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REPRODUCING OLD STRUCTURES THROUGH REFORMS: THE EXPERIENCE OF LAND REFORMS IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

In this article I propose to sketch the structure and action of polity and peasantry in relation to land reforms in Sri Lanka. I am primarily concerned with the land reforms of the seventies, but as a prelude I shall also discuss in brief, the early land and agrarian reforms in the independent Sri Lanka in order to place the history of current land reforms in a sociological perspective. The scheme of interpretation is based upon the dialectical method which involves thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It is argued here that land reforms did not fundamentally alter the property relations (production relations) but rather indirectly served to perpetuate the existing structures. The objectives and policy framework behind the land reforms in particular, and the agrarian reforms in general are considered to be indicative of political ideologies of the state in relation to the peasantry as governed by economic factors, as well as by social and political factors.

Historical Background

There are two pieces of legislation that could be considered as of relevance to early land and agrarian reforms in Sri Lanka. They are the 1953 Paddy Lands Act and the 1958 Paddy Lands Act. The 1953 Paddy Lands Act, conceived as it was, relied upon the goodwill of the individual land owner to treat the tenant humanely; it accepted the high rent paid by the tenant to be unfair, but left it to the individual to resolve it. It also sought registration of tenancy arrangements and security of tenure for a five year period, but then all these were left for the individuals to come to agreeable terms with. The Act was implemented in two districts and was proved to be ineffective. The next attempt at land reform came about in 1958 which fixed the maximum rent paid by the tenant, sought security of tenure and created farmers' organizations called 'Cultivation Committees'. However, the area of authority was confined to paddy lands alone. On the other hand, the land owners reacted by evicting the tenants; by the end of 1959, there were nearly 15,000 reported cases of eviction; by 1971 it was 43,134 (Weerawardena, 1975:5, 21–25, Appendix 7B) and gaining control over the institutions created for the benefit of the tiller. In the seventies there was a spate of reforms: the 1973 Sale of State Lands Law made provision for the colonists to buy land they had received under the government-sponsored settlement schemes; the 1972 Agricultural Productivity Law created Agricultural Productivity Committees in each local government division with appointed members who had a wide range of responsibilities;[1] the 1973 Agricultural Lands

1. The objective of the law was to impose regulations on land use and management, cropping patterns, cultivation practices, irrigation water management, soil and water conservation, pest and disease control, etc., with a view to obtaining maximum productivity from crops and livestock. The Minister may serve a Dispossession Order on people failing to fulfil such obligations. The Committees were entrusted with the duty of promotion, coordination and development of agriculture, and of assisting in the formulation of implementation programmes and targets for the production of crops and livestock. The APCs have powers to acquire and dispose of any property, to order anybody to furnish information on land, to impose and collect tax, to utilise the money for the performance and exercise of their duties and responsibilities, to obtain loans from the government or any other approved credit institution.

Law replaced the Paddy Lands Act of 1958 and provided for appointed membership in Cultivation Committees; the 1972 Land Reform Law fixed a ceiling on private ownership of land to 50 acres (25 acres in the case of paddy land and 50 acres in all other lands) and provided for the take over of all private land in excess; the 1975 Land Reform Law provided for the take over of the Company-owned estates; the 1979 Agrarian Services Act limited the paddy land operations under tenancy arrangements to five acres and gave more powers to the land owner, including relinquishing tenancy arrangements.

Analysis

First of all, the scheme of interpretation demands a clarification of the three stages, thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. The system of land tenure as it existed before the reforms and the conventional politics are included in the thesis; the challenges to this order of affairs are considered as anti-thesis, the syncretism caused i.e., the reforms or the structures and actions brought about by the process, is treated as the synthesis.

Secondly, it also requires a clarification on what is meant by the land reforms and the agrarian reforms; following Peter Dorner (1972; 18–19) and Wolf Ladejinsky (1964:356) I have taken land reforms to include all structural changes introduced by the state resulting in changes with regard to land ownership, land ceilings, land control, land consolidation, land registration and land redistribution in favour of small peasants, while agrarian reforms are considered as concerning itself with a much larger arena covering the institutional framework relating to the control of rents, security of tenure, the provision of agricultural extension, credit and marketing facilities, and other services to help small farmers to cultivate their land effectively. In a sense land settlement in Sri Lanka or the settlement of people in new land brought under cultivation through state intervention is also a kind of land reform. But since it does not involve acquisition of developed land of private ownership by the state and subsequent redistribution or alienation of the same by the state in favour of peasants and/or creation of special organizations to manage these lands under specific instructions of the state, I do not consider land settlement as land reforms proper.

