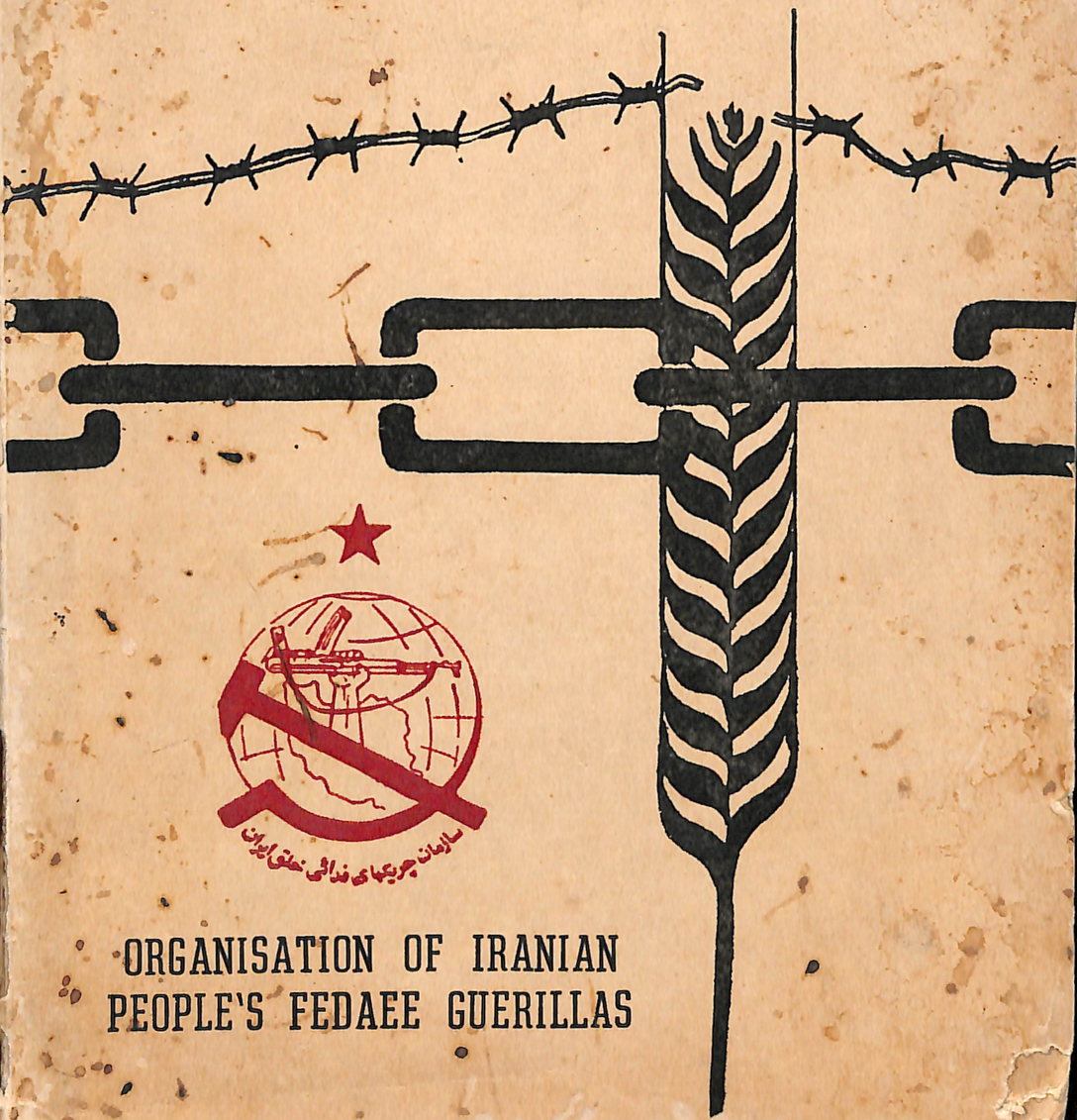


# LAND REFORM & ITS DIRECT EFFECTS IN IRAN



ORGANISATION OF IRANIAN  
PEOPLE'S FEDAAEE GUERRILLAS

**SCANNED**

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This is an English version of a Book published by Organisation of Iranian people's Fedaaee Guerillas (O.I.P.F.G) and it is a study of rural segments in Iran.

O.I.P.F.G. is a marxist organisation which adopted armed struggle on 1970 within the frame work of marxist-Leninist ideology & based on the fact of the existing Socio-economic and political conditions existing in Iran. This is done to break the false image of the regimes undefeatability which created after the 1953 C.I.A. Coup. Dictatorial regime of the Shah & its imperialist masters by imposing a suppression measures and oppressive atmosphere they could keep the image for over 25 years. During this period any political activity was crushed brutally. Hence, the absolute unarmed political activity along could not be considered as an effective measure.

After the implementation of a so called "White Revolution" and replacement of the feudalism with a new system called bourgeoisie compradore, even for a section of left forces this was not easy to beleif that the Shah's regime has become against a system which was supported by him till yesterday. This book gives an answer to all those who did not have a correct idea about the changes which took place in Iran Society.

Several books on socio-economic and political conditions of Iran are published by O.I.P.F.G., shows that the organisation carries its responsibility as a vanguard in Theory too.

FARYAD, Organisation of Iranian students (India) which started its activity in the year 1974, as a part of

opposition forces outside the country tries to bring out the informations and literatures on people's struggle in Iran, and till now has published several publications. Our main aim in publishing this book is to overcome the lack of information which is seen on rural socio-economic conditions among Indian Progressive forces. We hope by overcoming this deficit through this book and other literatures (going to be published later) we be able to carry our responsibility towards the masses in the region.

**Long Live Armed Struggle of Iranian Masses Against Reaction and Imperialism !**

**Long Live Indo-Iranian People's Solidarity !**

**Down with the Puppet Regime of Shah & its Imperialist Masters !**

**FARYAD, ORGANISATION OF IRANIAN  
STUDENTS (INDIA)**

*November 1978.*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

There are various interpretations available of the land reform in Iran, and of its effect on the socio-economic system of our country.

The regime's propagandists and sycophants have produced voluminous accounts and have monopolised the columns of many a newspaper in praise of the land reform. The nature of their support for the land reform is too obvious to need any serious reply.

On the other hand some opportunistic groups, who are supposedly "anti-regime", believe that in the land reform the Shah has reluctantly bowed to the wishes of the people, that he has been forced to concede to the people's "uncompromising demands". They therefore believe that the reform contains at least some positive, progressive, elements, and they are pleased that the Shah has at last retreated from his earlier positions. Hence they are now waiting passively to see our society advance gradually along the path of progress.

It would appear that this group fails to see that the "uncompromising demands of the people" will only be realised through an organised struggle by the people. For the Shah to surrender in the face of the "uncompromising demands of the masses" there would have to be a total



defeat both of imperialism and of internal reaction which, in our country, is possible only through a protracted and mass armed struggle. Imperialism and its client regime in Iran will never bow to the peaceful demands of the masses—least of all to a fundamental demand like land reform—and will smash any kind of mass protests and demonstrations with utmost savagery. It is only the power of the armed masses in their millions, and not popular demands posed in a peaceful way, which will bring imperialism to its knees—an imperialism which is armed to the teeth.

It is a mystery why these frustrated politicians have forgotten the most basic principle of Marxism-Leninism, and why they suppose that the historical laws governing the political hegemony of the proletariat no longer apply. The only explanation is that their natural inclination is towards preserving the present state of affairs—and this is what the opportunists of the right have, throughout history, endeavoured to do.

Another section of the opposition believes that nothing has in fact happened, and that the land reform is nothing but a creature of the regime's propaganda. They argue that if land reform has taken place and if the peasants have acquired land, this will in effect mean that feudalism, as a social phenomenon, has been destroyed. This in turn would mean that the Shah's claim to have carried out a revolutionary change in society is correct, i. e. one section of the ruling class (the feudalist section) has been replaced by another section of the ruling class. It therefore follows that the feudal ruling class has carried through a revolution against itself. This, they argue, is impossible. They believe that before the Shah's "White Revolution" (i. e. before 1961) Iranian society was semi-colonial and semi-feudal, and that it still, fundamentally, remains so. They therefore

invoke the revolutionary experiences of previous semi-colonial semi-feudal societies and they want to import them to Iran without making any changes. Under the positive slogan of "No Compromise with the Regime", they are denying all the changes that have taken place in Iran. They imagine that if they admit the de-facto changes that have taken place in rural relations, the revolutionary impetus in the villages and a mass armed struggle will automatically be precluded. It is precisely here that their main theoretical error is hidden. They imagine that by admitting that a socio-economic change has taken place, they will have denied the necessity for revolution-this is where their mistake lies. They are wrong because although a contradiction has changed, the fundamental contradiction in our society is that between the people and imperialism and this remains in force. Not only has this contradiction not been lessened by the "White Revolution" but it has actually been accentuated by it.

The transformation in the character of imperialist influence and in the nature of the exploitation of our labour force by world capitalism have increased the contradiction between capital and labour. They have consequently allocated a more prominent role to the proletarian elements in our people's anti-imperialist revolution and have thus increased the socialist component within the revolutionary dynamic. This, therefore, is not a regressive but a progressive development as far as the objective conditions of our revolution are concerned. This is precisely why we can conclude that from a strategic point of view, imperialism is a paper tiger; every step it takes, every tactic it employs, will lead it to a deeper grave.

Contrary to what this group assumes, it was the imperialist orientated comprador bourgeoisie who ruled our society, both politically and economically, in the period

before land reform. They were in partnership with the feudalists. The leadership, however, was under the control of imperialism. Despite the bonds that existed between these two sections of the ruling class (the comprador bourgeoisie and feudalists), there also existed a contradiction. Imperialism was not in principle opposed to swallowing its Iranian ally and the latter's economic interests all in one go; but this proved neither possible nor, from imperialism's point of view, desirable. Land reform was a quieter and more cunning way of destroying feudalism, and at the same time, offered imperialism a more pervasive control over the economic life of our society. This investigation will clearly show that, contrary to the beliefs of this group, some fundamental changes in the rural economy of Iran have taken place.

There is a third group who believe that the land reform was a ploy put forward by the regime to stem an imminent rebellion of the masses, to quieten down the revolutionary fervour amongst the people, and to disarm the vanguard politically. In other words the Shah and the ruling class had decided that it was better to take the heat out of the revolutionary conditions prevailing at that time by offering some reforms, and by giving in to the people's desire for those socio-economic changes that were compatible with the interests of imperialism. At the start of the "White Revolution" there were even some Marxists who put forward theories of this kind: under the slogan of "Land Reform, Yes! Shah's Dictatorship, No!" they voiced their implicit approval of the reform. However, as more and more aspects of the land reform were enacted they had to confront the facts of the matter.

The fact is that the regime's land reform cannot merely have been a political ploy to quieten the rebelliousness of the masses. The land reform has in effect des-

stroyed the feudal system of production in the villages it is evident that such a programme cannot be carried out without encountering economic contradictions and consequently it must have had an economic purpose.

It is also relevant that the political and cultural superstructure of feudalism could no longer meet the economic needs of imperialism. Nor was it in its political interests to preserve such an archaic system: feudalism was a decrepit system which had outlived its usefulness, and it was dangerous for imperialism to support it. The masses were angry with it and there existed the possibility of an open rebellion against it, as the experience of China and Vietnam had shown. The cultural and social values of feudalism had become a crumbling edifice: the petty bourgeoisie were not happy with it; the intellectuals saw it as a symbol of reaction and backwardness; and all this showed imperialism that, even from a political point of view, feudalism was no longer a useful ally.

In its fight against feudalism, imperialism used a variety of propaganda weapons: it promised the peasant masses an end to the miseries suffered by them over thousands of years and it played upon the anti-reactionary emotions of the petty - bourgeois intelligentsia. It may also have incidentally wished to take the heat out the prevailing revolutionary situation. However, the main impetus in carrying out the land reform was imperialism's own class interests.

The land reform can only be adequately analysed within the context of changes which were taking place in the system of world imperialism as a whole.

The growth of imperialist interests, together with the changing methods of exploitation, created a variety of states

dominated by imperialism. Some of these were colonies or semi-colonies, which had retained systems based on feudalism and slavery; others were "neo-colonial states" in which capitalist methods of production had replaced the old archaic methods. Let us examine the contradiction that exists between imperialism and feudalism in each of these countries. "There is a fundamental contradiction between imperialist domination and that of feudalism. As Marx has pointed out, wherever world capitalism obtains a footing, it turns the prevailing conditions upside down (in varying degrees) and tries to change it into its own capitalist mould. We believe that the peaceful co-existence which prevails at the moment between imperialism and feudalism is of a temporary and tactical nature, and that, sooner or later, feudalism will be dissolved in the world capitalist order of things. Imperialist domination, in its colonial form, savagely crushes any form of conventional relationship in society. In its semi-colonial form, imperialist domination is combined with feudalist domination. Lastly, in neo-colonialism, a particular society becomes an organ within the total imperialist order. Imperialist domination moves in a serpentine manner so that neo-colonialism is a repeat of the colonial situation, but on a more advanced level". (Section 4 of the appendix to "Armed Struggle : A strategy as well as a tactic" by the martyred comrade, Masood Ahmad-Zadeh; published by GODF).

