

Chapter 3

The Fate of Agrarian Reform from the 1960s to the 1980s

When the Basic Agricultural Law (BAL) was promulgated in 1960, populist agrarian reform was a robust idea with potential strength to push social change and to form a basis for Indonesian socialism - but from 1965 it sank below the surface of public discourse along with other attempts at political change. Even though agrarian reform had become a reliable policy for post-war independent countries and a main topic for discussions in various international academic discourses and policy-oriented forums until the end of the 1970s (Carroll 1970; Jacoby 1966; Woodruff, Brown and Lin 1966; Dorner 1971; Lin 1972; Lehmann 1974; Inayatullah 1980; and Ghose 1983), Indonesia's New Order regime had chosen a different approach for Indonesia's rural development which depended on a green revolution program without carrying out land reform as mandated by the BAL. Although there were subsequent efforts from the mid-70s until the beginning of the 1980s to bring back the BAL's mandate by some academics and other intellectuals (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978, White and Wiradi 1984¹), together with some government officials who maintained their concerns about agrarian problems in Indonesia, these were not successful. The BAL 1960 was neither revised nor replaced by a new agricultural law (although it was superseded by Forestry and Mining Laws), but its mandate to carry out redistributive agrarian reform was never implemented.

¹ This report was published in Indonesian 2009 (White and Wiradi 2009).

This chapter will discuss efforts by academics and other intellectuals, both outside and inside the government, to push the New Order policy-makers to continue to implement the earlier program of populist agrarian reform. Before describing those efforts, the chapter will describe briefly the successes and failures of the 1960s land reform program, as background for understanding why this program's implementation was discontinued during the early New Order period, and why public and academic discourses on agrarian reform in Indonesia disappeared for more than a decade after 1965. The aim of this narrative is to show that there was a revival of this populist idea based on use of scientific and social justice arguments, but the necessary political machinery to push it into the policy-making process did not exist. These efforts to revive agrarian reform in the midst of New Order repression, based on analyses of rural poverty problems, became a cornerstone of the later struggle for agrarian justice. It will be argued that these efforts were a crucial link between the pro-agrarian justice movement before 1965 and similar movements that emerged two decades later.

3.1 Successes and Failures of the Early 1960s Agrarian Reform Program

Around 400 families of Jangkurang village in the Garut District of West Java are members of the Pasundan Peasants Union (SPP, Serikat Petani Pasundan), which was formally established in 2001.² They joined the Union because they wanted to reclaim around 200 hectares of their land, which in the mid-1990s, had been taken by local landlords facilitated by local land authorities (Garut District Land Office) (Serikat Petani Pasundan 2002). The Jangkurang peasants are cultivators of the ex-Siti Arja plantation land, which was owned by a foreign enterprise through the granting of commercial land rights (*Erfpacht Verponding* nos. 265 and 116)³ in 1877 by the colonial

² Chapters VII will discuss SPP in more detail.

³ On *erfpacht* see Tauchid 1952: 42-47 and Harsono 1997: 37-38.

government. These rights legally expired in 1952 although the European plantation managers had been interned not long after the Japanese military occupation had begun in 1942, as happened throughout Indonesia (Pelzer 1978: 122-127, Kurosawa 1993, Bachriadi and Lucas 2001 and Lucas and Bachriadi 2000, Bachriadi 2002b). The Japanese military administration (1942-1945) encouraged local people to occupy ex-plantation land and grow food and other crops needed for military and war purposes.⁴ Since then the Jangkurang people have cultivated the ex-Siti Arja land, and some of them still remember how it was taken over from their families at the end of 19th century for the development of the Siti Arja plantation.

The occupation continued for some years after Independence, until the implementation of the national land reform program began in the early 1960s, when the land was formally redistributed to the Jangkurang people. The local land reform committee at that time issued a Land Rights Recognition Document (SKT, Surat Keterangan Tanah) to confirm the holders were recognised as the formal cultivators who would be issued with certificates of land ownership after the land had been full paid for.⁵ This did not happen for about a quarter of a century. It was not until 1988, with the assistance of the village head and the Garut Land Office (*Kantor Pertanahan*), that an effort was made to get the official certificates of land ownership issued. Another six years went by, until in 1994 the Head of the National Land Agency (BPN) issued a Directive Letter (No. 88/VI/1994) stating that the ex-plantation land was the object of land redistribution for the Jangkurang cultivators. At the same time there was a conspiracy between the village head and officers of the Garut District Land Office, who intimidated the cultivators to sell the redistributed land at a very low price to local landlords. As a result all the certificates were issued under new buyers names (the landlords). This was one of many cases involving land

⁴ For more about this topic see Tauchid 1953: 6-9, Pelzer 1978: 122-127, Kurosawa 1993: 28-66, Bachriadi and Lucas 2001: 126 and 131-132, and Bachriadi 2002b.

⁵ According to the 1960 land reform regulations the beneficiaries would get a certificate of land ownership after they had paid the compensation price set by the sub-district Land Reform Committee. This payment had to be paid to the government in annual instalments over 15 years.

redistributed in the 1960s land reform program that later fell into the hands of other parties (including occasionally former owners).⁶

The 1960s agrarian reform program in essence rested on the following principles: tenancy reform; limitation of land concentration (control over plantation estates, limitation of private land holdings, and abolition of absentee land)⁷; land redistribution (State Land⁸, privately owned land in excess of the maximum ceiling, absentee land, and ex-autonomous government or *swapraja* land); arrangement of farmer-based production; and agrarian planning. To implement this program several laws and regulations were enacted, including the Share Tenancy Act 1960, the BAL 1960, Act No. 56/1960 on Agricultural Land Ceilings, Law No. 21/1964 on Land Reform Courts and Government Regulation No. 224/1961 on Implementation of Land Redistribution and Procedure for Compensation.