In the independent Sri Lanka there have been two major systems of farming with attendant forms of land tenure corresponding to the dual economic structure, the peasant sector and the plantation sector, which Sri Lanka inherited from British colonialism. The picture can be ascertained from the following quantitative data: of the 3.5 million acres cultivated in 1946, 2.3 million acres were under the plantation sector, whilst only a little over one million acres were under the food producing peasant sector (Oliver, 1957).

The plantation sector was characterised by a modern capitalistic system of management; large units of production with processing industries within the production base; contractual forms of work relations as the dominant form of relations, i.e., the existence of a wage earning class of labourers having no claim for ownership of the product and the capitalist landowners managing the properties either by themselves or through corporate bodies, and a dominant resident labour force consisting mainly of Indian Tamils. These features gave the plantations the character of a distinct social system. British capital and management controlled a bulk of the plantations and processing and distribution of the plantation produce. During the post-independent era, Sri Lankans bought most of the privately-owned British plantations, without introducing any changes in the system of management or in production relations. It could only be considered natural as it was part of the acculturation process of the former to adopt the same system (Singer, 1964:85).

The peasant sector which sustained the majority of the population.[1] was characterised by a complex system of land tenure. According to the Survey of Landlessness conducted in 1948, 26.3% of all families dependent on subsistence agriculture in the rural sector had no land at all; 42.3% owned less than half an acre; and 54.1% owned less than one acre. The complex system of land tenure included a system of joint ownership of land (*Havul*), share cropping (*Ande*) tenancy, and a rotational system (*Thattumaru*) and (*Kattimaru*) of land tenure. Furthermore, there were lease-systems (*Badu*) and mortgage-systems (*Ukas*) etc.[2] each having its own tenurial arrangements. In the Wet Zone where the bulk of the population was concentrated and pressure on land was greater, about 20% of the land was jointly owned while the extent of *Ande* tenancy was over 40% in the case of paddy land (Farmer, 1957: 58, 84). In the districts of *Matara, Kandy, Matale* and *Ratnapura* more than 40% of the holdings and more than 45% of the area were under share-cropping arrangements (Sanderatne, 1972:120). On an islandwide basis, share-tenancy accounted for approximately 25 to 30% of the total acreage devoted to paddy, a figure that remained more or less constant during the past few decades (Peiris: 1976). The overall incidence of rotational land tenure was low, but in some districts of the Wet Zone it was over 36% (Moore & Wickramasinghe, 1978; 12–13; Weerawardena & Kolonnage, 1972:6). In certain other districts such as *Hambantota*, a considerable extent of paddy land was under *de facto* systems of control and management (Dias & Wickramanayake, 1977: 143–54).

The complexities of land tenure in the peasant sector have been accompanied by varying degrees and forms of surplus labour appropriation. As a generalization, it may however be stated that the incidence of share tenancy has been increasing and that the majority of the tenants continued to pay half the share of the harvest to the land owner. The extent of land ownership concomitantly determined one's social status as well as social stratification in this agrarian society where the majority of the population belonged to the *Govigama* (Cultivator) caste, and where non-agricultural employment opportunities were lacking. Therefore, it may be emphasised that the conditions under which land is held have an important bearing not only on productivity and distribution of income but also on the nature of the polity and society at large.

The systems of land tenure elaborated briefly above manifested themselves in the conventional political system at large, in terms of its general attitude towards the class of direct producers on the one hand, and its approach to development on the other. This, I shall analyse in the light of competition for peasant allegiance. To begin with, the major political parties had recruited the overwhelming majority of their parliamentary membership from among the wealthiest sections of the population (Singer, 1964: 81–5; Wriggins, 1960; 115). This included representation of proprietory interests over the existing property relations and therefore the same production relations. Naturally, then, the political leadership of the day demonstrated no necessity to change the system (Silva, 1977: 131). Economically much of the resources and attention was channelled into export agriculture. For example, out of the total allocation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation

1. The peasant sector is the food producing sector whose main crop is paddy which forms the staple food of the people of Sri Lanka. 80% of her population live in rural areas.

