, and where the elites earnestly seek to broaden their rural base, the possibility of a relatively successful reform is great.²¹

Ladejinsky, who was probably the most effective proponent for the democratic ideal of land reform in the post-war era in Asia, nonetheless emphasizes: "If the peasantry is to get what is promised, peaceful and democratically managed reforms are not going to fill the bill. Government coercion, whether practiced or clearly threatened, is virtually unavoidable."²²

The conclusions of Tai and Ladejinsky merely reiterate a truism in politics: that no class legislates itself out of existence. What is perhaps more pertinent to ask is whether non-competitive elites, once in power on the basis of land reform promises, would actually be willing to share the decision-making process with intended reform beneficiaries. Implicit in this perspective is the long-term view of democracy.

Thus, short-term goals for land reform — in terms of establishing legitimacy or conducting counter-insurgency — may be temporarily effective. But the longer-term goal of attaining democracy — not only in terms of protecting individual human rights, but also of achieving basic social freedoms from hunger, widespread poverty, and dependence on other countries — has proved to be more elusive and constitutes the focus for the continuing debate over the precise nature and orientation of land reform.

B. RESULTS VIS-A-VIS PROFESSED INTENTIONS

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that one reason why results of land reform differ from professed intentions is simply that political rhetoric tends to exceed realizable expectations. Asian leaders in the post-World War II era have become so adept at the symbolic uses of land reform that today no public leader would dare come out on record as being against land reform. An instance of this were the Congressional debates prior to the passage of the Philippines' Agricultural Land Reform Code in

21. Tai, *Land Reform and Politics*, p. 473.

22. Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Asia."

**Table 3. Democracy as the Goal of Land Reform,
in East and Southeast Asian Countries**

	<i>Non-Communist View</i>	<i>Communist View</i>
Assumptions regarding land problem	Market imperfections in the factors of agric. production — land, labor capital, entrepreneurship	Class struggle between landlords and peasants
Attitude toward property	Wider distribution of private landownership	Abolish private ownership of the means of production, i.e., land,
Process of land redistribution	According to legal norms; enforced by courts and police power of state	Means for peasants to exercise power over landlords
Duration of land distribution	Final stage, supported by infrastructure of services — credit, etc.	Transitional stage, prior to collectivization (cooperatives and / or communes)
Landlord compensation	"Fair compensation" based on land value or some other norm	None; all land and farm equipment to be expropriated
Tenure reform beneficiaries	Sharecroppers become lessees or owner-tillers, but landless agricultural workers not benefited	Poor and hired peasants allotted land; middle and rich peasants not touched
Farm operation	Family farms; increase scale of production with HYVs and more inputs, and service cooperatives	Collectivized agriculture: production teams, brigades, people's communes, large-scale farming
Ultimate vision	To form a strong rural middle class participating in parliamentary democracy	To create an egalitarian rural society, principles of the mass line and democratic centralism
Some recurrent problems	1) re-concentration of land-ownership 2) how increase scale and size of farm operation 3) government cooptation of peasant groups — towards fascism	1) problem of incentives 2) how provide specialized training without return of "capitalist tendencies" 3) control by a central government and the party — toward totalitarianism of the left

1963.²³

Indeed, sincere proponents for land reform may even go along with land reform schemes that have no realistic expectations of fulfillment, if only to keep the issue alive and to raise the peasants' own expectations: "The mere writing and passing of reform laws is a good thing, even if they are deficient and their execution is obstructed. Their very existence is a promise to the tenants and a threat to the landlord."²⁴ In the Philippine experience, this seems to have been the case with Magsaysay's 1954 land reform bill and Macapagal's 1963 land reform code.²⁵

A second reason for the lack of congruence between intentions and results of land reform is the lack of peasant participation — either in terms of articulating their demands or in ensuring the implementation of the reform once it has been legislated. Although they stand to benefit from any redistribution of land or rights to land, peasants are usually too unorganized and inarticulate to be initiators of reforms, much less active agents in its successful completion. Tai suggests that in the majority of countries he has examined, peasants have not actually played a major role in land reform planning and implementation.²⁶ The crucial relationship to examine then is the link between the elite and the landed class.

The third and principal reason for the gap between intentions and results in land reform is thus landlord opposition. This may take various forms: (a) dilution of the meaning of land reform during the period of initiation; (b) compromises during the period of formulation, (c) obstruction during the period of implementation, and (d) reversal after the reform has been completed.²⁷

(a) *Dilution*: Land reform in its popular usage has usually meant some form of land redistribution. In actual practice, however, it is not uncommon for so-called land reform programs in various countries to consist of measures *other* than land redistribution — i.e., land resettlement schemes (Thailand, Malaysia,

23. Raul Manglapus, *Land of Bondage, Land of the Free* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1967).

24. Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Asia."