The aims of tenancy reform (as regulated by the Share Tenancy Act 1960) was to rearrange the structure of sharecropping systems which had traditionally been implemented in rural areas, which were considered unfair (by the state authority and legislators) because they provided more shares to the land-owner than to the tenant. Traditionally the sharecropping system in general was based on a 1:3 tenant/owner pattern (called *mertelu* in the

⁶ See also Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979b, Mamock 1995, and Lucas and Bachriadi 2000 for other case studies on this topic. HKTI reported on a take over action of distributed land of the 1960 land reform program in South Sulawesi (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979a: 36); Mamock 1995 (republished as article in two other different books, Harman *et al.* 1995: 309-316 and Yayasan Sintesa and SPSU 1998: 83-95) exposed a case where redistributed land of the 1960 land reform program was taken over in Pekalongan District in Central Java; while Lucas and Bachriadi 2000 showed a similar situation in five villages in West Java.

⁷ Before 1960 an early attempt to abolish land concentration was carried out through the abolition of the 'private-estates' (*particuliere landerijen* or '*tanah partikelir*') regulated by Law No. 1/1958. These *tanah partikelir* were feudal enclaves dating from the days of the Dutch East India Company. Extensive tracts of freehold land had been given or sold to the servants and supporters of the VOC (including European and Chinese entrepreneurs) on the northern coast of Java. To make the offer attractive, the colonial government gave the buyers seigniorial rights over the inhabitants of their lands. These 'lords' appointed village officials, set up markets, collected fees, levied taxes, and requisitioned corvee labour at will (Cribb and Kahin 2004: 329, Soedargo 1962: 466-509, and Pelzer 1982: 35).

⁸ Chapter II discusses the issue of State Land.

Javanese tradition) or 3:4 (usually called *merapat*), even though in some areas there was an equal (1:1) pattern usually called *maro*) (see van der Kroef 1984: 156-157). The 1960 Share Tenancy Act regulated a new pattern of equal shares (1:1 for both tenants and land holders) for farming activities on irrigated rice land (*sawah*) and 2/3 share for tenants on dry field land. Besides establishing fairness in the income sharing relationship between the land owner and the tenant, this Act also aimed to protect the tenants who were usually in a weak position *vis a vis* land owners; and to encourage tenants to work harder on their land (see Soemardjan 1984: 110-111).

The agrarian reform program as described in the BAL 1960 was also aimed at limiting concentration of land holdings, either by private individuals or commercial institutions. The existing plantation lands with *erfpacht* (long lease) status, for instance, were only allowed to operate until 1980. After that all long-term leasehold land released by the Dutch colonial administration would become 'free' State Land, which would automatically become available for redistributive land reform if that land was already being cultivated by local people for their livelihood. If the plantation was still operating there, it could apply for a newly defined Commercial Use Right (HGU).⁹ Meanwhile private land holdings were regulated by abolishing land rights of absentee landlords and by regulating a land ownership ceiling that could not exceed 5 hectares for *sawah* (irrigated rice land) and 6 hectares for dry land in more densely populated areas, and could not exceed 15 hectares for *sawah* and 20 hectares for dry land in less populated areas.¹⁰

What was defined as 'excess land' (*tanah kelebihan batas*), 'absentee land' (*tanah guntai*), 'State Land' and 'ex-autonomous government' (*swapraja*) land was then available for land reform ('objects of land reform') and should be redistributed to potential beneficiaries (the 'subjects of land reform') with

⁹ See again Chapter II, for definition of the HGU (Hak Guna Usaha).

¹⁰ For detail of the limitations on land holding see Act No. 56/1960, article 1 and Supplement. For the prohibition of absentee landlordism see article 10 of the BAL 1960.

priority to be given to existing tenants and agricultural workers. Agrarian spatial planning and land use would be implemented together with the land redistribution program and the development of agricultural production units in order to develop community-based economic activity.

The land reform program was formally launched at the beginning of January 1961 but the redistribution of land did not start until 24 September 1962 after various implementing regulations had been issued.¹¹ However it was implemented slowly because of many challenges, especially from rural landlords and landowners who had become 'victims' of the limitations on land holding, even if they were given compensation for the over-limit parts of their land which had to be given to the State for redistribution. Compensation was not paid in cash at the time the land was given up, but was paid in instalments after the new beneficiaries had started to sell their crops.¹² This was one of the reasons why resistance occurred among the landowners who had their land designated as 'objects of land reform'.

The other main practical constraint in the implementation of the BAL 1960 was that it did not get solid support from existing political parties at that time, except the leftist ones (Kartodirdjo 1984: 128). Ladejinsky, a land reform expert with an international reputation¹³, who visited Indonesia in 1961 to observe the implementation of land reform, noticed in his 1961 memo to Minister of Agrarian Affairs Sardjarwo that 'only a miracle can help' because the agrarian reform legislation was 'voluminous, disjointed, contradictory, and

¹¹ Presidential Decree No. 131/1961 and Decree of First Minister No. 311/MP/1961 that regulated the formation, scope of work and duties of the Land Reform Committees in all levels, from national to village level, was passed on 15 April 1961 and 8 July 1961. While Government Regulation No. 224/1961 on the implementation of land redistribution was passed on 24 September 1961 (Soedargo 1962: 91-160). Before the redistribution process was started, the committees had to carry out assessments and verifications of total land to be redistributed in each district. Formal distribution processes could not begin until these regulations were issued.

¹² For regulation of the implementation of land redistribution, including the compensation mechanism, see Government Regulation No. 224/1961.