The so-called reforms of the regime must be analysed in the light of this correct observation. We believe that before the land reform, Iran was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. \* To expand the interests of neo-colonia-

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\* The characteristic of this society before the "White Revolution" was that feudalism in Iran no longer possessed all embracing political power. In fact, after Reza Khan's coup d'etat in 1921, political power was transferred to the imperialists.

lism in Iran and also to enable Iran to play its part in this stage of the growth of world imperialism, \* it was essential that the feudal system of production be done away with. This would

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Iran's new role in the system of world imperialism has two essential features. First, the imperialists have delegated the final stages of production (assembly, montage) of some goods to Iran for the purpose of internal consumption and export to regional markets: this has turned Iran, amongst other things, into a middleman. The second feature is that the preliminary stages of processing the raw materials, for export to imperialist countries, have been assigned to Iran. For instance, General Motors have set up Chevrolet assembly lines in Iran for the purpose of exporting these cars to the Gulf states; Chrysler have recently signed an agreement for the same reason; England is in the process of setting up a huge factory in Ahvaz for the production of oil refining machinery with the eventual aim of exporting this to the Gulf states. On the other hand, it is no longer profitable for the imperialists to transfer iron ore and copper to their own countries. Instead they set up steel mills and copper melting factories in the countries of origin. Bandar Abbas and Ahvaz have been designated for such purposes, and work has already begun on building a copper melting factory in Birjand, an area which has a rich supply of copper and gold only 100 metres below the surface. With a plentiful supply of cheap labour, there is no earthly reason why imperialism should not set up its factories in the lands under its domination. It is hard to find a factory in Iran where, next to the Iranian manager, a foreigner is not dealing with the day to day running of the factory. The impetus behind the destruction of feudalism in Iran can only be analysed from this angle: the transformation of Iran into a neo-colony and therefore into an organic part of the system of world imperialism.

lay the grounds for imperialist domination of all aspects of the Iranian society. We should now analyse what was the contradiction between the economic aims of imperialism and the feudal system of production; and why imperialism could no longer support the economic domination of feudalism:—

1. In a feudal society, the overwhelming majority of the labour force is deployed in agriculture, whereas imperialism needs more and more labour for work on assembly lines. The increase in the supply of labour thus attained will lower the general wage level. Nothing could achieve this better than the land reform which has despatched masses of bankrupt farmers and landless peasants to the factory gates.

2. Consumption in a feudal society is confined to localised production and is also subject to particular traditions with limited money transactions. This inevitably closes the villages to imperialists' products and deprives the latter of a vast untapped market.

3. The feudal system of production does not deliver standardised products and produces mainly for local (village) consumption. This is in serious conflict with the need of imperialism for raw materials.

4. With the feudal system of production in full swing, it was extremely difficult for imperialism to invest in agriculture. Where as today (after the land reform) the imperialists have extensively invested in agriculture in all parts in the country.

Having effected a qualitative change in its economic domination, imperialism needed to transform the political and cultural superstructure in accordance with the changes in

the foundations. As well as ordinary unskilled workers, imperialism needed skilled workers, technicians, engineers, trained managers and experienced consultants. The static, backward bureaucracy of feudalism was a stumbling block to this. Because of the new complexity of production, imperialism needed a competent and energetic system of management to pave the way for the expansion of its domination over all economic aspects of society. It is only in these terms that one can explain the relationship between the twelve sections of the "White Revolution"

With the setting-up of the "Education Corps", the regime tried to extend literacy to ordinary people, since imperialism needed a labour force which could handle machinery. Such basic knowledge would enable the labour force to see the logical correlation between simple aspects of its work. The aim of the regime was to pave the way for the injection of imperialist culture into the masses, rather than raise their cultural standards. Thus the rapid expansion of the radio and television networks, and the setting-up of village cultural centres, was designed to impose imperialist culture on the people. The methods of spreading this debased culture are very deceitful. The regime uses elements of folklore and adorns the ugly aspects of its aim with an attractive appearance.

The granting of votes to women and related reforms were designed to benefit imperialism. Here the aim of imperialism was to exploit a cheaper source of labour, which was devoid of any economic role by feudal traditions, and which was needed by the bourgeoisie.

The aim behind the educational revolution and the expansion of higher education and vocational centres was to train specialist and management cadres. Imperialism required



relatively specialised cadres to undertake the management of the expanding number of factories.

The administrative revolution aimed to sweep away the stagnant and outdated feudal bureaucracy and to bring in young, dynamic elements through whom imperialism would be better able to effect its political and economic plans. However, it must be stressed that the desire to do away with administrative feudalism did not mean the end of feudal elements inside the system. Imperialism had no personal dislike for these elements; it was merely that their position was in contradiction with feudalism. Hence it tried hard to transform, as far as possible, these same old feudal elements into comprador bourgeois and bureaucratic bourgeois.

The implementation of the laws of the "White Revolution" have brought about fundamental changes in the urban and rural areas. They have eradicated the feudal system of production in the rural areas, and influenced the socio-economic make-up of the towns. Initially it was difficult for the feudalists to analyse and understand the aims of the imperialists. They even tried to put up some "resistance" against the "White Revolution", and brought the land reform to a halt and even temporarily reversed it. However, they soon realised that the overlord's (i. e. imperialists) intentions were more decisive than they had at first imagined. Inevitably they changed their colour and began the struggle towards acquiring bourgeois status, while at the same time haggling quite a bit during the land reform in order to buy time, lest they miss the opportunities presented.

Consequently, all the big feudalists of yesterday have changed into the large bourgeois of today, dependent on imperialism. The Shah and the royal family who were the biggest feudalists before the land reform have become the

biggest bureaucratic bourgeois and comprador-bourgeois of Iran; so have the Alams, Batmangholijs, the Ghavams, ..... etc. In short all the big feudalists have joined the ranks of the bourgeoisie. A handful of smaller and medium-size feudalists, who did not possess the necessary dynamism and speed for transformation, went bankrupt and left the scene. Amongst the great mass of peasants, too, a new class structure is in the process of formation: a small proportion is becoming a relatively comfortable petit bourgeoisie; and another a bankrupt petit-bourgeoisie. The great majority of the peasants, however, have been prolaterianised. In conclusion, we can attest to, on the one hand, the colossal growth of the comprador-bourgeoisie and its unhindered domination of all the economic aspects of the society, and on the other, the sub-division of the peasant class into:—

(a) a great mass of hungry semi-proletarians who are constantly in search of employment;

(b) a poor rural petit-bourgeoisie (the middle of the road farmers), who are the enemy of imperialism and who are at loggerheads with the Government for having neglected to give them their share; and,

(c) a small comfortable farming section.

The great mass of the semi-proletarian peasants and the middle of the road farmers combine to form a revolutionary force in the rural areas. They are well aware of the Government's real policies and are no longer taken in by the regime's promises and propaganda; they are therefore the available force of the revolution. The small number of well-off landlords who have emerged in villages after the land reform have counter-revolutionary traits. This is one of the minimum requirements of the strategists of imperialism, since these elements are to become the political guardians

of the regime. In a great majority of villages, members of this social class are appointed as managers of the co-operative societies, chiefs of cultural centres, magistrates, etc., positions they use to propagandise for the regime's reforms. To create a dependent petit-bourgeois class is one of the political aims of imperialism and this, incidentally, is directly related to its basic schemes.

On the whole the strategists of imperialism put special emphasis upon the creation of a comfortable petit-bourgeois class that will act as the guardian of the regime. A similar new petit-bourgeois class has also emerged in the urban areas, (these we shall call the dependent petit-bourgeoisie). They consist of a small number of civil servants, some specialised personnel as well as a thin layer of labour aristocrats in the new imperialist-orientated industries. Their interests are closely related to those of imperialism, and they owe their material well-being to the latter's domination. The bulk of the imperialist-created products, such as Peykan cars and television sets, are also consumed by these people. Unlike the traditional petit-bourgeoisie, who seriously oppose imperialism, the dependent petit-bourgeoisie owes its very existence to imperialism's domination. All the "beneficial" aspects of the reforms of the so-called "White Revolution" in rural and urban areas are reflected in the lives of these nouveaux rich.

In order to discover the laws governing revolution in Iran and its special features in the various social fields, we have embarked on a series of analytic studies. These series will provide information for the people and will be a great help in illuminating the objective conditions governing our society. The present book is the first of a series devoted to rural research and it consists of three chapters. The first chapter discusses the rural situation prior to land reform. In

chapter two we have described the three stages of the land reform and the laws relating to the sale of religious lands, i. e. those attached to mosques, the divisions of orchards, and how these measures were executed in practice. We then briefly analyse the end result under the heading "A Resume of the Land Reform". Chapter three contains an analytical examination of the land reform.

The present book is based upon an empirical study of about 80 villages spread over three rural areas of Iran. Hence attention has been paid to the substantial issues rather than to the quantitative aspects of the problem. Occasionally, we consulted official and unofficial statistics, treating them with the necessary caution. In such cases, however we tried to correct the statistics in the light of our observations, and give figures that would represent the real facts.

## CHAPTER ONE

# RURAL IRAN BEFORE THE LAND REFORM

## THE FIFTY-THOUSAND VILLAGES OF IRAN

Before land reform took place, all the villages were characterised by a feudal mode of production, which involved three types of property : private ownership, mosque ownership, and state ownership. Alongside these feudal holdings there was a small amount of land owned by petty landlords as well as mechanized farming lands (involving bourgeois ownership).

Private ownership of land was itself distinguishable into three kinds : the big landlords, the medium landlords, and the petty (absentee) landlords. The first of these owned the greatest number of villages. For example, there were feudalists who owned more than 300 villages each. The Farmanfarma family owned land twice the size of Belgium; lands owned by the Batmanghlije family were as big as Switzerland; and the Shah's family owned more than 2,000 villages.

The pattern of land ownership in Iran before the land reform was, in general, as follows :\*

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\* The statistics are from the Russian author, Domin, entitled : "Contemporary Farming in Iran" published in Moscow.

(1) Big landlords, i.e. those with more than five villages each, owned a total of 19,000 villages in Iran (38% of the total). This category contained 37 families.

(2) Medium-size landlords, i.e. those with between one and five villages, owned a total of 7,000 villages (14% of the total).

(3) Religious institutions, holy shrines and their administrators owned a total of 6,000 endowed villages (12%). For example, the holy shrine of Razavi in Meshad (a pilgrimage city in north-eastern Iran) has 400 villages to its name. The Mosque lands (waqf or endowments) were of two kinds ;

(a) general endowments, involving the feudal ownership of the land by religious or charity institutions. This kind sometimes include real properties and rent was derived from them ; they are not the subject of our discussion here. Such endowments were administered by an Office of endowment ;

(b) special endowments, which were endowments only in name, since the administrator in such a case was appointed by the endower. This kind of endowment was, to all intents and purposes, a form of private ownership of land and bore no resemblance to the real endowment (type (a)) except its name. The motive behind such endowments was to insure against the confiscation of land by Governments and/or to forestall its arbitrary seizure by influential feudalists. Such endowments, therefore, were a legal device used by landlords. More often than not the endower was also the administrator.

Unfortunately, we have no statistics at our disposal indicating the proportion of land held by each of these two

kinds of institution, but it seems that the amount of land held as special endowments was greater.

(4) The state itself owned over 3,000 villages (6%). These, generally known as Crown lands, have been gradually sold off since 1931.

(5) Petty landlords (small farmer-landlords and absentee landlords) owned about 15,000 villages (30% of the total). Since there is no Government statistics indicating the proportion of the farmer - landlords to absentee landlords, we are unable to provide details on this. However, we do know that only 7% of the farmers in Iran owned over 3 hectares of land each.

Nearly all the villages had a feudal system of production, that is to say, each farmer worked a piece of land, known in the village vocabulary as "wasagh" (order, title) which was managed by himself. He would keep a share of the harvest for himself and give the rest to the landlord. The most prevalent system of sharing the crops was based on the five factors of cultivating the land, namely, water, land, seeds, oxen and labour. Everyone of these factors would receive a share of the crop. Hence, those farmers who contributed labour only would receive  $1/5$  of the crop, those who also contributed oxen would receive  $2/5$ , and so on. This was not a universal practice in the whole of Iran. In some parts the landlord would receive  $2/3$  and the farmer  $1/3$  of the crop.

However, these rules were constantly broken by the landlords, and in practice they took as much from the peasants as they possibly could. The peasants working on the lands of the feudal owners would hand over a share of the crop either to the landlords or to their farm managers. Those working on state-owned farms, or on those of the

mosque, would either give a share to the administrators or to feudal middlemen. The latter would rent such lands from the state or mosque administrators at very low rates, and themselves receive the shares of a feudal landlord from the peasants. The feudal shares were normally paid in kind, very rarely in currency.

As well as paying a share of the crop, the peasants were obliged to pay other feudal dues. For example, for the poultry they reared in their shacks, or the grapes they dried up in the sun within the confines of their houses, they were obliged to pay dues in kind. The number of these dues varied from place to place. In some parts of Kurdistan they reached as high as 103 items, according to one report.\* And on top of all the other dues, a peasant was obliged to do unpaid work for the landlord to work in the latter's house, to work as a labourer on his building sites, etc.

