

## A Study of Land Reform in West Pakistan

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Ayub Khan, the president of Pakistan, announced the decision of the government of Pakistan on the land reform in West Pakistan on January 24, 1959. This decision invited the attention of the world to an important new policy of the military regime in Pakistan.

This article deals with the implementation process of this land reform, its economic and political background, and assessment of its results.

This article is divided into four chapters.

The land systems that were dominant in Pakistan at the partition of 1947 are explained in chapter I. In this chapter, the present land revenue systems are also revealed relying mainly on the government report of the Taxation Enquiry Committee of 1959.

The reforms of land system after the partition and its actual effects are described in the next chapter. It is pointed out that there was a golden chance for land reform in West Pakistan in 1947-49, because there was much land evacuated by Hindu and Sikh landlords. But this opportunity had been lost and landlordism was reintroduced on that land. The reforms of tenancy acts and abolition of *jagirdar* were carried out, but their actual effects were negligible because the occupancy tenant only, the de facto real land-owner, could become de jure land-owner by the reforms of tenancy acts and the jagirdar was abolished effectively only in ex-NWFP.

In chapter III, the process and results of the new land reform in West Pakistan are dealt with. The land ceiling is fixed at 500 acres of irrigated land and 1,000 acres of unirrigated land although we may

say relying on some materials that 20 or 50 acres is the maximum limit of the peasant proprietor's holdings. Consequently, this ceiling is too high for the effective abolition of landlordism.

More than 70% of the excess land which was acquired by the government under this reform was uncultivated land.

In the last chapter, the economic and political background of this land reform and its actual meaning are discussed. The shortage of foodgrain has become the biggest bottle-neck in the economic development of this country since the First Five Year Plan period, 1955-60. The increased production of foodgrain is still the most urgent problem. The present government wanted to solve this problem not by giving incentives to the peasant through the abolishment of landlordism, but by the expansion of cultivated land.

Minister for Commerce, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto aptly said in 1959, "As can be seen from this momentous decision, there was no intention whatsoever to liquidate the landlord, who has in the past performed and still continues to perform valuable functions. The purpose is to eliminate seething class hatred and bitterness which had mounted up over a period of years, partly due to economic disparity but mainly due to irresponsible political harangues aimed not at the solution of our socio-economic problems but towards narrow, selfish and base political ends".

We may safely say that these two points are the real aims of this land reform and that so-called 'land reform' in West Pakistan could not live up to the objective demand of the people in Pakistan.