¹³ Wolf Ladejinsky was a US government service officer before he assisted General Douglas MacArthur in planning the post-war land reform in Japan at the end of 1945. He spent more than thirty years in Asian countries working on land reform and agricultural development. He ended his career on the staff of the World Bank.

altogether too politically, conservatively inspired agrarian reform legislation' (Ladejinsky 1977a: 297 [originally 1961]), while the government's land reform implementation administration (the land reform committees) were 'an example of how not to try to give land to the landless' (Ladejinsky 1977a: 298 [originally 1961]). Soetiknjo, a political law expert of Gadjah Mada University who had been involved in the BAL formulation process, said the program could not be implemented as originally envisaged because the implementers were the land owners themselves (*Kompas* 23 November 1977).

On his third visit to undertake an assessment, based on an invitation from Sadjarwo, Minister of Agrarian Affairs at that time, Ladejinsky assessed that 'the reform falls far short of anticipations implied by the enacted legislation. The gaps are indeed wide between aim and fulfilment... The enforcement of the agrarian reform is not nearly as good as it might be' (Ladejinsky 1977b: 341 and 345 [originally 1964]). He was convinced that the government had not enough capacity and budget, and not enough surplus land to carry out this program, not only for the land redistribution but also to support farming activities after the redistribution. This was the reason he proposed that the government should abandon the land reform program and concentrate more on population redistribution on the one hand [i.e. the transmigration program] and a break-through in agricultural productivity on the other, in other words, on small farm intensification efforts, as the way to improve peasants' productivity (Ladejinsky 1977b [originally 1964]). His review followed the new tendencies of the western – mostly US-based – international development and funding agencies that would not support the implementation of redistributive land reforms, especially those they considered were influenced by communist movements, preferring instead to support a top-down green revolution program without land reform (White 2005: 121-122).¹⁴

¹⁴ The US had been involved in various land reform programs in Latin America since 1954 in order to stem the spread of communism and agrarian revolution in Latin America. But it failed to stop rural radicalism; on the contrary the peasant-based radical left groups there used land reform to strengthen their struggle. So the US and other Western development agencies swung rural poverty eradication policy from access to land for small peasants to increasing food production, starting in the mid 60s.

While the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia) and its peasant organization, the Indonesian Peasant Front (BTI, Barisan Tani Indonesia), had launched the 'agrarian revolution' following the 5th Party Congress in 1954 (see Aidit 1959a, Hutapea 1959, van der Kroef 1960 and 1963, Mortimer 1972, and Pelzer 1982: 30-35), it now applied a new strategy to speed up this reform program. In 1963 they endorsed collective occupation actions, in which small and landless peasants groups occupied land that they perceived to be appropriate objects for land reform.¹⁵ This collective land occupation action was, in part, a kind of radical direct action strategy using a social movement¹⁶ aimed to challenge government and land reform committees to work more effectively. The PKI and BTI called this is a strategy designed to "bring land reform to completion" (*mensukseskan landreform*) (Pelzer 1982: 43 but other peasant organizations, political parties, and some observers called this strategy 'unilateral actions' (*aksi sepihak*). The actors of collective land occupation – the BTI – considered that their actions had a legal base on the agrarian law principle of 'land to those that till it' (see Törnquist 1984: 196). A leader of BTI, Asmu, asserted that 'land reform according to the BAL and its implementing regulations had not yet abolished the monopoly of land by landlords and feudal exploitation over their peasants, but rather had formally limited it' (Asmu 1964: 46). That is why land occupation actions conducted to implement the 'land to those that till it' principle, also aimed to abolish landlordism, categorized by the BTI as being people owning land (irrespective

See Stavenhagen 1970, Dorner 1971, Petras and LaPorte Jr. 1971 for extensive discussions about US involvement in land reform program in Latin America.

¹⁵ For details of *aksi sepihak*, see Lyon 1970: 42-59, Utrecht 1969: 81-85, Mortimer 1972: 40-62, Kartodirdjo 1984: 129-131 and 146-155, Padmo 2000, and Kasdi 2001.

¹⁶ Explanations about strategies of direct action either in social or political movements have been provided in Benewick and Smith 1972 and Carter 1973. According to them various forms of direct actions as political activities are usually conducted when the protesters find neither 'constitutional' nor other political actions to pursue to protest or change the policy. Moreover according to Benewick and Smith, direct actions are a traditional and legitimate form of political behaviour in a democratic state (1972: 1). In contrast, Kiernan 1972 has said that various forms of direct action depend on political circumstances, existing laws and regulations, or fluctuations in opinion and convention within the society. 'It may manifest itself in any shape from boycott to bomb; it may rely on moral coercion, like one of Gandhi's fasts or a suicide in Japan on an opponent's doorstep, or on physical force, which may be employed against buildings or other property, or against life or limb' (Kiernan 1972: 25).

of how much they had) but not working it and exploiting the peasants who actually were working there.¹⁷

Direct actions created a culmination of social conflicts in rural areas, which already had their roots in a combination of class relations and political streams (Lyons 1970 and Geertz 1960). These social conflicts together with political contention among national political elites over state power finally culminated in the political turmoil and violence in 1965-66 that ended with the apparent death of populist agrarian reform as the way to social change in Indonesia. The land reform program was halted, and the BAL was stigmatized politically and socially as a product of the communists.

As well there was a campaign of political repression on campuses and in scientific forums targeting academic discourses on agrarian reform and critical analyses of rural development and agrarian problems. The muzzling of scholarly critical discourse was begun just several weeks after the coup in October 1965,¹⁸ with the stated justification of 'cleaning the university from leftist influences'. Many academic staff and intellectuals who had been writing or speaking on agrarian topics, including administration staff, old and young, of leading universities, were suspended or fired for membership of the PKI or left wing organisations, while those surviving this purge had their academic and political life put under continuing surveillance (White 2005: 121-122).