2. In addition, there were the encroachers, permit-holders for food production, permit-holders under Land Development Ordinance, *chena* farmers or swidden agriculturalists and various types of service tenure.

and Fisheries, the investment allocation for non-export agriculture was 3.5% while for the export agriculture, it was 69%. (Ceylon Planning Secretariat, 1955). In fact, the country's development came to be identified with the development of export agriculture (Snodgrass, 1966:17). The traditional left, on the other hand, was concerned with the urban working class and the plantation workers, without recognising the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, in view of their classical ideological standing that the peasantry was not a proletariat, (that they have not been separated from the ownership of the means of production; they share land interests with the owners; and they could still own part of what they produce and that they could to a considerable degree, make their own decisions relating to the process of production). They gave relatively less value in their development strategy to agricultural development and advocated a policy of nationalization and industrialization (Silva & Samaraweera, 1974:21). Peasantization (better terms and conditions for the tenants and the peasants; land to the tiller; ceiling on land ownership; collectivization) would produce, according to Marxian ideology, historically regressive results. Because class is determinative of ideology, in the Marxist view, a society of peasants is a society dominated by petit bourgeois ideology. The belief that the plantation worker, by virtue of his position, as the proletariat of the most important economic activity of the island (the plantation sector accounts for about 93% of the total export earnings and nearly one third of the country's national income) could be revolutionized along with the urban proletariat who are engaged in the service activities connected to the export agriculture, led to the creation of social distance between the traditional left and the rural people. However, having realised the organizational power of the left, the power elite organized a twin strategy: the plantation workers of Indian origin were defranchised, thus leaving them out of the political arena and causing the loss of political strength of the traditional left to a considerable extent. Instead of abandoning parliamentary politics at this point altogether, the latter sought to play popular politics during the subsequent years (Obeysekera, 1973: 368–95). Henceforth, competition for peasant allegiance came to play a determinant role in the political and economic life of Sri Lanka. The power elite next demonstrated active participation in programmes of peasantization which included the expansion of the production base through family-farm based village expansion schemes and colonization schemes. According to the Land Commissioner's Department, 408,381 farm families have been settled by 1980 under various schemes of land alienation in an extent of 1,047,800 acres. The present Mahaweli River Diversion Scheme is expected to bring a further 900,000 acres under irrigation.[1] The ideology behind these actions was the concept of 'peasant proprietorship' which envisaged that individuals could conceive economic goals and freely act in pursuit of these. By creating a class of peasant proprietors, the power elite believed that it could establish, if not the identity of interests between the two conservative groups (governing elites and the peasantry), but at least a potentially harmonious working relationship between the two, and thus defeating the left's-challenge (Silva, 1974: 2). The polity conceived society and social relations on the one hand, and the role of the state on the other, in terms of liberal ideology, and ruled out the crucial question in land reform, namely interference of the state with property relations (Herring, 1972). Resettlement of peasants on irrigated land in the Dry Zone continued to receive prime interest from the policy makers of the successive governments as solutions to the pressure on land in the Wet Zone and to increase production, among other objectives (Ellman, *et al.*, 1976: 1). In the '*Green Revolution*' programme which commenced in the sixties, the state has been playing an

1. As a result of this, the extent under paddy cultivation, which stood at 856,000 acres in 1943 rose up to 1,614,012 acres in 1978. Acreages in the major colonization schemes and minor irrigation schemes which were 325,242 and 338,013 acres respectively in 1959 went up to 564,334 and 423,205 acres by 1978.

active role by subsidising inputs and supplying resources to achieve what has been described as an 'outstanding success', thus making the performance of the domestic agricultural sector 'crucial to the performance of the economy as a whole' (Corea, 1973: 296–297). This can be illustrated from the following statistics: the peasant sector increased its share in the GNP from 26% in 1950 to 69% in 1972; between 1952 and 1974, the output of the dominant crop of this sector, paddy, increased by 166%, while the area under paddy increased by 70% and the yield per acre by 45% (Wanigaratne, *et al.* 1980:2).