25. Frances Starner, *Magsaysay And The Philippine Peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Manglapus, *op. cit.*

26. Tai, *Land Reform and Politics*.

27. Cf. Tuma, *Twenty-Six Centuries*.

Indonesia, the Philippines), schemes for cooperative farming (Malaysia, Thailand); community development programs (Philippines, Indonesia, Laos); package programs extending the Green Revolution (Philippines, Thailand); and tenancy regulation which has been legislated by practically every country in the region. The arguments forwarded for all these other measures are cogent enough.

The principal flaw, however, is that they do not strike at the heart of the matter — the concentration of landownership in the hands of a few big landlords or many small landlords, accompanied in either case by the attendant social evils of widespread tenancy, debt peonage, and perennial rural poverty. As complementary measures for land redistribution, these other programs may be indispensable; as substitutes, however, for land redistribution, they simply dilute the meaning of land reform. It is in this light that the broadened term of “agrarian reform” has been criticized by some as a means of delaying the implementation of what should be “land reform” in the restricted sense.²⁸

(b) *Compromises*: Legislative delays and compromises have been favorite methods for landlord opposition. In Japan, the “first reform plan” which essentially reflected the views of the conservative ruling class had to be overruled by the second reform plan which was closer to the interests of the peasants and supported by U.S. occupation authorities.²⁹ In South Korea, in spite of political rhetoric, little was done to carry out the Allies’ program of land reform. Some former Japanese holdings were redistributed in 1948 and a few landlords parceled out their holdings to relatives in response to pre-election demands, but President Rhee’s government largely protected the interests of the elites.³⁰

Similar compromises have been noted by observers during the period of land reform legislation in South Vietnam and the Philippines in the mid-1950s. Some indicators of landlord dominance in legislation have been: the relatively high retention ceiling (one

28. Joel Rocamora and Corazon Panganiban, *Rural Development Strategies: The Philippine Case* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1975), p. 108.

29. Tishitaka Ushiomori, and Yozo Watanabe, “Agrarian Laws of Japan,” *Review of Contemporary Law* 6 (1959): 68-78.

30. Clyde Mitchell, “Land Reform in South Korea,” *Pacific Affairs* 22 (1949): 144-54.

hundred hectares for South Vietnam in 1956; seventy-five hectares for the Philippines in 1963); the deletion of an entire chapter on agricultural land taxation (the Philippines in 1963); exemption of particular lands devoted to plantation economies and export crops (South Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines); and formulas for compensation highly favorable to landlords (South Vietnam in 1970; the Philippines in 1974). In all these instances, and many hidden others, the "I-am-for-land-reform-but!" proponents of land reform have become its most effective opponents — by presiding over its legislative abortion.³¹

(c) *Obstruction*: The period of implementation of land reform has perhaps become the most fertile field for landlord obstructionism. Particular provisions of the law have been challenged and brought to court; tenants have been harassed and evicted, oftentimes on the basis of the law itself which allows for self-cultivation; land valuation committees have been stalemated by the absence of landlord representatives; government officials and local judges have been identified with the landlord class; etc.³²

Perhaps not all failures in implementation should be ascribed to the obstructionist designs of landlords. The absence of land records and cadastral surveys, lack of government personnel, the failure of infrastructure services for credit, marketing, etc., have oftentimes been cited as additional reasons for poor implementation.³³ It has even been suggested that landlords themselves be included as active cooperators in the smoother implementation of the reform program — e.g., by continuing to provide credit to their former tenants.³⁴

However, as with substitute measures for land redistribution, this technocratic approach to the implementation of land reform may simply gloss over the underlying reality: that landlords as a class stand to be adversely affected by any thoroughgoing land reform program. And, as such, opposition on their part is to be expected. The process of land reform does not have to create irre-

31. Cf. Manglapus, *Land of Bondage*; Tai, *Land Reform and Politics*.

32. Cf. Jose Diokno, "Legal Aspects of Land Reform: The Central Luzon Experience," *Solidarity* 2 (1967): 4-11; R.A. Luedtke, "LTTT Grievances and Disputes," Saigon, 1971. (Typescript); Ronald Dore, *Land Reform In Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

33. Joint FAO/ECAFE/ILO Report.

34. Romana Philanga-de los Reyes and Frank Lynch, "Reluctant Revels: Leasehold Converts in Nueva Ecija," *Philippine Sociological Review* 20 (1972): 7-78.

concilable class enemies, but neither has the history of successful land reforms shown that landlords would graciously accept the rationale of land reform.