In 1952 all feudal dues were abolished by Prime Minister Dr. Mossadegh, who also reduced the feudal share of the harvest by 20%—10% of which was kept by the peasant and the other 10% used for rural reconstruction\*\*. This was a progressive step and was in the interest of the rural Iran and of its social system. It was to win over the mass of peasants, but it could never have been a decisive blow

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\* This is from a book by Dr. Manoochehr Farhang called "The Economic Life of Iran", published in Tehran, 1971. We think that this writer, who is in the service of imperialism, has mistakenly or deliberately exaggerated. We knew only about ten kinds of feudal dues in Kurdistan before land reform, which we enumerated in the introduction to "An Enquiry into the Economic Structure of Rural Fars".

\*\* "The Diary" of the martyred comrade, Shahrokh Hedayati.



against the feudal system of production. This law remained in force to a considerable extent even after the downfall of Mossadegh, since the peasants were no longer prepared to return to the old state of affairs, even though some feudal dues were revived by the landlords and albeit in a different form, given legal force. For example, dues for edible oil were changed into dues for the use of meadow land, and were paid in kind (edible oil) by the peasant up until the land reform of the 1960's. The 20% reduction in the landlord's share of the crop fell into abeyance in 1954 after the Shah's return to power, and the feudalists extracted from the peasants whatever they could.

Those farmers who rented the land and paid the landlords a portion of the crop were known as the **Nasagh** (title) holders. All other residents of the village who had no such title, and who did a variety of jobs, were known as **Khosh-Nashin**-(landless settlers). A very small percentage of these settlers were shopkeepers, village priests, shepherds, etc., and the rest worked for the **Nasagh**-holders in return for wages (which were paid in kind), or for a share of the crop. According to Government statistics for 1960,\* the total number of **Nasagh**-holders and farmer-owners, before the land reform, was 1.9 million families, and the total number of **Khosh-Nashin** (settlers) was 1.3 million families. The percentage of farmer-owners was very small and their land was barely sufficient to support them. Hence they tended to earn their living by working on the landlord's property. Only 7% (130,000 families) of the 1.9 million families owned their own lands which averaged about 2 hectares each.\*\* The rest, i.e. 1.8 million families were landless peasants (although some of these had a negligible amount of land). The feudal

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\* "The Statistical Year-book of Iran", Tehran 1970.

\*\* Domin.....

system of production was the dominant one, and there was only a relatively small number of mechanized farms. According to Government statistics, only 4% of the production was carried out with the help of tractors.\* Generally, tractors, water-pumps and other farm machines were hard to come by. The peasants tilled the land with oxen and used other most primitive techniques, and the landlord only claimed his share of the harvest at the appropriate time. Consequently, production was unable to increase far beyond the volume needed by the population of Iran.

On the whole a system of barter existed in the rural areas, and the use of money was extremely limited. The peasants had neither the money to purchase industrial goods nor knew how to use such goods. The only goods that had a market in the villages were items such as sugar, a limited amount of cloth, and some elementary household goods. The feudal system of production imposed a static type of relationship in rural areas, and this was diametrically opposed to the interests and modern designs of imperialism which wanted to expand production. The imperialists badly needed the rural market for the sale of their goods and, at the same time, wanted to prepare the peasants for the production of raw materials. There was an important additional reason, namely, that imperialism had become terrified of the peasants' anger, which had reached its culmination. Inevitably, they began thinking seriously about a change in the feudal system of production. On the other hand, since the crown estates provided no real benefit to the Government and the proceeds were in effect being pocketed by the feudal middlemen, they had started selling them bit by bit from 1931 onwards. According to official statistics, the sale seemed at first to be more like a joke. However, the matter was gradually approa-

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\* A photostat copy pamphlet about the land reform by Bagher Parham.

ched more seriously. The scramble by civil servants and local landlords to grab these lands began in earnest and the lands sold to the peasants were wrenched from them by these people. According to a Government account, "the lands were before long back in the hands of the Khans and tribal chiefs". As a result of this sale, crown ownership, in some parts, was replaced by feudal ownership. By 1967 the rest were hived off and the office of administration for such lands was then closed down.

In 1949 the Shah decided to convert the value of his lands into hard currency. This sale dragged on till the middle of 1959 and as a result of it, 25,000 peasants became farmer-owners. Initially, the sale was motivated by political considerations : the Shah's unstable position at that time. The people's struggle had reached its zenith and the Shah therefore wanted to turn the value of his possessions into hard cash. One consideration was the desire to deposit them in foreign banks, in case he had to flee the country. But there was also an economic motive behind the sale : from being the biggest semi-feudalist in the land, the Shah became a thorough-going bourgeois. Both the Shah and imperialism were anxious that other feudal landlords should follow his example and undergo a peaceful change-over, but this was not to be. The imperialists' theoreticians consequently began work, and in 1960 the Government presented the land reform bill to a parliament dominated by feudalists. The parliament promptly rejected it. Then about the end of 1961 imperialism took an irrevocable decision regarding the land reform. In the first stage, the Iranian parliament was dissolved and the Shah held a fraudulent referendum : this woke the feudalists up with a jolt. In the second stage of the land reform, imperialism took a tactical step backwards and allowed the feudalists to assume power once more, and to wrangle about the five complicated phases of the land reform.

The Government protracted this stage long enough to give the feudals time to transform themselves into bourgeois. Finally, in the third stage of the land reform (which also comprised the sale of mosque lands) they decided to eradicate the remnants of the feudal system of production. This last decision is still in the process of execution, but by now the system of production in the villages has been all but transformed and (as will be shown) a new class structure is in the process of being formed.

There are two basic reasons why the land reform has dragged on so long. The first is because of the intense fear that imperialism felt for the peasants : it was possible that the masses would suddenly rise and take the initiative from the imperialists, would kill the landlords or drive them out of the villages, fight the gendarmes and Government agents, and take over the lands. Hence, throughout the land reform, imperialism fought the feudal system slowly and with utmost caution.

The second reason is that some feudal landlords put up a resistance, or otherwise obstructed the course of the land reform. Eventually, even these landlords came to their senses and, instead of engaging in an unprofitable struggle, they speeded up their efforts in order to join the rank of the bourgeois. The important role, however secondary, of a weak and corrupt state-bureaucracy in prolonging the land reform must also not be overlooked.

An amusing incident which may not be all that irrelevant to our discussion should be mentioned here. In the course of the land reform, the shah and his cronies made a great deal of noise in order to induce the people to believe that the reform could only emanate from a genius like the Shah, that the phenomenon of land reform was peculiar to

Iran, and that other countries should follow the imperial example, or even send people to Iran to learn a thing or two.

The fact that such reforms had previously been undertaken in other countries needs no proving. The recent history of semi-colonial countries contains ample proof of this. The myth that the land reform was purely a reflection of imperial humanity and of the Shah's love of the peasantry, and not a precise plan hatched by imperialism, has been refuted in the introduction to this book and elsewhere. We have reminded the reader about the deep penetration of imperialist goods into rural Iran, the huge investment programmes by imperialism in the agricultural sector, and the transformation of agricultural produce into goods, especially for export. All are the logical sequels to the Iranian land reform.

In stage-managing the land reforms in Iran and other semi-colonized states, the imperialists frequently took a direct hand in the implementation of such reforms. For example, at the start of the land reform in Iran a Mr. Wolf Valadi-Jinski, a specialist in this field who had directly supervised the land reform in Japan, was scheduled to come to Iran and supervise the reform. He failed to materialise, apparently due to illness. But the significant fact is that the land reform in Japan was directly ordered by the Yankee army after the occupation of 1945 in order to break the power of the rural landowners there and modernise Japanese capitalism.

On the 9th December, 1945, General Mac Arthur, commander of the US forces in Japan, wrote to the Imperial Government of Japan saying : "..... The imperial Government is hereby ordered to present to this command a comprehensive programme of land reform, not later than 15th March, 1946. The programme shall contain plans covering the following points :-

- (a) Transfer of the land ownership to farmers from those who are not engaged in farming ;
- (b) The provision of credit facilities, at a fair rate, for the purchase of lands from the landlords;
- (c) Payments for the purchase of lands will be made by yearly instalment by the farmers, proportionate to their income ;
- (d) The provision of necessary support for the farmers in order to prevent their return to the previous peasant status ;

Such supports must be governed by the following guidelines :

- (1) Access to long or short-term credits with reasonable interest rates ;
- (2) The protection of the farmers against any exploitation by the distributors and by those turning agricultural produce into goods ;
- (3) The stabilisation of the price of agricultural produce  
.....\*\*

We do not know which Yankee general communicated to the Shah the order for land reform in Iran, neither do we know the identity of the Yankee specialist who has directly supervised it. However, we can see that, on the face of it, there exists a striking and deep-rooted similarity between the land reform in Iran in the 1960's and General Mac Arthur's order to the Imperial Government of Japan in the 1940's

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\* "Land Reform in Japan", **Economic Research Magazine**, No. 5 & 6, the Economic Faculty, University of Tehran.

## CHAPTER TWO

# LAND REFORM IN PRACTICE

### THE FIRST STAGE OF THE LAND REFORM (RATIFIED IN FEBRUARY 1961)

The eradication of large-scale ownership of land was apparently the main object of the first stage. According to the laws of this stage, every landlord was entitled to keep one Shesh-Dang\* village, but had to sell the remainder of his lands to the Government and receive payment by instalments paid over 15 years. In its turn the Government would sell these lands to the peasants with a 10% profit and itself receive payments by instalment over 15 years. The Shesh-Dang kept by the landlord could be parts of different villages (so that together they made a total of one Shesh-Dang). The definition of a landlord, as stated by the Higher Council of the land reform (August 1962), covered any person, of any age and of any status.

In the first stage of the land reform, the general endowments were still in the hands of the feudal middlemen (who rented these lands) and no change took place, but the rules regarding special endowments were the same as

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\* The whole of one village, irrespective of its size. A village is normally counted as having six parts (Shesh-Dang).

those applying to private ownership of land, namely, a Shesh-Dang village could be kept by the respective administrator and the rest was to be dealt with as above.

From what has been said before, it is clear that the laws of this stage of the reform worked to the advantage of the landlords in two principal respects. The first one was through the definition of a landlord by the Higher Council of the land reform, which recognized an ownership of land irrespective of the age and status of the owner; and the second one was the choice of a Shesh-Dang village, beyond which ownership of land could not go. As we know, no sooner did the landlords heard about the proposed land reform than they began transferring the ownership of their villages to their wives, children and relatives. The land reform bill (ratified in February 1960) had declared any subsequent sale or transfer of villages null and void (in sub-section 5, 7 and 8, section two of the said law, effective from the date of ratification). However, the landlords managed in fact to find numerous ways of getting round this law, e. g. by backdating documents with the help of private registrars (solicitors); or, rearranging the pages of the official registration books. Landlords had been aware since 1931 that crown estates were being sold to the peasants (this, in effect, was not the case as we have explained in the introduction, but it indicated government policy) and since 1949 a lot of noise had been made about the Royal Estates.

The decisive factor in pushing the landlords—even the least influential of them—to share their lands amongst their own families was the ridiculous Bill of Land Reform ratified in 1959. Therefore by the time the land reform began to be implemented the great majority of the landlords had already shared their estates amongst their own relatives. The deci-



sign of the Higher Council of land reform to define a landlord as being someone "of any age or having any status" was designed to protect the interests of these landlords.

There is no definite criterion according to which a unit of Dang (portion) can be assessed : a village with 50 hectares of land and seven or eight families is called a Shesh-Dang; so is a village with 5,000 hectares and 1,000 families. Hence a great number of the big and influential landlords managed to register a dozen or so villages situated in the same area as being one Shesh-Dang village. A big feudal landlord in Fars called Ghavam is an example of such landlords; he managed to register about ten villages at Ghara-Balagh (in the Darab region) as one Shesh-Dang, thereby exempting them from the first stage of the land reform.

Notwithstanding the characteristics of this "LAW", the division of land in this stage, compared with subsequent stages, had a rather decisive impact on the eradication of large-scale land ownership-although in practice some landlords managed to find ways of dodging the reform.

There is no information regarding the amount of land divided up in this stage, since the Government has refrained from publishing the true figures. The figures that have been published are extremely vague and were primarily for propaganda purposes. According to the latest statistics, 16,333 villages and 1,001 farms were affected by the first stage of the land reform. The number of families who acquired land as a result was 777,825. These figures are misleading for the following reasons :-

(1) In the 16,333 villages affected, only a small number of them were divided into Shesh-Dangs. In other words, in the great majority of these villages only two dangs

or even one,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , or even less than a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a dang were in fact shared out.

(2) These villages have the least land, the least water, and are the least fertile; they are, in short, the worst of their kind. Since the landlords had the choice, the villages that have had their complete Shesh-Dangs divided amongst the peasants were often dry or with very little water. Hence the peasants of these villages have, because of the lack of water and therefore the lack of crops, flocked into the towns and have become virtually vagrants.

(3) Out of the 777, 825, families who acquired land in the first stage, a relatively small number (perhaps about 30 to 40%)\* have acquired lands in amounts of between 1 to 2 hectares. The rest have been given a negligible amount that cannot possibly support them. A great number of the landlords have chosen the permitted Shesh-Dang from different villages (e. g. one dang from village number 2; two dangs from village 14, and so on). Consequently, in the first stage, one can find a village where, say,  $\frac{1}{2}$  dang or less was divided amongst 50 peasants, and each peasant received  $\frac{1}{50}$ , or  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a hectare or less. Yet these 50 peasants are listed in official statistics as "farmers who have acquired land", and are part of the afore-mentioned 777,825 families. This example clearly shows the falsity of Government statistics, published for propaganda reasons; and does not clarify anything.