The contradictions involved in the process (between land, capital and labour on the one hand, and peasant culture, traditional loyalties and modern systems of management including norms relating to the parliamentary system on the other) brought forward challenges to the existing order. First of all, peasant politicization came by way of a millennialism towards the second half of the fifties. The political, social, cultural, administrative and economic domination by the alien structures (that is, the culturally alienated westernized elites who allowed Christian influence to determine the way in which the resources were distributed) aroused the primordial sentiments of the masses–the peasants–whose cultural identity was inseparably bound up in their religion, Buddhism. In this indigenous social structure, the religious leaders, the *Sangha,* controlled the symbols of identity and hope, and the other leaders such as the *Ayurvedic* physicians and *Sinhala* teachers were also well placed. Threatened by the alien values, ideas, practices and the ruling class' subservience to these, the peasants were now predisposed to reassert their identity in which their religion and language occupied a dominant position. The need for state intervention in economic affairs by way of planning (indirect control), direct involvement and regulation, was increasingly being felt and found expression in the acts of the new government that came to power in 1956 through mass politics (mobilization of the indigenous social structure and the charismatic authority of the power groups in this set up). However, land reforms were not attempted, although the terms and conditions of the tenants received attention. Yet, colonization of the Dry Zone was frequently given the character of a *Sinhala* Buddhist movement towards the reassertion of the past glory and the land lost following the Sinhalese retreat to the Wet Zone after the thirteenth century.

Although the expansion of the production base resulted in an increase in production output (average yield per acre of paddy which stood at 30 bushels in 1955 went up to 53 in 1978) in the new settlement schemes, the same old land tenure systems that prevailed in the villages emerged resulting in the concentration of land in the hands of a few and also rural indebtedness of the majority. The changes in cultivation practices caused by the *'Green Revolution'* package worked to the benefit of the capitalists and the majority found upward social mobility through farming unsuccessful. In the Rajangana Colonization Scheme, for example, for 84 percent of the settler households, the average monthly income from paddy farming was well below Rs. 200/– (Abeyratne, 1972). In 1969/70; 44 percent of non-estate and 59 percent of estate rural households received less than Rs. 200/– a month, which amounted to an average of less than Rs. 40/– per person per month (ILO, 1971:87). The experience resulted in a widespread negative aitttude towards agricultural employment. The plantation sector's expansion and its adoption of new technology (especially cloning) exerted further pressure on land in adjoining villages and on employment opportunities within the plantation sector (Sarkar & Thambiah, 1957; xi;. Report of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission, 1951). The peasants were now producing for the market and therefore were victims of market manipulation by the middlemen and the businessmen. The increasing prices

and sometimes the non-availability of new chemicals, fertilizers, and other necessary inputs also provided some of the necessary conditions for their being proletarianized (Amin, 1976).

The traditional left, having given up its revolutionary ideologies, came to terms with the power elites: the 'Father of Marxism in Sri Lanka', or the leader of the *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* (People's United Front) crossed over to the United National Party, the party supporting the presence of foreign capital and its management in the economy; the rest, the Communist Party and the *Lanka Sama Samaja Party* (the Lanka Equal Society Party) formed an alliance with the national bourgeois, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The disgruntled groups broke away from the traditional left and formed independent organizations. The new left mainly headed by the JVP, took the revolutionary ideologies, along with criticisms of the traditional left and guidelines on a Sri Lankan revolution to the schools, universities and the rural proletariat, stressing the need to link the oppressed sections of the rural poor with the urban worker. As the government soon fell short of the electorate's expectations and failed to solve the country's problems, an armed struggle headed by the JVP attempted to overthrow the system. The state crushed the struggle. However, major land reforms came as a direct consequence of this armed struggle.[1] Land reform laws were passed in the legislature endorsed by all the parties in the Parliament. Under the Land Reform Law No. 1 of 1972 which imposed a ceiling on privately held land ownership to 50 acres, 563,411 arces (of which 386,895 acres were already cultivated) were to be vested in the Land Reform Commission; the Land Reform (Amendment) Law of 1975 resulted in bringing further 415,508 acres of company-owned estates under the Land Reform Commission (Abeysinghe, 1976).

However, lands belonging to temples, shrines, churches, mosques and trusts were exempted from the Land Reform Laws. *De facto* systems of land control such as *Gambara* system also did not come within the purview of these laws. On account of the small holdings in the paddy agriculture, hardly any paddy lands came within the reform laws, anyway. Nevertheless, it must be noted that about 60% of the acquired land was under export agriculture and 85% of these was within the densely populated Wet Zone where cultivable land has been nearly fully utilized (Peiris, 1975).