The redistribution program itself, as the beginning phase of agrarian reform, had been implemented systematically for only 4 years (1962-1965) and reached only about 50% of the 112,000 hectares throughout Indonesia which had been targeted for redistribution (see Morad 1970: 7, also Hutagalung 1985: 74 and Utrecht 1969: 85). After 1965 the program, although not completely abolished and still being implemented 'here and there', ran very slowly and ineffectively (Utrecht 1969: 87). A government report in 1969 stated that in

¹⁷ For the BTI's categorisation of landlords, see Asmu 1964: 45-46.

¹⁸ See notes 34 and 35 of this chapter.

total only about 73% of targeted land had been redistributed during this period to less than 1 million peasants, or about 30% of an estimated 3 million potential beneficiaries. (Utrecht 1969: 86-87, Huizer 1980: 121, and Hutagalung 1985: 78).¹⁹ This report also showed that most redistributed land was originally State Land (around 48% of total redistributed land). While of the total excess land (*tanah kelebihan batas*) available for redistribution, only around 62% was redistributed; and of the total absentee land (*tanah guntai*) available for redistribution, only around 56% were redistributed (Morad 1970: 7, Huizer 1980: 121, Hutagalung 1985: 78). This means around 38% of rural landlords' excess land (*tanah kelebihan batas*) and around 44% of rural landlords' absentee land (*tanah guntai*) were 'saved' from redistribution. This land was never redistributed mainly because, as stated by Huizer, 'the land reform committees were often dominated by representatives of the local elite and were biased in favour of the large landowners, and they were also liable to certain forms of corruption' (1980: 111).

Taken together, the above figures show why the 60s land reform program did not fully achieve its main objective, which was to change unequal land holding structures in rural areas. Moreover, in many cases distributed land was later claimed back by the former owners or taken over by other parties who used the opportunity of the 1965-1966 political turmoil (see for instance the case studies in the report by Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979a, Mamock 1995, Lucas and Bachriadi 2000, and Serikat Petani Pasundan 2002; see also Hutagalung 1985: 76-77).²⁰

¹⁹ Utrecht added that this number could be less because the available data did not count how much of the redistributed land had been taken back by the former owners or other parties after the 1965/1966 political turmoil (Utrecht 1969: 87, note 28).

²⁰ Beside Utrecht (see previous note), Tjondronegoro, a prominent Indonesian rural sociologist, believes that much of the supposedly redistributed land had been taken back by the former owners. In 1971 he argued that a great deal of the redistributed excess land (*tanah kelebihan batas*) had been reclaimed by former landowners after the political turmoil (Tjondronegoro 1971: 13). Lucas and Bachriadi 2000 have shown that out of 283 ha redistributed to 622 landholders in Soge village in Indramayu district (West Java), only 58% retain rights to the redistributed land in 2000. The village headman illegally gained control of 42% and then sold it off.

Another problem caused by the 1960s agrarian reform program was the continuing existence of big plantation estates and the land certification of ex-foreign plantation land which had either already been redistributed to, or just occupied by, local people. The government's 1969 report of the program implementation indicated that 'State Land' which had been redistributed, a category which possibly included former plantations and other land that now officially belonged to the state, was around 48% of the total of redistributed land (Morad 1970: 7, Huizer 1980: 121, Hutagalung 1985: 78). As we have already noted, the beneficiaries (of all kinds of redistributed land including redistributed state lands) could not hold a formal certificate of ownership over this redistributed land until after they had paid the required compensation to the government in annual instalments over 15 years. Only then could the government release the certificate of land ownership. As already mentioned, during this 15-year period the beneficiaries would hold a Document of Land Rights Recognition (SKT, Surat Keterangan Tanah) as proof of right of occupancy.

During this 15 year period all distributed land provided by the land reform program was to be cultivated actively by the beneficiaries and could not be transferred to other parties for any reason (see Government Regulation 224/1961, articles 14:4 and 15:3). But, as mentioned earlier, much of the distributed land was transferred by beneficiaries to other parties either compulsorily or voluntarily (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979a, Mamock 1995, Lucas and Bachriadi 2000). Lucas and Bachriadi (2000) reported that over 40 per cent of redistributed land held by individual cultivators in one village in Indramayu district (West Java) was transferred forcibly under intimidation and manipulation of local elites and/or military; while redistributed State Land was taken over by other parties for the development of plantation estate and reforestation programs. An interim report made by the Ministry of Research in 1979 also reported that much redistributed land was given back to the former owners because the beneficiaries felt it was not appropriate according to their religious beliefs to

receive land from others through the land reform program (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 19). This could have been Muslim landlords finding reasons to justify taking back land that been confiscated by the local Land Reform Committee and redistributed.

The changes after 1965 were followed by a revitalization of the plantation sector program. This was conducted by the New Order regime in the 1970s and intensified during the 1980s, with many new Commercial Use Rights (HGU) being issued for big new plantation estates.²¹ The designated areas for these new plantation estates included many parcels of redistributed land. Existing land occupations of these areas by local people, based on Documents of Recognition (the SKT) issued under the 1960s land reform programme, created many land conflicts. As many of the big plantations were being operated under the aegis of local and national military power, these conflicts became complicated with outside interests intruding into them.²² The Army, the major organised opposition to the communists, never supported the implementation of populist land reform in Indonesia as had occurred in the 60s (Mas'oeed 1989: 60)

Political change and regime shift in 1965/1966 and the political commitment of the new regime to a program of capitalist developmentalism halted previous efforts to bring about land reform to change agrarian structures in Indonesia. The New Order regime did not have the same political and ideological interest in land reform as its predecessors (Utrecht 1969: 87, Mas'oeed 1989: 60). Its version of land redistribution rested more on, and merged with, the transmigration and resettlement programs (Tjondronegoro 1971 and 1972) and the implementation of contract-farming schemes in plantation development (PIR-Bun) (Parlindungan 1983, Fauzi and Bachriadi 1994, Gunawan, Thamrin and Grijn 1995, and Bachriadi 1995 and 1999b). In some cases these schemes contributed to other types of land conflicts that

²¹ See chapter II on this topic.