Among the villages that were divided in the first stage, can be found whole Shesh-Dangs as well as units of one dang,  $\frac{1}{2}$  dang or less. If we assume that the average share of each family, from the villages that have been divided, was

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\* Based on our own observation. See the "Research into the Economic Structure of Villages in Kerman" and "Research into the Economic Structure of Villages in Fars".

three dangs, it follows that the total amount of dangs, divided was about 8,160 complete villages, or  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total number of villages in Iran. The number of families who received one to two hectares of land cannot be calculated on the basis of Government statistics. Perhaps 30 to 40 percent of the 777,825 families received 2 hectares of land or just over or under. The rest had so little, if any at all, that there was no difference between having land or not.

Large-scale ownership of land was one of the features of pre-land reform feudalism in Iran, and if the laws of the first stage had been put into effect carefully, without any trickery by the landlords with the connivance of Government agents, the villages given to the farmers, and consequently the number of peasant families owning their lands, would have been far greater.

According to the figures shown in Chapter One regarding large-scale ownership of land, it will be clear that about 70% of the villages in Iran, before the land reform, belonged to those who owned more than one village each (be it mosque property, crown land, private land, etc). Even if we set aside crown lands and mosque land, which were not subject to the laws of the first stage, and merely calculate the lands owned by big and medium size landlords, who had more than one village each, the total would still exceed 60% of all villages in Iran. Of this total, 8% was that of special endowment. Nevertheless, the villages that have been divided do not exceed  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total. This shows that many of the big landlords tricked their way out of the land reform. Below we shall try to give some instances of these frauds, but unfortunately the extent or the amount of the fraud has not been established.

As has been mentioned previously, one of these tricks was to register several Shesh-Dangs as one. A

second one was that the landlords transferred the ownership of land to their wives, children and relatives. Moreover, the laws of the land reform itself included a few exceptions. They were: the landlords' orchards, grazing lands, suburban villages and mechanized farms. These lands remained exempt throughout the land reform. The exceptions envisaged in the law were a heaven-sent loophole to the landlords.

The big, influential landlords were given the message beforehand about the land reform, or had otherwise felt it in the air. They availed themselves of the weakness and corruption prevalent in the bureaucratic system, and also by using the legal exemption, managed, in many cases, to avoid the loss of their lands.

- A great number of villages that were miles and miles from a town (outside the radius prescribed by the law) and whose economy had no resemblance or affinity to a town, were passed off as suburban villages.

- By various trickeries and by buying off Government agents, a great number of landlords passed their lands off as mechanized. To strengthen their case, they sometimes put a tractor on their farm and dug an artesian well. On other occasions they would revoke the existing peasant-landlord relationship and would employ the peasants as labourers, thereby giving them the status of farm-workers. More often than not this change was a pure formality (as the peasants themselves have told us) and took place merely on paper. In some villages, for example, the farmers, signed the wage-slip at the end of each month, whereas no money changed hands and they were given a portion of the crop as before.

- Since orchards were one of the exceptions in the land reform laws, many landlords directed most of the water to

their orchards ; they built walls round the most fertile parts of their lands and turned them into orchards.

- As well as the afore-mentioned exceptions, it was decided that the villages that had been rented during 1959 should remain so until 14th December, 1963. Such villages in fact became part of the exceptions to the first stage.

As we have previously described it, the farmers were to make payments by instalment in return for the land and water received. The value of such payments were more than those they would otherwise have had to pay to the landlords in the form of crops. The value of land was based on the proportion of the tax paid by a landlord, multiplied by a co-efficient suitable for a farming area. The co-efficient for a farming area was determined by the land reform agents. As to what the figure for the co-efficient was, depended entirely on the discretion of the agents. If they were 'seen' by the landlord and satisfied with the bribe, or if they were frightened of an influential landlord, then they would put an astronomical value on the land (a high co-efficient); if not, then the value of the land would be marked down. Before the land reform the landlords had, through bribery and various other forms of fraud, managed to pay very little tax indeed.

Before the land reform, the peasants would receive seeds and loans from the landlord. This was obviously not possible after the land reform. On top of this, since the farmers, who had received land, were obliged to borrow money in order to pay the instalments, money lending became a permanent feature of village life. Consequently, money lenders and shopkeepers who were prepared to give credit carried on a thriving business. On the other hand the Government set up farm co-operative societies. In those villages that went through the first stage of the land reform,

nearly all the farmers "who own land" and some Khosh-Nashins (landless settlers) are members of these co-operative societies. The societies sell a great variety of manufactured goods (washing powder, vegetable oil, etc.) that were previously unknown to the peasants, as well as such commodities as sugar and tea. They also advance loans to the farmers. Theoretically, the interest charged on such loans is 6% but in practice other expenses have to be borne by the borrowers: 2% towards the co-operative society's building; and another 5% of the loan must be used for buying shares from the society, which is not recoverable in practice. Since the farmers can receive loans of up to five times the value of the shares they hold, they can increase the amount they borrow every year and thereby increase their dependence on the Bank Kheshavarzi (the bank through which the co-operative societies channel their loans.)

To pay the instalments on land, to buy sugar, tea, clothes and generally to manage to exist, they have to borrow money. Since the societies want their money back at a certain date, the farmers often have to borrow from money-lenders and shopkeepers in the village, or even perhaps in the town, at a much higher rate of interest in order to pay back the loans. In effect the loans from the societies will be transformed into loans from money-lenders. The expansion of the money relationship in the villages, which is the result of the instalment system and the activities of the farm co-operative societies, money-lenders, shopkeepers, etc., has driven the already poor farmers towards bankruptcy, because this relationship and the farmers' increasing contacts with towns have created more and more needs for them. Thus they are pushed further and further into debt.

## **THE SECOND STAGE OF THE LAND REFORM (RATIFIED IN FEBRUARY 1962)**

This stage comprised all the villages that had not been covered by the first stage of the land reform (barring the exceptions). The aim of this phase was apparently to do away with the remnants of feudalism, but infact it turned out to be a retreat from the land reform and hence beneficial to the feudalists. As though the imperialists had realised that they should not push their old colleagues and present rivals (i. e. the feudalists) too far, they managed to topple the Land Reform Minister, Arsanjani, and bring back Alam (a notorious feudalist). In other words, imperialism and feudalism sank their differences, while the contradiction between them and the people remained.

This stage opened the way for the landlords to avoid the land reform altogether by offering them five different alternatives :

1. to rent their lands out to the peasants ;
2. to sell their lands to the peasants (in accordance with the rules envisaged in stage one);
3. to share their lands with the peasants and receive 2/5 of the value on a ten-year instalment basis. The division of the land between the two parties (i. e. landlord and peasant) was to be based on the landlord's share of the harvest ;
4. to form a joint-stock agricultural unit, \* in which landlord and peasants would become partners, according to

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\* Note that this is not the same as a Jointstock agricultural company - as we explain below.

their respective share of the land determined by the rules set out in the second stage of the land reform bill;

5. to buy out a peasant's right and, with the latter's approval, farm the land by employing casual labour; (N. B. : the law relating to the division of Gharas-Maleki is a provision of this stage, which will be described later).

1. Apparently, this first alternative was the one favoured by the landlords. According to official statistics, this provision affected 1,232,548 peasants. Its relative importance, is shown by the figures relating to all the provisions of the second stage:-

**Provision One :** Peasants who rented the lands from landlords - 1,232,548 ;

**Provision Two :** Peasants who bought the lands from landlords - 57,226 ;

**Provision Three :** Peasants who shared the lands with the landlords - 156,580 ;

**Provision Four :** Peasants who formed Joint-stock units with the landlords - 110,126 ;

**Provision Five :** Peasants who sold out their rights to the landlords - Nil.

By far the best way of preserving the system of feudal relations was for the landlords to rent their lands out to the farmers. Through various tricks, the landlords managed to fix the rent well above the value of the crops they used to receive under the old system and they forced the Nasagh-holders to pay these new rents. For example, in one village the landlord, who was using half the water supply for his



orchards, managed to convince the land reform agents that the water was being directed to all the farms and thereby fixed the price of land at twice its actual value. The result of this injustice has been that the farmers of this village have been forced to flock to the cities in search of work in order to be able to pay the rent on the land which they undertook to pay in five years.

The general endowments were also taken out of the hands of the big rentiers (the feudal middlemen) and given to the peasants on 99 year leases. Such leases were subject to a five-yearly review. According to the official figures, the peasants who received such land numbered 135,751. These peasants complain bitterly about extortionate rents they have to pay, saying, "before the land reform we used to pay much less rent to the landlords who in turn paid negligible amounts to the Government. Now that we are renting the lands they have put up the rent at least ten times. And if we say that we do not want to rent the land, the Government will send in their agents, saying that we have to. Before the land reform we were mercilessly robbed by the feudal middlemen and now it is the turn of the state"

2. There were few landlords who were demented enough to voluntarily sell their land and water to the Government so that the latter could, under the second provision, give them to the farmers. This occurred only in cases where there was not really any genuine land or water and these were abstract names rather than anything else. In such a case the landlords would give them to the peasants at an extortionate price. According to official statistics the peasants who thus received lands in the second stage of the land reform numbered 57,226. We believe that even this number is exaggerated.

3. This provision was, to quote some farmers themselves, "a mere formality and no more". According to this provision,

the water and land were to be divided between the landlord and the peasant (the division being based on the share of the crops between the two parties), the latter undertaking to pay  $\frac{2}{5}$  of the value of land to the former. In practice, however, the landlord would give the peasant a negligible amount of land and, through various fraudulent means, keep the rest for himself. This provision of the land reform was grossly misused by the landlords in three ways:

Firstly, the lands to be divided amongst the peasants were not properly surveyed and mapped out and hence there were no exact and definite measurements. Secondly, the peasants were not made aware of the rules and regulations governing the land reform. Thirdly, the influential landlords managed to ignore the rights of the peasants by buying the services of Government agents.

The laws of the land reform were unjust in themselves; but the landlords' influence and deceits together with the land reform agents' corruption made them more so. For example, in areas where the landlord's share of the crop was  $\frac{4}{5}$  of the total harvest, he would, according to the law, keep  $\frac{4}{5}$  of the land and give away  $\frac{1}{5}$  of it to all the Nasagh (title)-holders. The landlord would obviously keep  $\frac{4}{5}$  of the most fertile land and give away  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the worst type available, and receive  $\frac{2}{5}$  of the value of what he had given away. Frequently, the landlords would prefer to keep a portion of the peasants' lands in lieu of the  $\frac{2}{5}$  payment. Quite apart from the inferior quality of soil and the inaccessibility of water, etc., these lands did not represent even  $\frac{1}{10}$  of the total land held by the landlords; this was because, to begin with, there was no map to show what  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the total was, and secondly, because the surveying of such lands was done by venal Government agents, whose corruption is well known.

In compiling the present research, we have studied over 80 villages. From amongst these we have found only one village in which the farmers were satisfied with the ways in which land was divided. The farmers in this village, after a considerable amount of complaining and after lodging numerous complaints against the landlord, found no redress in the locality. Compared with other farmers in the neighbouring villages, the Nasagh-holders in this village are relatively well-off (because although there are fewer Nasagh-holders, the land is fertile; however, the village population as a whole, who are in the main Khosh-Nashins (settlers, without land), is no less than in other villages). They were able to dispatch a few people to Tehran and there hired a lawyer to take up their case. After lengthy legal wrangling and a handsome payment to the lawyer they won a judgement which forced the land-lord to share the land on a fifty-fifty basis: although the pre-land reform share of the crop for the landlord was  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the total harvest, the latter was trying to give  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the land to the farmers. They also made sure that the granting of half of the total land to the farmers was not a mere formality but that the landlord did **actually** share  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the land. This, however, was an isolated case. In the rest of the cases the farmers, in the event of a complaint, were either ignored or, if they insisted too much, were beaten up (both by the land reform agents and the local police). This, incidentally, helped to reveal to the farmers the nature of the Government and of its corrupt bureaucracy.

Another kind of fraud employed by landlords was that a great number of them manipulated the exceptions provided by law, and managed to reduce the amount of land which could be subjected to the land reform. For example, in many villages where there were farmlands and orchards, the

landlords would direct most of the waters to such orchards and expand them to cover the farmlands as well.

The farmers who acquired land under this provision numbered 156,580, but the amount of land received by each farmer was so small that it could not possibly support a family; hence it would be wrong to call them owner-farmers. Some of them acquired as little as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a hectare of land.

The plot of land being so small, the farmers either have to work for the landlords or go out in search of labouring employment. A great number of them simply give up work in the villages and go to work in the neighbouring towns or villages as labourers.

4. An agricultural joint-stock unit is different from an agricultural joint-stock company set up by the Government. The landlord and peasants own shares in an agricultural joint-stock unit according to their respective share of the crop, but in fact the unit is a version of the old landlord-peasant relationship with a different name.

Such a unit could come into being with the consent of the landlord(s) and the peasants with a management board of three (one representing the landlord(s); one representing the peasants, and one chosen by both parties together). According to official statistics the farmers who set up such units with their landlords (i. e. the farmers who have remained peasants, as before but with a different name) number 110,126. The number of villages which have been turned into agricultural joint-stock units is 600.