The sysnthesis can be explained in terms of alienation of land:

(*a*) categories of land exempted from the land reform legislation, and

(*b*) management of land which came to be vested in the Land Reform Commission under this legislation.

The lands that remained unaffected by the reform were those belonging to religious and charitable organizations. The organizations, in social relational terms, were social structures in more than one sense: firstly, they were cultural in the sense that they were part and parcel of peasant culture predicting particular ideational relations or normative behaviour; secondly, they were economic relations permitted to survive through the changes that were being introduced. Thus, both culturally and economically there were structures left 'unaffected' which were conforming to the conservative model of social relations. By leaving these 'structures' to survive, the

1. A personal discussion the writer had with Mr. Mahinda Silva, the then Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, revealed that the idea of land reform was being seriously considered before the insurrection broke out. However, it is important to note that the insurrection and its process of development, would have quickened the legislative action in this connection.

state ensured the existence of a force of resistance within the peasant society, itself. Further, the nationalization of other lands also meant a reduction of economic support that these institutions had been receiving from the land-owning elite. In the circumstances, although these particular structures were not affected theoretically, that in itself did not mean that they were unopposed or indifferent to the reforms. This had important implications for the reforms despite the fact that the peasant sector as a whole did not lose its own land by virtue of its small fragmented holdings. The problems perceived primarily in economic terms were the result of the secularization of both religion and polity, and was a jealously watched phenomenon by the former. Thus, on the one hand, the exclusion of the traditional power structures left the peasants to be essentially peasants; on the other hand, on account of secularization these power structures were bitter about the state's demonstrated preference on circumscribing its area, leaving political and economic matters for the state's own concern. In essence, therefore the reforms did not correspond to progressive development in this area. *De facto* systems of land control having not come within the purview of the reforms continued to exploit the peasantry. In principle, it was successfully competing with the idea of nationalisation or 'socialization' of means of production. The peasant production relations thus being basically unaltered, reinforced resistence to change, and helped in the reproduction of the general power structure of rural society.

The other front is concerned with what was done to the land that came under the reforms. As a result of nationalization being interpreted by the state as 'people's property,' the peasantry was expecting that all acquired estates would be distributed among the people. However, the state decided upon a three-part management scheme: individual peasant holdings, collectivisation and large production units. To begin with, the land reforms came by as an abrupt response to the crisis situation: the insurgency. There was no intent of land reform in the government election manifesto; the programme of reforms was carried out within a short period of time, under emergency regulations; and the government did not have a specific plan of action as to the management of land that came to be held by the Land Reform Commission. A majority of the acquired estates being crucial to the country's foreign exchange earnings, the state could not give into the popular demand for redistribution. In the circumstances, the state had to rely upon its bureaucracy both in the drafting of the programme of land reforms and in the implementation of it. In this situation, the bureaucracy being in sharp contrast to the traditional patron-client type of social relations, it was confronted by rural social structures in general and rural power structures in particular. The sections of the peasant population that received land under redistributive schemes of the government, either on an individual or collective basis, were now caught up between their new masters (the bureaucracy) and new socio economic organisations, and their original social situation that is the wider village society in which they live as opposed to the situations where they work in the new organizations.

The new society that was being experimented within isolated pockets surrounded by villages that were under the sway of capitalism in terms of production for the market, rejuvenated certain traditional principles of social organization relating to labour mobilization and mutual trust and co-operation. They also received continued government support and services which were not so readily available to the wider peasant society. The contradictory elements that were inherent in this exercise were: (*a*) stress of tradition without respect to the variation of time and activity; (*b*) discrimination; (*c*) misconceived relationship between the micro and macro society and economic ideologies. In the first place, although the reassertion of traditional ideology and identity in terms of collectivisation was attractive to the

peasantry in general, it proved to be of no success in practice for the very meaning of traditional principles could not be conceived due to the historically different stages of the contemporary society. Secondly, government support to the collectives was perceived as a waste by the wider peasant society where the majority of the people lived and problems prevailed. This practice acted against the emergence of a sense of self-reliance that it tried to create because of dependency upon the government machinery; it also did not promote intergation with the villages; instead it created a rift. Thirdly, it was considered that although these schemes were smaller in scale and in number, it would create a demonstration effect, as in the extension methodology, upon the villages gradually transforming the wider society into one based on co-operative forms of social organizations. As time passed by, it proved otherwise. The economic ideology relating to collectivisation was attempted at a time when the macro economy was being increasingly organized on the principles and ideology of capitalism. Moreover, in the places where it was attempted, the very binding principles relating to co-operation worked to undermine its own success, for the observance of such principles as mutual trust and co-operation led to the denial of the general members' access to check the account books, etc., and surplus labour appropriation by outsiders. The surplus labour appropriated by the outsiders or the central administration was redistributed to some of the other similar organizations under the principle of mutual aid, but also in turn brought about undesirable results which demoralized and discouraged the ordinary members.