(d) *Reversal*: A final and more insidious form of landlord reaction to land reform is the reversal of reform objectives several years or even a generation after the reform has been accomplished. South Korea's attempts to consolidate very small farms into medium-size farms after the initial reform have been viewed with apprehension by some because of the likely reemergence of landlordism.³⁵ Already the disguised forms of tenancy prevalent in the densely populated rice-growing areas today have indicated a *de facto* reversal of reform goals.

Japan and Taiwan have also moved in the direction of making land reform ceilings and the rules for land transfers more flexible—allowing for bigger-scale farming, but also the possibility of absentee landlordism once again.³⁶ In the early 1960s, the belated compensation of ex-landlords as legislated by the Japanese Diet has also been viewed by some as a reneging on the original rationale of land reform.³⁷

In the Philippines, perhaps the most significant reversal today has been the acceptance of permanent leasehold for the majority of tenants as the maximum goal of agrarian reform, instead of the much-publicized objective in 1972 to distribute certificates of land transfer to all tenants. Even land resettlement projects, originally designed to clear pioneer lands for family-sized farms, have resulted after a generation or two as areas of widespread tenancy and abandoned farms.³⁸

C. FEASIBILITY OF LAND REFORM

Landlord opposition as well as the emergence of new forms of landlordism have reduced or even nullified the projected impact

35. Robert Morrow and K.H. Sherper, *Land Reform in South Korea, Spring Review* (Washington: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1970); Ki Hyuk Pak, "Economic Effects of Farmland Reform in the Republic of Korea," in Brown and Lin, eds., *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, pp. 102-3.

36. Takekazu Ogura, "Economic Impact of Postwar Land Reform in Japan," in *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, ed. James R. Brown and Sein Lin (Taipei: University of Hartford, 1968), pp. 223-76.

37. Tuma, *Twenty-Six Centuries*.

38. Carlos Fernandez, "Blueprints and Realities: Adaptive Processes and Development Policies in a Frontier Resettlement Community," SEADAG seminar paper (San Francisco, 1972).

of land reforms in various countries. From past experience, we can therefore try to draw together three general conclusions with regard to the feasibility of new or continuing reforms.

(1) Elites do make the critical decisions whether land reform is to be substantially implemented or not. However, elites themselves are constrained by the social bases of their power. Elites closely linked to the landed class are no more than the executive arm of a semi-feudal oligarchy and will not carry out substantial reforms. On the other hand, elites that are dominant or independent of the landed class are more likely to push through effective reforms.

In addition to the examples of Japan and Taiwan – whose elites were prodded on by U.S. backing and the Communist threat – it is instructive to examine the thoroughness of land reform or more profoundly, agrarian revolution, carried out by the Communist regimes in China, North Vietnam, and North Korea. Tenancy has not only been abolished, but rather landlords as a class have been eliminated – if not by execution, certainly by re-education. If there have been defects in implementation, they have been on the side of excesses against the landlords. In this regard, White's observation is to the point: "Land reform is a law plus the political power balance: if the landlords have the power they can distort the law in their favor; if the poor peasants are given power they can distort the law in their own favor."³⁹

(2) Land reform programs initiated primarily for the short-term objectives of counter-insurgency and establishing the legitimacy of a new or failing regime are likely to have limited success at the beginning, with a tendency of petering out with the passage of time. Despite initial reports of widespread acceptance, South Vietnam's LTTT program was already showing signs of slowing down even before the final political upheaval in 1975. Likewise, the Philippines' agrarian reform program today has shifted emphasis from Operation Land Transfer to other related activities such as the Samahang Nasyon and Masagana-99 programs.

(3) In the Asian context, the most stubborn opponents of land

39. Christine Pelzer White, *Land Reform in North Vietnam*, Spring Review Country Paper (Washington: Agency for International Development, 1970), p. 63.

reform have been the medium- and small-landlord class. Although tenure status with regard to farm size is an extremely relative term, peasant perceptions of who is a big, medium, or small landlord have ordinarily been adequate for delineating social relationships within a rural community. It is in this area that several reform programs have floundered and been stalemated — for lack of appreciation of the extent and political significance of the small-landlord class. “Land reform’s most effective opponents,” stresses a rural development seminar group, “are the small landlords, not the large.”⁴⁰

40. SEADAG Reports, p. 15.