5. According to Government statistics, up to January 1970, 17,157 Nasagh-holders had sold their rights to

landlords. However, in their statistics concerning the second stage of the land reform published in January 1971, the Government has made no mention of these farmers. Official statistics in this case are completely unreliable and the true figure far exceeds 17,157. A comparison of only two items in Government statistics will throw some light on the subject. According to Government figures, 16,944 peasants have sold their Nasaghs, whereas the number of landlords who have bought these Nasaghs is put at 7,869 ! In other words each landlord bought on average the nasaghs belonging to only two farmers!! This we believe to be an impossibility \*. Perhaps the figure of 7,869 landlords (who bought the peasants' rights to their land) is more revealing—and Government bureaucrats forgot to distort this figure. On the basis of this figure (7,869), each landlord must have bought atleast the nasaghs of 20 to 30 peasants. And the number of peasants who thus sold their rights to land exceeds 200,000 persons.

It should also be noted that :-

(a) no farmer willingly parted with his title to the land and most of them were certainly forced or tricked into doing so;

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\* The average number of nasaghs on a single farm does not fall below 35. The Government in effect says that each of those 7,869 landlords have bought at the most two nasaghs from a single farm, or possibly from two different farms. To acquire only one or two nasaghs (portions) would simply not be economically viable. And at any rate, looking round in villages, one will never find a pre-land reform feudalist or landlord owning one or two nasaghs of a unit of farm. Hence the writers' astonishment at Government figures. (Translator's note).

(b) the lands farmed by these Nasagh-holders were amongst the most fertile, hence the landlords' unwillingness to part with them;

(c) more often than not the farmers were paid nothing in return for the titles and were tricked into signing the document; alternatively, they were paid very little.

These farmers say that they were taken to the Registry office en masse and made to sign documents, the nature of which they were ignorant of. Only afterwards had they realised that they had sold their Nasaghs. Before taking them to the Registry, they would occasionally be given a good meal. Clearly, the general ignorance of the farmers on the one hand and the deception practised by the landlords on the other hand paved the way for the abuse of this provision in the second stage of the land reform. The corruption of Government agents also played a major role in the deception. Corruption in the bureaucratic system of administration is so apparent and undeniable that there is hint of it even in Government sponsored investigations.

An investigation called "Shesh-Danghi" into a village in Marve Dasht, published by the Research Department of the University of Pahlavi, reveals that the farmers were made to sign a piece of paper which later on turned out to be related to the sale of titles by the farmers. The farmers protested to the land reform office, saying that they did not know the nature of the paper they had signed. But the office paid no attention to their complaints and took the side of the landlords.

As a result of such coerced signatures and fingerprinting\* frauds, the farmers have realised that the move-

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\* Those peasants who are unable to sign, put their finger-prints under the documents. (Translator's note).

ments of their hands are, at any rate, capable of effecting some change. In all this deception, the "Education Corps", these educated sons of our people, together with the gendarmes, displayed their skills in extracting signatures from the peasants by hook or by crook—all for the sake of having a sumptuous meal at the expense of the landlords; or of getting praise from the latter and being recommended to the local land reform office.

Sections 27 and 28 of the land reform regulation (second stage) ratified in July 1964 concerned orchards and groves, where land and water belonged to the landlord and where buildings, etc., belonged to the farmer or, where they were jointly shared by landlord and farmer. One or the other should in these cases have bought the other's share. But these sections fell into complete abeyance until May 1971—i.e. until more than seven years later and four years after the ratification of the third stage of the land reform bill. Then a law was passed setting December 1971 as the date for the definitive execution of sections 27 and 28 (more will be said about this later).

On the whole, the second stage of the land reform, unlike the first stage, was universally applied and covered all the lands left over from the first stage. Yet it was designed to save the landlords and was wholly to their advantage. This stage was much more cautiously approached than the first one and was therefore responsible for a great deal of rent rackets, fraudulent mechanization, in some cases actual mechanizations, as well as the introduction, of the capitalistic system of production, and of semi-capitalism (e. g. payment in goods) into the agricultural sector.

It is interesting to note that lands that were mechanized on the date when the first stage of the land reform law began were deemed to be part of the exceptions, but in the

second stage, lands that were mechanically cultivated after the date of the first stage of the land reform law were also declared to be mechanized. This gave landlords the opportunity to mechanize their lands, or merely 'persuade' the agents that they were mechanized.

Mechanization or motorisation were, in reality, frequently used for window dressing and employed by the landlords to avoid land distribution. When we asked some village women what motorisation or mechanization was, they replied: "motorisation means that they give you 8 pounds of wheat and one tooman\* a day; and mechanization means that you should sign the wageslip at the end of the month". The difficulty is that one cannot use Government statistics and documents to discover the system of production prevalent in the villages, because in practice categories used have assumed different meanings.

Although in the second stage "motorisation" and "mechanization" were means employed to prevent the distribution of land, and on some of this same mechanized land the old system of share-cropping remained in force, nevertheless as a result of effecting provisions 2 and 5 of this stage of the land reform law, mechanization and the capitalist system of production now predominate in rural Iran. Landlords would employ a tractor or two on their farms and possibly a combine, as well as digging an artesian well; thereby they rid themselves of the farmers and probably avoided the subsequent stages of the land reform. But other less shrewd landlords insisted on preserving the old system (of share-cropping and renting). Eventually even these landlords followed suit and began buying tractors and turning the peasants into casual labourers-and the process still continues.

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\* One tooman is roughly about one Rupee.



Some provisions of the second stage, e.g. one and two, caused the emergence of petit-landlords and provisions one, four and possibly five, helped to preserve the old feudal system. Provisions one and four were the cause of the third stage of the land reform, with which we shall deal later.

According to official statistics, until the end of 1969, 800,000 families received land and water and 1,318,000 persons rented land belonging to landlords and religious endowments. Of course, out of the 800,000 families at the most 300,000 received sufficient land for subsistence.\*

(N. B. As it has been shown previously, all royal estates and the greater part of crown lands were sold prior to the land reform. Those farmers who thus became landowners we classify as petit-landlords, and they were dealt with in the first and third chapters of the present book. A part of the crown lands was distributed some years after the land reform, and this went on till 1967 in which year the administration dealing with crown lands was dissolved. According to official statistics, peasants who received land during this time numbered 100,000. Unfortunately, the nature of this distribution is not clear to us, but what is certain is that the number of peasants who received sufficient land to subsist on was less than 100,000).

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\* This estimate is based on our own observations. See "Research into the Economic Structure of Rural Kerman" and "Research into the Economic Structure of Rural Fars".

## **THE THIRD STAGE OF THE LAND REFORM (RATIFIED IN OCTOBER 1968)**

The third stage of the land reform was designed to rectify the anomalies of the second stage, such as leasehold tenancies and the agricultural joint-stock units. This, of course, was the outward appearance : in practice the third stage has had no effect because although the laws of this stage were ratified in March 1968, they have still not been put fully into effect and only a few villages have been affected by these laws.

There were two main provisions in the third stage:-

1. the sale or distribution (in proportion to share-cropping) of rented lands (except the general endowments);
2. the sale or distribution (in proportion to share-cropping) of lands held by agricultural joint-stock units ;

According to this first provision, the landlords could choose one of the two following alternatives:-

(a) to sell their land and water right to the peasants (through the Government). The cash price was fixed at ten times the annual rent ; and if sold on a twelve-year instalment, the price was to be twelve times the annual rent ;

(b) to share the lands with the peasants in proportion to the share-cropping percentages, and to receive  $\frac{2}{5}$  of the price on a ten-year instalment basis ;

Naturally, most landlords opted for the second option. The private endowments were also subject to this provision. The laws relating to the sale of general endowments were also ratified in May 1971, and we shall deal with this later.

According to the second provision there were also two options for the landlords :-

- (a) to sell the lands to the peasants ;
- (b) to share the lands with the peasants, in proportion to share-cropping and receive 2/5 of the price ;

Ultimately, in order to set the minds of the landlords and petit-landlords at rest, the Government declared in February 1969 that the three stages of land reform had been completed and that no more bills relating to land reform would be introduced. At the time of this declaration, the three stages of the land reform were by no means completed and, in fact, the laws relating to it are still being implemented in some villages. According to Government statistics of January 1970, 16,078 villages and 943 farms were distributed under the first stage, and in another set of official statistics published in January 1971, the number was put at 16,333 villages and 1,001 farms. It is abundantly clear from these two figures that after 10 years of land reform, only 255 villages and 58 farms (the difference between the two sets of figures in the official statistics) covered by the first stage were distributed between January 1970 and January 1971. In other words, even the first stage has not been completed, let alone the second and the third stages.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the first stage was designed by the imperialists to deliver a serious warning to the feudal landlords, and that the second and third stages awoke them to the demands of the imperialists to become bourgeois.

## **THE LAW RELATING TO THE SALE OF RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS (ENACTED IN FEBRUARY 1971)**

In February 1971, while the land reform laws were still being effected, and there was no legal authority for the sale of general endowments to the peasants, a law was enacted called "The Transformation of Tenancy into a Better State of Affairs, and the Transfer of Endowed Villages and Farms to Tenant-farmers". According to this law 135,751 peasants who were tenants on such farms were to buy them by instalments in accordance with the laws of the first stage of the land reform. Official figures published in September 1971 showed that 47,063 farmers had bought general endowment lands. Presumably more such lands have been, or are in the process of being, bought by the tenants. According to the same law, such tenants will have to pay the rents until the documents relating to the sale of these lands are arranged.

## **THE LAW RELATING TO THE SALE OF GHARAS-MALEKI\* ORCHARDS (ENACTED IN MAY 1972)**

The distribution of these kind of orchards was envisaged in sections 27 and 28 of the land reform regulations (stage two) ratified in May 1964 where the law stated that in such orchards either the landlord must buy the farmer's share or vice-versa. This law was ignored by the landlords and the Government therefore felt obliged to draft another bill in January 1972 to emphasize the urgency of implementing the afore-mentioned regulations and to pass it through Parliament. This law stated that should the landlords and farmers fail to tackle the question of Gharas-Maleki orchards by August 1972, the Government will take steps to deal with such orchards in the following manner: in a case where the landlord owns the total of Arseh\* and farmers own the Ayan,\* the farmers shall have  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an orchard together with the accompanying rights; in an orchard where the landlord owns it but the Ayan is shared between him and the farmers, the latter shall receive  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the orchards together with the accompanying rights.

We must point out to the reader that prior to the land reform, the number of Gharas-Maleki orchards was very small. During the course of the land reform the landlords managed either to deprive the farmers completely of their rights or to limit them to a great extent.

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\* A Gharas-Maleki orchard is one where the land, buildings, water, etc. are owned jointly by the farmers and the landlord, e.g. the farmers might own the trees, the buildings, etc. (known altogether as Arseh) and the landlord might own the land and the water (known as Ayan) - (Translator's note).

In those orchards where the law was carried out, the share-cropping system was replaced by one based on farm labourers and petit-landlords. But their income dropped sharply (our own observation)\*. Those who owned part of the orchards previous to the land reform say that they used to obtain half of the crops plus many extras. Now they own half of the orchards but the extras have disappeared.

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\* Research into the Economic Structure of Rural Kerman and "Research into the Economic Structure of Rural Fars".

## **A RESUME OF THE LAND REFORM**

The land reform laws, both in their enactment and execution, went through ups and downs and phases of retrogression which were the result of the imperialists' weakness (and the caution resulting from this weakness) in tackling feudalism decisively. The imperialists were unable and unwilling to strike a definitive blow against feudalism, although they wished to be the sole plunderers of society.

The fact that the land reform itself was a great muddle was clearly reflected in its three stages, its contradictory provisions and in the subsequent laws. If they were not so muddled, the land reform laws, in their present form, could have been applied in two stages with the six following provisions - and still have retained the constituent elements of the present laws of the land reform:

### **(a) Stage One :**

1. sale, by instalments, of a specified number of villages to the farmers of those same villages;
2. sale of the general endowments to the farmers of such lands ;
3. distribution of some of the Gharas-Maleki orchards;

### **(b) Stage Two :**

This stage could provide three options for the land-lords-

1. voluntary sale of the remaining lands to the farmers of the same lands;
2. division of land on the share cropping basis and

the management of the landlord's share in partnership with the wage-earning farm-workers;

3. the purchase of the peasants' rights, with the latter's consent, and the management of the land in partnership with the wage-earning farm-workers;

Of course, it would have been possible to use deception even in the course of these two stages, e.g. to get the farmers' consent by fraudulent means, or to coerce them to sell their titles, or to find a loop-hole in the law to skip the first stage, and so on; this would not have significantly altered the nature of the land reform. The expansion of tenancy in the second stage and its elimination in the third stage was due, on the one hand, to the prevailing confusion and ignorance on the part of the regime, and on the other hand the inability and conservatism of the imperialists in tackling feudalism decisively, which resulted in the feudalists coming to power again in the second stage.

But, as we know, the land reform laws with their accompanying provisions were enacted. The end result of the laws were in fact no more than the two stages and six provisions mentioned above, although in practice even this much (six provisions) were not put into effect and were merely replaced with a set of cautious formalities.

#### **(c) Joint-Stock Agricultural Companies :**

The law relating to the setting-up of such companies was passed in February 1967. In some villages (the number so far is 27) semi-Government joint-stock companies were set up in accordance with this law. Lands owned by farmers and petit-landlords were handed over to these companies in return for shares. The number of shares received was proportionate to the amount of land owned by each farmer.