²² About this topic see Chapter II, pp. 57, particularly note no. 51.

occurred later on. Land problems were treated merely as routine administrative matters. Their resolution was no longer portrayed as creating a foundation for the development of a people's economy (Sajogyo and Wiradi 1985). Land questions and agrarian reform that had become an important political issue until the middle of the 1960s sank for more than a decade under the imposed weight of the New Order's politics of developmentalism, domination and repression.

3.2 Agrarian Reform Discourses during the 1970s and Early 1980s

Land conflicts and peasant protests, as occurred in Jenggawah (East Java) and Siria-ria (North Sumatera),²³ and famine in Kawarang²⁴, one of the important rice 'granaries' of Indonesia, were reported widely in various mass media in the mid-1970s. This reporting triggered a re-emergence of public discourses about agrarian problems. Not only social analysts and academics but also members of elites and prominent party leaders, including the ruling Golkar, were involved in discussions and debates about rural poverty, unequal landholding structures, and seizures of peasants' land. Their opinions and proposals appeared in the mass media (see *Angkatan Bersenjata* 24 November 1977; *Kompas* 5 Augustus 1977a, 31 October and 23 November 1977; *Merdeka* 17 and 19 November 1977; *Suara Karya* 10 and 15 November 1977; *Rebong* 1977; and Abdurahman 1977).

Pro and contra opinions were publicly expressed about the need-or-not of land reform included a revival of the previous allegations about PKI influence on the formulation of the BAL and the 1960s agrarian reform program (Datuk 1977; Siregar 1977; Abdurrahman 1977; and *Kompas* 5 Augustus 1977b, 31 October and 23 November 1977). The contra position, for instance Datuk (1977), stated that 'the substance of the BAL and land reform will change the

²³ For more about these cases see Chapter IV.

²⁴ For more about this famine case see Chapter IV.

structure of the collective traditional community which has a spirit of mutual work (*berjiwa gotong royong*) into an individualist community, which clearly could have had consequences that had never existed before'. He also questioned why the food shortage incident in Karawang, which had been caused mostly by maladministration and manipulation of food aid supplies as reported in a statement from the Minister of Internal Affairs Amir Machmud (*Kompas* 4 November 1977), besides the problem of weather (drought), would be resolved by land reform. According to him these views were not correct because they drew again on arguments about the worth of the BAL and land reform, views that had disappeared 17 years ago. In addition he warned his audience to be alert to PKI cadres who could infiltrate Indonesia's political life again. Then he proposed to create new legislation that would be more appropriate to the new Indonesian situation if land reforms were still needed.

In contrast, pro-land reform opinion underscored that the BAL and the land reform program were not a product of the PKI and they argued, in contradiction of the Datuk's view, that problems of poverty and unequal land distribution in rural areas had a causal effect on the famine which had occurred because the BAL had never been implemented consistently (see *Kompas* 5 August 1977a and 23 November 1977, *Angkatan Bersenjata* 24 November 1977, *Suara Karya* 16 November 1977, Abdurrahman 1977, Rebong 1977, and Siregar 1977). Even a leader of the government-controlled farmers association (HKTI) said that land reform needed to be implemented again to prevent the problem of famines like the one which had occurred in Karawang (*Merdeka* 19 November 1977).

Political posturing leading up to the 1977 general election also coloured the re-emergence of debates about land and poverty in the media (Siregar 1977 and *Merdeka* 17 November 1977). Several politicians who had become businessmen and controlled huge landholdings, made statements to the press about the necessity of land reform to resolve the threat of food shortages and dependence on rice imports (*Merdeka* 17 November 1977). Various experts

held intensive publicly reported discussions about land problems, the BAL and the existence of customary land in Indonesia's agrarian legal system (Kompas 5 Augustus 1977b and 1977c; *Sinar Harapan* 3 and 17 October 1977).

The theme of rural poverty and its proposed structural resolution also emerged at a social sciences conference in 1979.²⁵ The conference that put this sensitive theme on the agenda was held in the midst of a power consolidation of the New Order regime that wanted political stability as a precondition for the implementation of its capitalist-developmentalism orientation. The conference was of sufficient concern to the government for military officials to monitor it closely (White 2005: 124, note no. 34). The press was careful to provide limited reporting on this event; it only mentioned speeches of keynotes speakers who were high ranking government officials, such as the Vice President, Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Environment (see *Kompas* 14-17 November 1979). It seems government pressure in the aftermath of the revoking of press licenses after the 1978 student protests against Soeharto (who intended to be re-elected after the 1977 general election), was still strong.²⁶ It was very clear after the 1978 student protest the New Order regime wanted to prevent the press from stimulating public debate on the sensitive topic of poverty and agrarian reform. Coincidentally or otherwise, in the middle of November 1977 President Soeharto reportedly instructed the Ministry of Research to review land problems, especially ownership, landholding, land use and share tenancy (*Suara Karya* 15 November 1977). But according to Gunawan Wiradi, a Bogor-based rural sociologist, it was Soemitro Djojohadikusumo, State Minister of Research, and also Minister of Economics and Finance at that time, which

²⁵ This conference was the 1979 National Conference of the Association for the Development of Social Sciences (HIPIS, Perhimpunan Pengembangan Ilmu-ilmu Sosial) in Malang, East Java, which took 'Structural Poverty' as its conference theme. The conference proceedings were published two years later in Alfian, Tan and Soemardjan (1980). There were two papers in this conference that analyzed empirical data on poverty problems and unequal land distribution that proposed structural resolution (see Siahaan 1980; and Sinaga and White 1980). Structural poverty problems had been raised in academic discourse, triggered by publication of the book by Singarimbun and Penny (1976) where the idea of populist agrarian reform appeared for the first time in an academic setting post-1965 in the preface of this book written by Sajogyo, whom we have already noted is an Indonesian rural sociologist with an international reputation (see Sajogyo 1976).