Collectives and their administrative framework were not the only institutional changes introduced. Concomitant to the reforms were some institutional changes which included the creation of Agricultural Productivity Committees and Cultivation Committees comprised of appointed membership. The District Political Authority created in 1972 had a Member of Parliament as its head and had wide powers regarding the allocation of funds. The state bureaucracy was thus brought into work in close collaboration with the peasantry, their representatives and their policy makers. But here again the problem mentioned before namely, that of secularization versus politicization in the context of an agrarian society, resulted in the ultimate collaboration between the bureaucracy and the polity. This left the ordinary peasant at the receiving end, rather than involving him in the decision-making process relating to production, distribution, management and construction. The rural power structure, the bureaucracy and the higher level political structure, mutually reinforced each other and accumulated facilities and benefits which otherwise would have accrued to the peasants. The bureaucratic redefinition of the concept of villages (co-operative, traditional) into various terms (*Janawasa, Samupakara Gammana, Samuha Govipola, Samuha Nishpadana, Sanwardana Mandala* and so on) contributed more to the intensification of and the increase in the process of bureaucratization. Although these were conceived as being different to the ordinary villages in terms of their organizational structure and progressive stage of development, the paradox was the necessity for integration. The sons and daughters of the ordinary villagers were recruited, but they also brought along age-old village problems like family feuds etc., into these schemes. The bureaucratic structures of the new villages failed to unify the factions. They instead found it easier to manage them through a policy of divide and rule, which was contradictory to the attempted ideal of reconstructed village. By the end of the decade, the new villages had been dissolved and a process of villagization (decollectivisation) was set in motion, which gave individual allotments and removed the bureaucracy furthering the process of capitalization. However, even if half of the land controlled by the Land Reform Commission was redistributed as individual allotments, it would have meant only a marginal increase in the peasant sector (Peiris, 1975), while the problems of this sector would still remain as before (Goonaratne & Samad, 1979:277–91).

It was decided that the best productive estates were to be managed as before with the only change being in terms of service personnel. Although the extensive privileges that the managers and superintendents had enjoyed were reduced to some extent, they were restored before the decade elapsed. While some of the estates were returned to the former owners, the management of the majority of the rest was given to the former owners or their managers. The estates that were still under government control were managed by special bureaucratic organizations created for this purpose. All in all, in the case of the plantations, there have been no fundamental changes and the so-called peasant-workers alliance did not occur despite villagers receiving employment opportunities in these estates. A peasant, in such cases, may also be a plantation worker, and a plantation worker may also be hired by the peasant. These economic relations however did not permit a political consciousness to develop. Instead, a new form of patron-client relationship and factionalism emerged. The old problem of enmity between the up-country peasant and the Indian plantation worker was further intensified, with the latter getting his long time unclassified and uncertain legal position of being 'stateless' workers on the state-owned plantations now resolved. The subsequent developments witnessed the incorporation of the leader of the Indian Plantation Workers' Union into the ruling party's cabinet of ministers and granting of voting rights to these workers. Yet, it did not promote 'class consciousness'; on the contrary, politicization along popular politics led to further development of factionalism. This was the converse of institutionalization and consolidation of old structures through reforms.

In conclusion, land reforms represented a convergence of political opinions in the sense that all the major political parties endorsed the programme of land reforms. However, agreement on the policy level does not assure a synthesis of actual forces at work. In effect, it served to further the process of Sri Lankan mode of capitalistic development with its attendant forms of factionalism and patron-client bondages. This was important in an agrarian society where competition for peasant allegiance is crucial for the reproduction of the *status quo*. These reforms, contrary to popular belief, did not create conditions under which the peasants became revolutionary, but reproduced relations which were essentially old structures.

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