The Government itself guarantees production by employing machinery and farm-workers and distributes the profit amongst the share-holders in proportion to the number of shares held by each farmer and petit-landlord.

Some people erroneously believe that these companies form one of the stages of the land reform. They are, in fact, part of an experimental programme, 27 of which have so far (1972) been set up all over Iran, but the Government has not yet decided on the success or failure of such companies. Hence the Government is unable to use the companies as a means of putting their plans into effect.

The fact is that after the first and second stages of the land reform, Iranian agriculture became stagnant and production fell, while livestock farming also declined sharply, as it had been based on small-scale production. The Government was led to form joint-stock agricultural companies in an apparent attempt to increase mechanization to prevent the farms breaking into too small units, to increase the area of agricultural lands, and lastly to exploit the agricultural economy - these all being the aims of the imperialists.

To investigate these companies and their aims requires a separate and more elaborate study.\* They are apparently modelled on the western (Yankee) types of joint-stock companies, except that there are severe limitations on the transfer or sale of shares (for example, should the share-holder wish to sell his shares he will first have to get permission from the Ministry of Co-operatives) and the Government retains control. The Government has also heavily subsidised these companies, which puts the whole project into question.

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\* This study has now taken place. See "Research into the Agricultural Joint-Stock Companies" by GOPF.

Some believe that the whole idea is a failed experiment; and others, that it is a calculated scheme to make agriculture dependent on imperialism and the Government's economic programme. In any case, these companies represent a net loss to the Government.

The agricultural joint-stock companies were an experiment, and only their future performance will show whether the Government can launch the scheme in other parts of the country, or whether they can answer the requirements of the Government.

The farmers and petit-landlords are highly dissatisfied with these companies, because the dividends from the shares are far below the income they used to get from their lands. Moreover, they do not consider their shares to be a substitute for the "ownership" (of land), and want the Government to return their lands.

The disproportionate use of machinery on these farms has rendered nearly all the villagers, be the petit-landlords or Khosh-Nashins (landless settlers), unemployed.

The process of the land reform, the subsequent formation of joint-stock companies and the relationship prevalent in them have all increased the farmers' awareness; and both the farmers and Khosh-Nashins are intensely against such companies. One of the Government researchers has revealed that the share-holders of one company went to the local land reform office and demanded that the Government return half of their land and do what they like with the other half.

The agricultural joint-stock company is a bitter reality, a part of the process of land reform that has been imposed on

**the villagers, and after a considerable amount of wrangling they have realised that demands and complaints will get them nowhere.**

**It is worth mentioning that so far no more than 27 joint-stock companies have been set up, and clearly the Government has not attempted to form any more such companies.**

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE DIRECT EFFECTS OF THE LAND REFORM

The land reform, as we have said before, represented a defeat for semi-feudalism at the hands of imperialism. The fight between these two antagonistic forces was governed by a give-and-take process, and if we have been critical of the programme of land reform, this was not meant to imply that the economic infra-structure of the villages has not undergone a transformation. There is no doubt the laws of the land reform have been applied; but in a much worse form than they were enacted. This we have amply illustrated in the preceding pages. The clearest proof of this is the length of time it has taken to apply the laws-10 years, already, and it promises to take a good many more years.

However, the point to stress is that during the prolonged application of the laws, those feudalists who had, by various fraudulent means, managed to avoid the distribution of their lands, did not remain feudal but succeeded in becoming bourgeois, i.e. they mechanized their farms and employed casual farm labour. A tiny proportion of the peasants changed into being farmer-owners, and the rest formed the great mass of Khosh-Nashin (landless settlers) or wanderers. Other transformations in the economic life of the rural society also took place. Such transformations were the direct socio-economic effect of the land reform, and they were :-

1. the expansion of mechanization, and increased investment in agriculture;
2. an increase in the number of petit-landlords (farmers-owners) ;
3. the tremendous increase in the number of Khosh-Nashins, and the release of disguised unemployment ;
4. the expansion of money relationships and the growth of a financial bourgeoisie (chiefly bureaucratic) in the rural areas ;
5. the expansion of orchards;
6. a rapid growth in the general awareness of the villagers ;

\* \* \*

### **1. Expansion of Mechanization and of Investment in agriculture**

The land reform law defined a mechanized farm as "land which is at least cultivated by a tractor and worked by farm labourers". We have also accepted this definition since the absence of peasants and the use of casual farm labour denotes a capitalist form of production which, if put into effect, means that at least the cultivation of land is done by machines. In this case the landlord will naturally undertake to manage the farm, invest in the land and in order to increase his profit, he will use machinery to reduce the cost of labour to some extent : in other words the replacement of the feudalist system of production by a capitalist one, and the consequent mechanization. Hence whenever we talk of mechanization, it also means the capitalist system of production (i.e. the presence of farm labour, a bigger unit of production, and the management of lands by landlords).

Many years prior to the inception of the land reform, a great number of influential and alert landlords, particularly those with connections in the Court, Parliament, etc., realised the land reform was coming and began mechanising their farms, i. e. they displaced the peasants, put a tractor or two on the farms and employed casual farm labour. Most of these mechanizations were of a fraudulent nature in that a landlord had apparently turned the peasants into farm labourers while, in fact, the old share-cropping system was in force, and the tractor was merely to be shown to the land reform agents in order to avoid land distribution. Nevertheless, even such superficial exercises were at least a step, however inadequate, towards mechanising farms.

After the application of the first stage of the land reform, a good many of the feudalists, who had at any rate passed through this stage, managed to mechanise the rest of their farms and thereby avoiding the subsequent stages of the land reform. Nevertheless, there were some landlords who were either incapable of mechanizing their farms or unwilling to invest in the land. In such cases it was either the case that the farms were of too low a quality to warrant investment or, alternatively, the landlord preferred to invest in industry and commerce. The lands belonging to this set of landlords were run on the old share-cropping basis or rented out until they became subject to the second stage of the land reform.

In the second stage those landlords who had either availed themselves of the provision allowing them to distribute their lands in proportion to their share of the crop, or who had bought out the farmers' rights, had a considerable amount of land which they subsequently mechanized. But the lands, which were subject to the other two provisions

of this stage-renting or joint-stock agricultural units-remained in a semi-feudal state until the third stage.

In the third stage all the lands, either rented or managed by joint-stock agricultural units either were distributed or are in the process of being distributed, and the landlords have mechanized their share of the land (amounting to nearly all the land). They will run it with the help of casual farm labour. There are still some landlords of semi-feudal status who are trying to preserve the old system of production. Although the machinery of the land reform has left this group alone, the dynamic of capitalism (profit, costs, etc.) will nevertheless either force them out of business or oblige them to join the array of bourgeois landlords.

The mechanization of agriculture has on the one hand opened a whole new market for the imperialists' products and on the other released the disguised unemployed in the rural areas, that is, forced millions of peasants to join the ranks of the unemployed (see below).

It must also be mentioned that during recent years a great deal of money has been invested in agriculture, with state encouragement. A lot of these investments are imperialist orientated. A number of influential people, including members of the Shah's family, invested heavily in the north as well as other places. Hasham Naraghi, a well-known US-orientated capitalist, has turned 20,000 hectares of land under the Dez Dam into mechanized farm and grazing land; the Dutch Shell Oil Company have used 20,000 hectares under the same dam; the army has lands near Sefid Rood Dam (Rasht) under cultivation; Hamid Reza (the Shah's brother) owns the fertile lands of Dasht Naz (Sary); and Mehmood Reza (the Shah's brother) has cotton farms at Chooleh (Sary).

In short, next to the mechanized farms of the old feudalists of yester-year who have changed into the rural bourgeois of today, the big Iranian and foreign capitalists are investing heavily in the agricultural sector.

## **2. The Increase in the Number of Petit-Landlords (Farmer-Owners).**

The number of these farmers—who also existed before the land reform—has greatly increased since the land reform. "Tehran Economist" (number 467, year 1962) said, "Before the land reform, 40% of the farmers had a piece of land which they owned, but they could not be called petit-landlords since a great number of them owned only about 20 square metres of land each. Only 7% of Iranian farmers owned about three hectares of land each before the land reform".

In 1960 Government statistics (before the reform) the total number of Nasagh-holders and petit-landlords was put at 1,934,160 which included farmer-owners and non-farmer-owners. We can ignore the part that is less than 100,000 (i.e. 34,160) which would comprise farmer-owners and non-farmer petit-landlords (since, in fact, the total number of non-farmer petit-landlords does not exceed 100,000, and accept the figure 1.9 million as the total number of petit-landlords and Nasagh-holders. Therefore, 7% of 1.9 million, i. e. 133,000 farmers owned about 3 hectares of land each before the land reform. The rest were either peasants or rented a piece of land.

However, after the land reform the number of farmer petit-landlords was, according to Government figures, 1.9 million and according to our calculation 800,000. Clearly, Government statistics are unreliable and there are no other official or unofficial figures concerning this. The figures at the



disposal of the Ministry of Co-operative & Rural Affairs are probably more comprehensive, but they are kept secret. And even if they were published they would still be unreliable, because what has actually taken place in the course of the land reform is fundamentally different from what is conveyed by the official documents relating to it. For example, in the case of one of the villages that was subject to the second stage of the land reform, it was decided that the third provision of this stage should be invoked, and the land shared between the farmers and the landlord in proportion to the share of the crops previously accruing to the latter. Since the landlord's share of the crops in this particular village was  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the total harvest, the land was divided 50-50 between the peasants and the landlord. According to the official documents the rule was complied with. But a close look at this village shows that the landlord's share of the village amounts to over ten times that of the peasants.

We have shown that Government statistics are unreliable; those of the Ministry of Co-operatives & Rural Affairs are secret, and will in any case not tally with the facts; no other statistics are available. The only alternative left to us is to study the Government statistics and correct them in accordance with our own observations. Of course, the figures thus arrived at are not 100% correct, but they can serve as a guideline and are sufficiently accurate to identify the nature of the problems. We have done this, while also recording intact our own observations.

As we have said, the number of farmer-owners and Nasagh-holders was 1.9 million before the land reform (.1 million farmer-owners and 1.8 million Nasagh-holders). Later on the number of Nasagh-holders was drastically reduced. According to the Government's own admission, 7,800 landlords bought the rights of the peasants in the second stage. There is no mention of the number of peasants

who thus lost their lands. At the beginning, as well as in the process of the land reform, a great number of the landlords either displaced their peasants or turned them into casual labourers (apparent or real) on the farms and paid them in money or kind. The number of such peasants is not recorded either. We have therefore to ignore the number of these peasants since they simply cannot be assessed, and in any case such assessment will show a larger number of peasants who acquired lands than is in fact the case.

Inevitably, we have to turn to the maximum number of peasants who have received lands. Let us assume that those Nasagh-holders who acquired lands number 1.8 million (which is definitely not the case). The question is why the official figure does not tally with this number? According to Government statistics 780,000 Nasagh-holders received lands in the first stage; and 1.5 million in the second and third stages (except those working on general endowment lands). The peasants on general endowment lands number 130,000. Therefore, the total number of Nasagh-holders should be 2.41 million. This is not, in fact, the case because those peasants who were subject to the second stage of the land reform were exactly the same as those who had acquired lands in the first stage, and the third stage was applied in the case of only some peasants who were Nasagh-holders in the second stage. This was also the pattern for the peasants of general endowments. (In effect, a great number of these peasants were deceived in all stages of the land reform as well as during the transfer of general endowments. Every time they received land, it was only in name. Consequently, they had to abandon their lands and resort to labouring jobs). Therefore, the total of 1.5 million, and 780,000 Nasagh-holders of the first and second stages respectively, plus 130,000 of the peasants on the endowment lands is 1.8 million—no more than the Nasagh-holders in 1960.

According to our observations, out of this 1.8 million only 200 to 300 thousand received fertile land of about one or two hectares each in the first stage. The rest received lands only in name. In the second stage it is difficult to find a peasant who has received a piece of land which might be of any use. The number of peasants who received crown lands during the land reform is less than 1000,000.

In the third stage 1.3 million peasants, (those who were renting land or farming for joint-stock agricultural units) are supposed to have acquired lands, out of whom 20% to 30% might have sufficient land to support themselves, i.e. 260 to 390 thousands (assuming, of course, that the third stage of the land reform is carried out). Assuming that 100,000 out of the 130,000 peasants working on general endowments will receive sufficient lands after the completion of the third stage, and also assuming that the laws relating to the "Transformation of the General Endowments into a Better State" are carried out, the total number of peasants who have acquired and will acquire lands will be as follows :—

(i) those owning relatively sufficient land :—

(a) <b>First Stage :</b>	200—300 thousand persons
(b) <b>Second and Third Stages :</b>	250—400 thousand persons
(c) <b>After the execution of the laws of Endowment :</b>	100 thousand persons
<b>Total</b>	<b>600—800 persons</b>

(ii) those owning very little land :—

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| (a) First stage :  | 400—500 thousand persons |
| (b) First, second, third stages and after the execution of the laws of endowment : | 700—800 thousand persons |

To sum up, before the land reform there were 130,000 petit-landlords who had sufficient land to support themselves on. In the process of the reform, 600—800 thousand such petit-landlords were, or are in the process of being, created. 1.1 million peasants received negligible amount of lands ; they are more or less like Khosh-Nashins. The rest are landless peasants. In other words, after the completion of the land reform and the execution of the laws relating to the sale of general endowments, the total number of all farmers with land and all those with small amounts of land will be as follows :—

About 800,000 farming families who are supported by their own lands ;

About 1.1 million families with very little land (more like Khosh-Nashins) ;

(the case of the landless peasants, who number 2.1 million families, will be discussed later) ;

Thus, after the completion of the whole of the land reform and the execution of the general endowment laws, only 800,000 farmers became petit-landlords and the rest are either Khosh-Nashins or as good as these. Out of this 800,000 about 100,000 owned lands before the land reform and did not owe any instalments on their farm; the rest will have to pay instalments which far exceed the amount they

would otherwise have had to pay the landlords in the form of crops. The instalments on endowment lands, as well as those belonging to the feudalists, are astronomically high. It will take these petit-landlords anything between 12 to 15 years to pay off the instalments, during which time their living conditions remain more like those of the old-time peasants than owners of land; the difference is that in the past they would have had to pay feudalists and now they will have to pay the Government. In other words, the old contradiction between the landlords and peasants has been transformed into a contradiction between the latter and the Government—although this is not by any means the only contradiction between them.