²⁶ For more about the revoking of press licenses after the 1978 student protest, see Hill 1994: 39.

wanted to conduct a review of land problems in Indonesia within his ministerial office. Then he brought the idea to Soeharto as a ministerial brief to the President. Soemitro's initiative was actually stimulated by public debates in the press on this issue and the publication of research conducted by Atje Partadiredja, an agricultural economist from Gadjah Mada University, on the economic condition of the peasantry and the results of the 1960 land reform program in Indonesia (see Partadiredja 1972, 1973a, 1973b; Partadiredja and Moekroni 1973). Partadiredja's research was a collaborative work between his institution and the Bogor-based Agro Economic Survey Foundation led by Sajogyo, which was trying to bring agrarian problems back into the public and academic discourse (interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [no.: A-06]).

However Soeharto wanted a second opinion about what action to take in response to the recent debates about the agrarian problems. His response can also be seen as a New Order regime tactic to dampen the noisy debate by showing implicitly that the government had been tackling the problems. Soeharto's administration also needed to have a position on agrarian issues to take to the FAO's World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) that was to be held in Rome in 1979 (see Katjasungkana 2007).²⁷

Minister Soemitro's team finally handed its interim report to the President on 4 March 1978.²⁸ This unpublished report²⁹ concluded in essence that the

²⁷ The Indonesian government sent a big delegation to this conference led by the Minister of Agriculture (see Sajogyo 2000). The conference produced a declaration on agrarian reform implementation as a foundation of social development, which became known as the Peasants' Charter. The conference also announced that all member states of the FAO agreed to implement the strategic actions of the Charter and provide annual reports to the FAO.

²⁸ This team provided an interim report because it concluded that further research was needed on agrarian problems while the President needed an immediate response. In fact, according to Gunawan Wiradi, while the team consisted of 30 Indonesian scholars, only 4-5 actively worked on the interim report review. Much of the team's report was based on data and information provided by the Bogor-based Agro Economic Survey Foundation (interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]).

land problems should be analysed within the framework of national development (at that time), which included three interrelated dimensions: economic growth, fair and equal income distribution, and stability in social development. In fact, according to this report, the population-land ratio had already made land and water scarce resources. Beside the population pressure factor, there were also competing demands on land, both for agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 1-2).

According to Soemitro's interim report, the problems of agriculture, including land ownership, holding and tenancy, and land concentration, were creating a feeling of social injustice within society, which would become a source of social unrest if disregarded. Above all were the twin realities of an agrarian structure inherited from the colonial period, which was not changing to meet the needs of development, and ineffective system of law enforcement (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 3 and 15). Some constraints to the implementation of the BAL and the Share Tenancy Act 1960, such as changes in attitudes to production and social relations in society, and an unstoppable tendency of land commercialization were occurring which together with the behaviour of government officials, were impeding the implementation of legislation. There was also the reality that many communities still depended on customary laws to regulate their land tenure (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 15-16).

In the context of land reform, the report mentioned that the resolution of agrarian problems should not only be limited to land distribution but should also include changing existing production relations caused by unequal agrarian structures. The team also mentioned the need to develop democratic rural institutions along with the development of production cooperatives, credit, extension and education (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 3-4).

²⁹ This interim report was not published until 2008 when it appeared as a chapter in an anniversary volume on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Professor Sediono M.P. Tjondronegoro who had been secretary of the team (Soeromihardjo, Sodiki and Risnanto 2008: 1-62).

The report also concluded that although many peasants should have been beneficiaries of the land reform program, in fact, much of the land redistributed was no longer held by the original beneficiaries or had been released by the original beneficiaries. This problem had occurred for several reasons: the amount of land redistributed had been too small; after 1965/1966 many parties, especially land owners thought they had lost out because of the land reform program; former landholders accused the beneficiaries as being members or supporters of the PKI; many former land owners had reclaimed their land with or without compensation; as we have noted some beneficiaries believed that receiving redistributed land through this program was a religious sin (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 19). In response Soemitro Djojohadikusumo, State Minister of Research responsible for the work of his team, said that both unequal landholding structures and lack of skills would cause poverty and unequal income distribution (*Kompas* 7 March 1978).

Based on their review, the Ministry of Research team made several recommendations needing implementation: the mandates and regulations in the BAL 1960 and Government Regulation No. 224/1961 about share cropping were still valid; absentee landlords were prohibited under the BAL; the land reform committees and land reform court should be revitalized;³⁰ and a budget to implement the land reform program should be provided. Essentially the recommendations of the interim report said that the original land reform program should be continued (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 48-49). The team also recommended the formulation of new regulations to follow up the mandate of the BAL, the Share Tenancy Act 1960 and existing regulation on land redistribution. New regulations were needed for abandoned land, agricultural labour and for land use planning in order to prevent conversion of agricultural land, especially irrigated land, to non-agricultural purposes (Menteri Negara Riset Republik Indonesia 1978: 49-50).

³⁰ The land reform court and judiciary that had been established by Act No. 21/1964 was abolished in 1970 by Act No. 7/1970 on Abolition of the Land Reform Court/Judiciary (see Harsono 1997: 367-369).