Today the old structure of landlord-peasant relationship has all but disappeared, and the petit-landlords (the old peasants) have been transformed into a helpless petit-bourgeoisie who are on the one hand at the mercy of financial (bureaucratic), commercial and comprador bourgeoisies (because of the debts they have incurred on such things as water pumps, tractors, artesian wells, etc.), and on the other, due to the socio-political nature of the Government, have not benefited from the technical advance of the recent years and, with their primitive farming tools, are at the mercy of nature. A small minority of these petit-landlords have grown prosperous and are in the process of hitting big times, while another small minority are desperately trying to keep themselves afloat. The great majority of them, however, are fast approaching bankruptcy — they have either sold their lands and joined the ranks of the Khosh-Nashins, or are in the process of doing so.

Petit-ownership of land, after the land reform, has still to take a definite shape and therefore has not yet assumed a well-defined form. The correcting economic mechanism is

still hard at work, driving the greater proportion of petit-landlords out of business and leaving the arena clear for a relatively few to flourish.

### **3. The Tremendous Increase in the Number of Khosh-Nashins and the Release of Disguised Unemployment**

In Iranian villages those peasants who do not possess lands are known as Khosh-Nashins. They include shopkeepers, village mullas (priests), shepherds and landless farmers. There is no information as to the total number of Khosh-Nashins in Iran. However, it is possible to give an approximate figure, based on official statistics and on our own observations.

According to Government statistics there were in 1960 a total of 1,284,300 Khosh-Nashin families and a total of 1,934,160 petit-landlords and Nasagh-holders. In other words there were  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times as many petit-landlords and Nasagh-holders as there were Khosh-Nashins. Therefore, the distribution of the rural population in 1960 was as follows :-

- those petit-landlords who were able to support themselves : 130,000 families;
- Nasagh-holders ( i.e. peasants, those renting lands, etc.) : 1.8 million families ;
- Khosh-Nashins (i.e. farm and other rural workers) : 1.25 million families ;

After the land reform the number of Nasagh-holders diminished and that of Khosh-Nashins increased sharply. This sharp increase was due to the following factors :

(a) the mechanization of some farms prior to the land reform; and also during the first stage of it, when landlords bought out (not in fact) the peasants' rights. The displacement of Nasagh-holders in the second stage of the land reform turned them into Khosh Nashins.

(b) the expansion of orchards also helped to increase the number of Khosh-Nashins. In order to avoid land distribution, the landlords turned their farming lands into orchards thus exempting them from the provisions of the land reform laws. This meant the end of the Nasaghs held by the farmers and their subsequent transformation into being unemployed Khosh-Nashins or possibly into being labourers on the orchards.

(c) those peasants who received negligible amounts of lands in the first and second stages, plus some of those who acquired lands in the third stage, left them practically unattended and joined the ranks of Khosh-Nashins. Their plots of land were so small that, in fact, there was hardly any difference between them and the landless peasants.

(d) independence of the Nasagh-holders' children : the amount of land received by each peasant was quite insufficient to support their normally large families. Consequently, the children roam around in search of employment and have practically stopped living in the parental households, becoming instead part of the rural Khosh-Nashins.

(e) the rural population has grown fast whereas farming Nasaghs have either remained static or have been divided into smaller units (which make them practically unusable). Therefore, the increase in the rural population is in the form of an increased number of Khosh-Nashins families.

Before the land reform, whenever a family increased in number, e.g. a young man got married, the village would be

divided into Nasaghs afresh in order to fit the newly married into the new set-up. In other words the villagers would tighten up their individual Nasaghs so that the new people could have a plot of land. Or, alternatively, due to the rise in the village population, unutilised lands would be cultivated leading possibly to the setting up of another village. However, after the land reform if a young man got married, he would either have to get a piece of his father's land or become a Khosh-Nashin. And whenever a farmer died his land would be broken up into small plots to give to his children which was tantamount to turning them into Khosh-Nashins.

Thus, the number of Khosh-Nashins in recent years has been, and still is, growing fast. Due to the lack of reliable statistics, it is unfortunately impossible to give an exact figure for the number of Khosh-Nashins in Iran today. But it is possible to give an approximate figure based on the present number of petit-landlords and an estimate of the total village population of the country.

According to a figure presented by Valian, the Minister of Co-operatives and Rural Affairs (Kayhan Daily, August 1972), the total rural population will reach 17.5 million by the end of 1972. This is, of course, far below the actual number, since the Government, with their distorted statistical criteria, have counted many villages as parts of urban areas. For example, according to this same criterion, anywhere with more than 5,000 people is a town and not a village. This is a completely incorrect assumption because in most of these so-called towns, one can recognise the ingredients that make up a village—the main occupation of the residents is farming; goods are consumed on a localized basis; commerce and industry are practically non-existent, and so on. Therefore, we believe that out of the 31 million people in Iran (again



according to Valian) about 70 percent, that is, 20 million live in the rural areas. The 20 million villagers form an approximate 4 million families, giving us the following table :-

- farmers who are able to support themselves with their own land : about 800,000 families;
- farmers with very little lands (almost Khosh-Nashin) : about 1.1 million families;
- Khosh-Nashins : about 2.1 million families.

Of course, this does not represent the true figure of the Khosh-Nashins in Iran - the children of Khosh-Nashins as well as those of most of petit-landlords should be added to it. Since 33% of the male population of the country are over 10 years of age, it can be assumed that 6.6 million (i.e. 33% of 20 million) of the rural population consists of males over 10 years old. Considering that this male rural population is frequently out of work it follows that :-

About 800,000 rural persons are petit-landlords; and about 6 million rural persons are almost Khosh-Nashins.

In other words there are  $7\frac{1}{2}$  times as many Khosh-Nashins as there are petit-landlords. Obviously, the figure does not include women. In many Iranian villages, especially in the north, women work shoulder to shoulder with men and there is no difference between them as far as work is concerned. As they possess economic independence, some of these women can also have political independence. Of course, not all the 6 million Khosh-Nashins we have mentioned are, according to the definition given, semi-proletarian. There are also shopkeepers, mullas, shepherds, etc., although they form a relatively small part of the 6 million (in fact their number does not exceed a few hundred

thousand persons). Therefore, the great bulk of the rural population is semi-proletarians or landless migrants.

The economic life of the children of petit-landlords, especially the more well-off members of this section, is not separate from that of their parents'. But with the passage of time, new economic needs will arise, the children tend to become more independent and the family unit moves towards disintegration. The current rush to consume new manufactured products and the replacement of the pattern of self-sufficiency by a money economy will have a decisive role in breaking up the large family unit and replacing it with husband-wife-child family units.

On the whole, the Khosh-Nashins are unemployed and virtual migrants. They tend to rush towards any possibility of work : they go to urban and rural areas; to the north and south of the country; they travel as far as Kuwait and the Gulf states; they are used as casual hands by smugglers in the east of Iran near Pakistan and the Afghan borders; etc., but the great majority of them are unemployed. They depend entirely on a negligible amount of livestock farming, on casual employment and possibly on a small amount of income derived from the handicrafts of their women-folk. The reason we call them semi-proletarian is because there are elements who are proletarian in their economic existence (i.e. they sell their labour) as well as bourgeois elements (i. e. those engaged in cattle rearing, handicrafts, etc.) With the so-called industrialisation of livestock farming initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture—in effect the transfer of this section of the economy to the imperialists and big internal capitalists—and with the stiff restrictions introduced by the Ministry of Natural Resources regarding the grazing of animals, this meagre source of livelihood of millions of Khosh-Nashins and owner-farmers is coming to an end. The home-made

handicrafts are obviously no match for modern manufacturing techniques and are therefore bound to die out.

Consequently, this semi-proletarian of rural Iran is becoming ever more proletarianized. It cannot be over-emphasized that the most important features of Iranian Khosh-Nashins are unemployment and vagrancy. The great majority of them work no more than two months a year (Valian himself admits that during the course of a year there is only 90 days, work for a farmer). The rest of the year they are unemployed and spend their time in enforced lethargy, lounging about in the sun. Hence they are also known as "Aftab-Nashins"\*. When they do work they tend to wander around Tehran and other big cities doing casual work in factories, mines, or wherever they can find it. This unemployment and vagrancy has blurred their vision of the future and has pushed them into despondency. In the near future they will form the backbone of the Persian revolution—and the avaricious advance of imperialism and reaction will help to strengthen it even further.

The interesting point to note is that these Khosh-Nashins provide the link between the urban and rural areas. These representatives of rural Iran can be found in many urban factories and workshops, who have preserved their socio-economic connections with the villages. They are therefore able to transfer the culture and knowledge of the urban working-class to the rural areas.

#### **4. The Expansion of a Money Relationship & the Growth of the Financial bourgeoisie (Especially Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie) in the Rural Areas**

Prior to the land reform, the rural economy was primarily based on self-sufficiency, that is, the money relation—

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\* Aftab = sun                      Nashin = sitter

"Aftab-Nashin" = Sun Lounger (Translator's note)

ship played a very small role in the day-to-day lives of the villagers. They would buy such items as sugar, tea and some household goods from the local shopkeeper, but would otherwise rely on their own production for their needs. This pattern changed after the land reform. The need to pay instalments on land, the transformation of some peasants into labourers, the growth in the consumption of capital goods (farm machinery, chemical fertilizers, treated seeds) as well as consumer goods, and the sharp increase in the number of Khosh-Nashins all contributed to the tremendous growth of the money relationship in the rural areas. Shopkeepers and money-lenders began to do increasingly profitable business. The Government, too, started investing in the rural areas and set up co-operative societies. The main task of these societies is to lend money to the villagers, but they also sell various goods in competition with the shopkeepers. It is important to note that the land reform would have been well nigh impossible without these co-operative societies, because the peasants who received lands would not have been able to survive without some financial backing from the societies. However, the societies were not charitable concerns designed to bail the farmers out of their difficulties. Rather, they were part of a calculated scheme to benefit the comprador and bureaucratic bourgeoisies.

The aim of the societies is twofold: Firstly to encourage the growth of money transactions in the rural areas and to promote the consumption of modern goods; and secondly, to collect the interest on borrowed money and pass it on to the Government. Nearly all villagers, be they owner-farmers or Khosh-Nashins, owe some money to the co-operative societies, the amount ranging between 300 and 2,000 toomans\*. We have already talked about the condition

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\* One Tooman : about one Rupee

of, and the interests on, these loans. Any farmer wishing to join a society must buy some shares at 5 toomans each. This will entitle a farmer to get a loan of between 300 and 2,000 toomans according to the number of shares he holds, subject to his financial standing. The period of a loan is normally 11 months.

The number of rural co-operative societies is growing daily. In 1970 there were 8,000 such societies with a membership of 1.6 million (nearly all of them owing some money to the societies). The Government has recently decided to amalgamate the societies and reduce their number with the result that each rural area should have only one co-operative society.

The loans advanced by the societies are from the credit provided by the Agricultural Bank—which has recently changed its name to the Bank of Agricultural Co-operatives. The societies deal with this bank through the co-operative syndicates. The amount of loans advanced by the societies has been increasing each year. For example, from the date it was established until 1960, the Agricultural Bank (in the course of more than 30 years) advanced a total of 370,000 toomans in loans, these averaging 2,000 toomans each. Whereas from 1961 until January 1966 (in less than 6 years) the same bank advanced a total of 1.8 million in loans, averaging 1,000 toomans each. The loans are given for such things as the purchase of water pumps, the digging of wells, other irrigation machineries, orchard developments, rural building works, animal husbandry, and also for private use by the farmers. The middle petit-landlords are also entitled to receive such loans, but loans received by the farmers are normally used for personal purchases and not for machinery, etc., related to farming.

The total amount of loans paid out through the Co-operative syndicates between 1963 and 1969 was as follows :—

Year	Million Rials*
1963	3,427
1964	4,131
1965	5,480
1966	5,168
1967	5,187
1968	5,287
1969	5,205

As well as the Agricultural Bank there are also other banks which invest in agriculture by providing credit facilities, but they do not lend to the farmers. For example, the Office of Agricultural Expansion will only lend to those investing on a large scale in agriculture. The loans are normally upwards of 125,000 toomans. The Bank Saderat has directly invested in farms in the provinces of Baluchistan and Sistan. It further intends to buy up 40,000 hectares of land in those provinces and directly supervise the farming process.