These recommendations in essence were to bring back onto the national agenda reform of the existing agrarian structure and agricultural production relations as mandated by the BAL and the Share Tenancy Act 1960, in order to improve agricultural and rural productivity. The recommendations of the Ministry of Research team wanted to 'resolve agrarian problems in Indonesia caused by the historical disruption of 1965-1966 and the subsequent freezing of the BAL 1960' (Wiradi 2008). But none of the recommendations were implemented by the New Order regime (interview with member of supervisory board of Akatiga Foundation, Secretary of Soemitro's team, 8 June 2009 [No.: A-05]), except for a statement in the 1978-1982 Five Year Development Plan (Repelita III, Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun III) that reform of land tenure and land use would be taken into account along with the transmigration program and other rural development programs (see Menteri Negara Riset Republic Indonesia 1978: 68-71, especially point 20, page 69).

However, the Interim Report's recommendation that land tenure and land use reforms (which meant land reform) be implemented, and its conclusion that the BAL was a national product (not a PKI one), appeared in the 1978 Broad Outlines of State Policy (GBHN, Garis Besar Haluan Negara), in the MPR (People's Assembly) Decree No. IV/1978. This statement no longer stigmatized the BAL and the land reform program as being part of the communist movement (see also Wiradi 2000: 141). Many statements of high state officials on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the BAL in 1980 also said that land reform was not a product of the Communist Party (White and Wiradi 1984: 19). Nevertheless, this did not mean that the New Order regime was becoming more accommodative or less repressive towards efforts to bring agrarian reform back onto the State's agenda.

To follow up the recommendations of the Minister's research team, as well as the results of the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) mentioned earlier, on National Peasant's Day (24th September) HKTI conducted a series of intensive reviews of Indonesian

peasantry and agricultural workers' conditions and rural poverty (Napitupulu, Patty and Soemartojo 1979).³¹ Their conclusion was that, ironically, rural poverty was still widespread, side by side with the positive results of New Order's development programs

One cause of this poverty was the existing unequal agrarian structure in rural areas. This is why the HKTl then recommended that land reform should be implemented again consistently together with improved access to agricultural inputs (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979a; Napitupulu, Patty and Soemartojo 1979). In this context, HKTl argued that agrarian reform should be implemented again in Indonesia based on national and international consensus as stated in the BAL and in the Peasant's Charter (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979a: 38).³²

In order to follow up the recommendations of Minister of Research Soemitro's team and results of the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), in 1981 several Indonesian and foreign academics together with government bureaucrats again reviewed the implementation of the 1960s land reform and conducted a comparative study on land reform implementations in other Asian countries. In an intensive workshop in May 1981 new arguments and approaches were formulated to again try and implement agrarian reform in Indonesia.³³ The recommendations

³¹ We can say they were intensive reviews because the last 6 day seminar event in Jakarta, 24-29 September 1979, was the culmination of reviews conducted previously in four cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Medan and Bogor), in which people from government institutions, research institutions within and outside the universities, mass-based organizations, and non government organizations and representatives of peasant groups within the HKTl as well were all involved (see Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia 1979b).

³² According to Gunawan Wiradi, who was involved in this series of reviews, the HKTl (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia) was still mentioning the importance of agrarian reform in Indonesia because it was currently being led by a nationalist political activists at that time such as Wardoyo who became the Minister of Agriculture later on and Toha, a political activist of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI). HKTl had a different orientation, more supportive of the New Order rural development without agrarian reform, when this organization was led by the New Order bureaucrats and military officers later on (interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]).

³³ A series of training sessions for a number of academics and bureaucrats to analysis agrarian problems that was continued by a field comparative study in India were conducted before the

from this meeting were formally delivered to the Minister of Internal Affairs. But again it was the same story; there was no follow up by the New Order regime (Sajogyo 2000 vi; Wiradi 2008; and interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]). Moreover, there were more state security officials than participants attending the two weeks meeting as it was closely monitored. The press were also prohibited to publish details about the purpose of the meeting (White 2005: 124, note 34; Wiradi 2009 12 and 63-64); but the Minister of Home Affairs made only a lip service statement when he received the report and recommendations (*Kompas* 1 June 1981).

According to the workshop and training coordinator, the government's lip service to agrarian reform was reflected in the statements of Amir Machmud, Minister of Home Affairs at that time. He made three confusing statements over a three week period: First he said, 'We have already implemented land reform', then during the Salabintana workshop he said 'We are implementing land reform in an ongoing way', and after the Salabintana workshop he said 'We will implement land reform' (interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]). Although some academics, HKTI and several mass media to re-ignite public debate and the public discourse on agrarian reform ideas, social movement organizations based on NGOs and student groups were not so involved in agrarian reform. As will be shown in the next chapter, Indonesian NGOs, which were limited in number at that time, were more concerned with rural development and income-generating projects that gave less attention to the agrarian problems, except Bina Desa. This organization became part of the Asian Network for Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (ASIA-DHRA) that had also put agrarian reform onto

workshop. This workshop, which had as its theme 'Agrarian Reform in Comparative Perspective', was conducted in Salabintana, Sukabumi, West Java in May 1981, was organised by the Agro Economic Survey (SAE) Foundation, Bogor, in collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, and was attended by Indonesian academics and bureaucrats beside several internationally recognized agrarian experts from Bogor Agricultural Institute, Gadjah Mada University, University of Indonesia (Indonesia), Institute of Social Studies and University of Utrecht (Netherlands), Land Tenure Center (USA), Center for Studies in Social Sciences and Public Enterprise Center for Continuing Education (India), and included several representatives of international funding agencies such as IDR-Canada, USAID, and NUFFIC-Netherlands.

its working agenda, but campaigning to influence the policy was not part of Bina Desa's strategy at that time. With the steady strengthening of the New Order regime and its authoritarian politics, after 1981 critical debates on agrarian transition and agrarian reform had been going on again more under the surface of public discourses, as well as academic and lecture forums during this time. .

The muzzling of scholarly critical discourse and the well-arranged changes in the orientation of agrarian studies in the universities (White 2005), the increasing control of the press to limit criticism on agrarian issues, increasing control of HKTI and the shutdown of the Agro Economic Survey Foundation at the end of 1981³⁴ (interview with member of expert council of KPA, Bogor 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]) all contributed to this 're-disappearance' of public discourse on agrarian reform. After that there were only one or two agrarian scholars who were still attempting to articulate the need for agrarian reform (see for instance Wiradi 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1985, and 1986; and Tjondronegoro and Wiradi 1984). The stubborn scholar survivors such as Gunawan Wiradi,³⁵ for instance, had the opportunity to move their ideas on

³⁴ The Agro Economic Survey Foundation (SAE, Survei Agro Ekonomi), the non-government research institute that conducted in-depth research and published widely about rural poverty, unequal land distribution, rural villagers' income, and rural transformation during the implementation of the green revolution program, was taken over by government and attached to the Ministry of Agricultural after conducting an intensive review and training on agrarian reform at Salabintana in 1981. This institutional take over was based on a decision of Sumarlin, the Minister of State for the Regulation of the State Apparatus (MENPAN, Menteri Negara Penertiban Aparatur Negara) (interview with member of expert council of KPA, on 19 June 2009 [No.: A-06]).

³⁵ Gunawan Wiradi was one of the victims of political cleansing in his university, the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB, Institut Pertanian Bogor), at the end of 60s. After several years working in non-academic circumstances, he was invited back to join the scientific activities of the Agro Economic Survey Foundation (SAE) by his mentor, Sajogyo, who, as we have noted, was a leading Indonesian populist rural sociologist with an international reputation. Based on his research in this institute and his deep knowledge of agrarian politics and history, he wrote many academic papers and popular writings and actively promoted populist agrarian reform as the solution for unequal land distribution and rural poverty, which in his analysis had occurred since the colonial time. He was coordinator of the SAE's training and intensive workshop on agrarian reform at Salabintana in 1981. For his scientific and popular writings and promotion on agrarian reform after 1981, see for instance Wiradi 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1985, and 1986. For his life story see *'Ikhlas Mengamalkan Ilmu'* (oral history material) and Wiradi 2009: 39 – 69. For his influential and provocative argument to reframe land conflicts and capitalist-driven eviction using an agrarian reform perspective in a reflective meeting of social movement activists in early 90s, see Wiradi 1998 [originally 1993]; and for his

populist agrarian reform into other social movements that were beginning to campaign against land evictions since the mid 80s. Wiradi influenced student groups and non-government campaigns on land disputes to reframe their movement with an agrarian reform perspective, which emphasised 'the issue of landlessness and unequal land distribution together with the problem of capitalist-driven land evictions. Then, using terminology proposed by Powelson and Stock (1987), he introduced the idea of 'land reform by leverage' to Indonesian social movement activists. This means a bottom-up land reform program based on the power of organized people, as an opposite idea to 'land reform by grace' or a land reform program that merely rested on the state imperative or land reform that was designed by state apparatuses and implemented through government institutions (see Wiradi 1997). This idea was to provide a theoretical underpinning for campaigns as well as discourses about agrarian reform in Indonesia in the future.

3.3 Concluding Remarks

Implementation of agrarian reforms of the first half of the 1960s was halted with the regime changed in 1965/1966. This was followed by the imposition of limitations of public and academic discourses on that topic. Attempts by academics and bureaucrats who maintained their concern about agrarian problems and rural poverty and who wanted to bring the implementation of particular agrarian reforms back into policy were unsuccessful. One important factor contributing to this failure was the absence of real political power to bring back their ideals into the arenas of policy-making processes. In this instance the challenge and political contention against the power holders was unsuccessful.

However, this failure to change the agrarian policy led some of the more stubborn agrarian scholars to find new fertile ground to replant the agrarian

promotion on the idea of 'land reform by leverage' which he introduced in KPA's national workshop on agrarian reform in 1995, see Wiradi 1997.

reform ideas when land conflicts cases and local protests against land expropriations occurred in many places since the mid 80s.³⁶ On the one hand, the issue shift of the pro peasants movement orientation reflected the contribution of these processes, as we will show in Chapters V and VI. On the other, this process led to the emergence of new or transformed political actors that subsequently lead to the formation and spread of rural social movement bases,³⁷ as we will see in the following chapters (Chapter IV to IX).

Although they were only leading to a future issue shift, the formation and spread of social movement bases, processes in this period are still important to recognise and confirm as the cornerstone of the re-emergence of pro-agrarian reform movements in the subsequent decades. Looked at in this perspective, these scholars played a political role that could not have been played by any potential social movement groups after the muzzling of the left in the wake of the 1965/66 events. This political role was to maintain and revitalize the populist agrarian reform ideals, which the regime had attempted to 'expel' from public discourses in Indonesia. It took a couple of decades for these social movements to show results. That populist ideals and campaign bases were consolidated into social movement campaigns, which were to begin in the mid-1980s, in the midst of state repression. We will discuss these campaigns and how new movement coalitions including peasant unions have been formed in the following chapters.

³⁶ About spread of land conflicts in Indonesia will explore in the next chapter (Chapter IV).

³⁷ In contentious politics perspective, as developed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, this process of the emergence of a new or transformed political actors in social movements was defined as 'actor constitution' (see McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 318-321 and Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 72-74 and 216).