Beside the co-operative societies, money lenders are also engaged in providing cash for the farmers. These as well as shopkeepers and a variety of middlemen are in direct competition with the societies. The interest on the loans provided by these usurers sometimes exceeds 100% per annum. Since the farmers will have to pay back their debts to the societies on a predetermined date, they have no choice but to borrow the money from the usurers.

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\* Rial : the Persian unit of currency equal to 10 paise roughly.

Although the farmers are exploited by the societies' loans, these same loans have helped the farmers, and more specially the petit-landlords, to maintain their daily economic equilibrium to some extent. They have also somewhat slowed down the proletarianization of this class of villagers. But on the other hand the rapid growth of money relationships is gradually destroying the barter system and village self-sufficiency.

## **5 The Expansion of Orchards and Vegetable Farms**

Since orchards and vegetable farms were some of the exceptions in the laws of the land reform, many landlords embarked on expanding them and directed the greater part of the water supplies to the orchards, etc. This is quite clear from investigating the available data on orchard production in recent years. For example, total production of pistachio nuts in 1960 was 6,000 tons, whereas it was 6 times as much in 1968, i.e. 36,000 tons; the apple and pear crop increased from 60,000 tons in 1960 to 356,000 in 1968; and citrus fruits increased from 80,000 tons to 254,000; and so on.

In the second stage of the land reform it was decided that Gharas-Maleki orchards (orchards where the landlord owns the land and water, and peasants own the trees) should be divided between landlords and peasants. But this provision of the law was completely ignored, and with various trickeries the landlords managed to kick the peasants out of their orchards. Only recently some of the orchards belonging to the less alert landlords (as we have explained before), who were not able to carry out the appropriate fraudulent measures, were distributed amongst the peasants.

Generally, the orchards were extensively expanded and worked on by casual labourers. In many orchards,

share-cropping is still in force but on the whole, wage-earning is becoming the norm. Capital investment in orchards is relatively small and they are normally labour intensive. Hence the system of production is akin to the old feudal system, with the characteristic landlord-peasant relation well preserved.

## **6 Rapid Growth in the General Awareness of the Villagers**

Apart from its economic and social effects, the land reform has helped to increase the general awareness of the villagers. The changes in the mental attitudes of the villagers can be divided into two main categories. First, those changes which are the direct result of the process of land reform. Second, the changes which are the natural follow-up to the socio-economic effects of the land reform. This category we call the indirect effects of the land reform on the mental attitudes of the villagers.

From the very start of the land reform, the Government with its propaganda machine made the peasants aware of new problems, awakened them to needs that had subsisted for 2,000 years, and whetted the peasants' appetites by promising to fulfil these needs without actually being able to do so. The land reform proved incapable of satisfying the burning desire of the peasants for land, except on an extremely small scale, and failed to meet the wishes of the poor farmers and destitute Khosh-Nashins for the ownership of land.

The Government began the land reform with the loaded but deceptive slogan of "He who works the land shall also own it!" This encouraged the desperate peasants to take the initiative in villages and, despite the caution and vigilance of the regime, some peasants attacked the landlords and kicked them out of their villages; alternatively, they refused



to pay the landlords' share of the crop even before the land reform had actually been introduced in their particular village. However, the gendarmerie's bayonets soon taught them that the Government was not behind them. During the three stages of the reform, the peasants frequently came face to face with the corrupt bureaucracy and learned at first-hand about the deep-rooted corruption in the system. They saw with their own eyes that theft and bribery were rife amongst the land reform agents and also in Government establishments, and witnessed the latter's abject surrender to the feudalists. These contacts helped to increase the peasants' awareness. The socio-economic effects of the land reform had also left their mark on the mental attitudes of the villagers (i.e. these were the indirect effects of the land reform).

Now we shall attempt to analyse the direct and indirect effects of the land reform on the minds of the peasants :-

#### (i) The Direct Effects

1. destruction of the concept of ownership in the minds of the villagers;
2. recognition of the corrupt bureaucracy by the farmers;
3. the recognition by the farmers of the links between the Government and the rich;
4. recognition of the prevailing contradiction between the farmers and the Government;

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#### 1 The Destruction of the Concept of Ownership in the Minds of the Villagers.

To the villagers of today, ownership is no longer a concept to be held in reverence. The belief that possessions have been endowed by the Almighty and can only be taken away by Him has been destroyed, because they have seen

with their own eyes how ownership can be created or destroyed by force. The shareholders in the joint-stock agricultural companies have seen how ownership of land can be changed. It will come as no surprise to the farmers if the Government tells them that their lands will be taken back or some other lands will be confiscated. Many farmers assume that the state is the permanent owner of the distributed lands and can take them back at will.

To the question, "When do you think you will pay off your instalments"? a village woman replied, "Oh well, I don't know. Anyway, when the instalments are paid off, do you believe the Government will let us keep the land? Because I don't". An old man commented, "Do you know, all this land distribution was a waste of time. The Government should give us 5 toomans a day and take all the harvest". The last statement clearly shows the farmers' indifference to ownership. But it also shows that the real owner in the minds of the farmer is the Government (the predominant force) and he would rather work for 5 toomans a day than be a petit-landlord.

As yet there is no real substance in being a petit-landlord since most farmers will have to pay instalments for years to come. And in this battle they face the Government, i.e. the gendarme's bayonet, that is to say, brute force. Any time we asked a farmer why he did not have more land, he would promptly answer "Because we could not exert any more force". In other words the fact that ownership is synonymous with force is an objective reality for farmers who have gone through the land reform. On the whole this is a beneficial trend because forceful ownership can no longer count on the support of religious beliefs previously held by the farmers.

## 2. Recognition of the Bureaucracy's Corruption by the Farmers

In the course of the reform the farmers came to learn about the corrupt nature of Iranian bureaucracy. Although they might not be able to define it precisely, it is clear from what they say that they are well aware of the nature of this bureaucracy. A farmer who was asked why he did not complain to the official, replied, "Even if I complain to the Shah himself, the complaint will find its way back to the lowest (in rank) gendarme and he knows full well how to handle it". Another farmer related that "When we sent a complaint to Farah (the Shah's wife) she wrote underneath "To be dealt with". We duly took the complaint to the local gendarmerie where we were promptly arrested and put in jail". The questioner told him "Do you know, they all speak in code with one another. "To be dealt with" means throw him in the nick!" Hearing this the farmer gave a burst of approving laughter as if he had heard the greatest truth in his life.

Another farmer said, "No matter where we send our complaint, it will be referred to the gendarmerie. Of course, the landlord has orange groves and only has to send a basket of oranges to the gendarme in charge." "The landlord" said another "has a carpet workshop as well. It is enough to send a carpet to the governor of the county and end the matter amicably!"

When the matter of land distribution was brought up, one of the farmers commented "The lands were distributed in a carpeted room beside a brazier and an opium pipe and not in front of the peasants. The lands given to the peasants are merely the Zakat and Khoms\* that the landlords would otherwise have had to pay to the mosque."

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\* Two varieties of religious dues in Islam. (Translator's note)

Another farmer said "If the landlord's share is a 12 square metre carpet then the farmers' share is as big as a match-box".

A farmer from another village said, "In the old days they used to rob people in the middle of the night; now they do it in broad daylight".

An old woman from an as yet undistributed village (near a town) said, "The land reform agents come to the Haji's\* house, have their meal and then leave".

A farmer renting some endowment land complained, "If a colonel or some other influential person steals 100,000 toomans not a sound will be raised in protest. But woe betide a destitute farmer who is unable to pay rent: he will be abused, called all sorts of names, and ultimately jailed."

In short the farmers' contacts with Government establishments in the course of the land reform have made the nature of bureaucracy and the nature of the Government abundantly clear to them. They have no more illusions about Government establishments and when someone suggests they "complain" they merely laugh. It is possible that while the process of land reform has not been officially or in practice ended, some optimism might still linger on about the Government. But the end of the land reform will herald the end of any remaining hopes.

### **3. Recognition by the Farmers of the Links between the Government and the Rich.**

In the process of the land reform and also during the course of various investigations regarding their many complaints, the farmers fully realised that the Government is

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\* A Haji is the one who has been to Mecca and has, therefore, done his Haj. (Translator's note).

on the side of the rich and those with money. A farmer analysed the point quite well. He said, "We, the moneyless farmers can effect nothing. By the time we get enough money together and manage to hire a vehicle, the landlord will have jumped into his car and off he has gone. Even if we do decide to follow up our complaints, we first have to have enough money to buy food. And where is that going to come from?" He sighed deeply and continued, "So you see, the power of those with money has crushed those without—the powerful has swallowed up the powerless".

A farmer from another village said "Wherever we send our complaint it finds its way to the landlord's office; we have even tried the court".

Because of the landlord's influence in the country's administration, the farmers of a village in that county collected enough money to send one amongst them to Tehran in order to post their letter of complaint!

A farmer from a different village said, "You cannot really be at loggerheads with a landlord, specially when your complaint finds its way on to his desk".

In one village the gendarmes subjected the villagers to the Falak (the beating of the soles) in order to force them to accept the new rents.

It is widely believed that local gendarmeries are under the influence of the landlords.

In short, the link between the landlords and the Government is felt far and wide.

#### **4. Recognition of the Prevailing Contradiction between the Farmers and the Government**

Apart from their deep dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy and Government agents, the farmers are both econo-

mically and socially in contradiction with the Government. One of the determining factors of this contradiction is the problem of instalments. In other words, as long as the owner-farmers have to pay instalments on their lands, they will be in economic contradiction with the Government. For example, one of the farmers said, "The Government's aim with the land reform was to bring all farmers into their own service." Another such factor is the loans from the banks.

A peasant complained that, "these banks are the death of us. As soon as there is the slightest delay in the repayment of the loans, they will charge us 14% interest and threaten us with gendarmerie and imprisonment." Of course, this is not the real rate of interest on borrowed money, as we have described before. In practice the interest far exceeds this apparent 14 percent (charged by the farm co-operative societies). Another economic contradiction between the Government and the farmers is the restrictions put on grazing animals by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The social contradiction between the Government and the farmers stems from the fact that the latter are condemned to a very primitive existence in far out villages and are deprived of all the amenities of modern civilization.

The main contradiction is between this set of farmers and the imperialist orientated Government and their backwardness is directly attributable to their (the imperialists') domination. These farmers may not clearly recognize this contradiction. Nevertheless, they do feel it in their daily existence. They expect the Government to help them, to put facilities at their disposal, provide schools for their children, and provide medical facilities. These expectations are indicative of the fact that the farmers consider the Government to be the perpetrator of their miseries.

A farmer in a near-barren village complained that, "If the Government pay us 2 toomans a day each, we will all work for them. What can we do? If only the Government dug a well we would be able to grow best quality wheat."

The Khosh-Nashins are also in contradiction with the Government, and consider the latter to be the perpetrator of their miserable conditions. A Khosh-Nashin from a village said, "Do you know, we have to bottle it all up the whole time. For us death is a festival. Do you call this living?! What is the first person in the country (the Shah) doing about our plight? I tell you what; the best solution is to throw all Khosh-Nashin workers into the sea"

The Kosh-Nashin workers on mechanized farms often say that it would be good to distribute these lands amongst them, although this was merely a wish and they know that they have not a chance in hell. However, their more immediate demand is for work. And when they are given employment they are driven like mules. "They leave the tractor to cool down a bit, but we have to carry on non-stop", said one, "Government is not for us".

The Khosh-Nashins are also normally engaged in very small scale livestock farming. Because of various restrictions on grazing animals introduced by the Ministry of Natural Resources, this source of livelihood for the Khosh-Nashins is drying up. A Khosh-Nashin complained that he was unable to graze his sheep because of these restrictions and added "and the owner-farmers refuse to let us cut grass from the environs of their farms"

Unfortunately, the prevailing contradiction between the Government and the farmers is not very clear to the latter. This is because for 1,000 years or more the peasants farmed and lived in the most primitive manner and are yet to

see a better way of life comparable with the old one. The land reform has to some extent indicated to them the possibility of change.

The regime's deafening propaganda apparatus had at least the advantage of bringing home to the peasants the existence of a better life than theirs.

**(ii) The Indirect Effects of the Land Reform on the Minds of the Farmers**

1. a growth in the farmers' general awareness due to their increased contacts with towns;
2. an increase in the farmers' mental ability due to the handling of modern tools;
3. the effect of the expansion of money relationships on the farmers' mental faculties;
4. the widening of the farmers' horizon as a result of consumption of modern goods;

This set of effects is firstly of a long-term nature; secondly—unlike the first category (i.e. direct effects)—they do not increase their political consciousness but help generally to improve their social and cultural awareness.

On the whole, the villagers' political awareness today is reflected in the one and only form of dissatisfaction—namely, with what the Government does or does not do. During the course of the land reform, this dissatisfaction was with the gendarmes and the land reform agents. The farmers had not yet lost their hope of getting



redress from the higher echelons of state bureaucracy. However, having lodged frequent complaints and having seen them thrown into the dustbin, so to speak, their dissatisfaction is now with the whole Government set-up. The farmers entertain no more hopes about subsequent Government programmes.

The growth of this awareness depends entirely on the result of the struggle. It is up to the revolutionary intellectuals and politically aware workers to analyse the subjective and objective conditions in the villages, based on other revolutionary experiences, and set about creating organisations and fighting units in rural areas.

### **The Guerilla Organisation of the People's Fedae**

# *A P P E N D I X*

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