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LAND REFORM IN UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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LAND REFORM

in

UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

by

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PROLOGUE

In the body of this paper I have followed the outline requested for the "Spring Review of Land Reform," but the outline does not seem quite appropriate for analyzing land reforms in U. P. or in India, either for their role in Indian history and affairs or for significant comparison with other countries in the world. This is the case for several reasons:

(1) The land reforms in India passed and carried out during the decade following independence were a continuation or culmination of the whole trend of British land policy during the previous century of imperial rule and were not in intent or substance "new," "revolutionary," or a change in direction of policy;¹

(2) Insofar as the land reforms were a part of the restructuring of Indian society, they were a secondary and corollary aspect of the creation of a democratic polity and of a socialistic, modernizing economic policy;

(3) Insofar as the reforms may have affected the future of Indian polity and economy, the effects were primarily upon social status and political power and not upon agriculture and other economic activities;

(4) They did little if anything to change the personnel engaged in managing and working the operating farming units;

(5) Land reform in India is not and cannot be a national policy because matters of land tenure are reserved to the constituent states under the Indian Constitution.

1. Please see the Introduction to Section III for the relevant argument; and also Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, pp. 121-140. Full citations for all works cited are given in the Bibliography.

Immediately after independence and the consolidation of the princely states into the Indian Union, the national government of the Congress Party--and the Congress Party governments in the constituent states--embarked upon a national policy of economic development, democratization of government, and equalization of social, political, and economic status. Issues and policies in regard to universal man- and womanhood suffrage, parliamentary government at the Centre and in the states, local government organs in the districts and villages, the building of heavy and light industries, the spread of banking and modern commercial methods through the economy, the raising of revenue, the financing of development by deficit finance, expenditures upon "normal" government, upon development, upon defense (vis-a-vis Pakistan and China), policies in respect of power and irrigation, agricultural development via extension and community development, the building of a fertilizer industry and the encouragement of state and private production of cement and iron and steel and motors for small scale irrigation, policies in regard to the movement of food from region to region, and the importation of food into India--all these are closely interrelated and constitute a part of the political, social, and economic history of India during the last two decades. To attempt here to describe and to analyze this history, to account for the policies and changes therein, and to attempt to relate them each to land reform would be impossible. Suffice it to say, then: (1) that developments on all fronts have been great during the last two decades; (2) that economic policy and economic history have resulted in an expansion of the Indian economy, including India's agriculture, greater than the rate of growth of population and have created at least the base for a successful industrial economy; and (3) that the major policies and events and changes which have led to this successful development originated and did occur as independently of the land reforms as is possible within a country and within a political/economic system.

For an understanding of these issues I can make no better suggestion than to read George Rosen's Democracy and Economic Change in India. If Rosen's book is a full one, India is a full subcontinent and on grounds of population and diversity is as worthy of the title "continent" as is Europe.

In rural India (and in rural U. P.) the major policies and forces leading to change and development have been the extension and community development services, with the inputs and the financial liquidity which they have provided; the growth of industries producing inputs for a more modernized productive agriculture (fertilizers, galvanized iron, coal dust for brick making, cement, pumps); roads, and the great growth in the private trucking industry; and, perhaps most importantly

of all, the growth in markets for agricultural produce. This growth in markets is a product of the growth in incomes which has been stimulated and maintained by the large government expenditures on development and the large private developmental expenditures which have been the response to the "guaranteed markets" provided by the governments' expenditures.

None of these programs and their implementation were tied to the progress, processes, or administration of the land reforms. Probably the most responsive and rapidly growing state in India is the Punjab, where land reforms of any significant sort did not come until the 1960's but where the inputs and ideas provided by community development and by the new market opportunities were seized and put to efficient use. In marked contrast, U. P. has had the most thorough-going land reforms in India (except for those in Kashmir), but has experienced the slowest rate of agricultural development and been the scene of the largest number of setbacks of any state in India except perhaps Bihar. During the 1950's agricultural output in U. P. did grow along with agricultural output in the rest of India, but not quite so fast, and then in the early 60's not only failed to rise but in a couple of years actually fell. Then, beginning in the early 60's and disguised in output figures by the very bad monsoons of 1966-67, farmers in the western and to some extent the central parts of the state began sinking small wells on their holdings. The result has been that agricultural output is now again rising significantly. However, these developments are to be attributed to a shift in policy from large scale irrigation projects to the provision of loans and help in digging farm wells, a policy shift begun by the U. P. government in the 60's and not related to the land reforms, or even clearly to national agricultural policy.

A peculiarity of Indian politics and thought is the importance of land reform in the rhetoric of political life and economic policy. In this respect, it is very like the position of the cooperative movement in Indian rhetoric. Land reform and cooperation are "good things" and no Indian opposes them; quite the contrary, he emphasizes their importance to the political and economic development of India. However, governments and their administrations do not devote major effort to land reform and cooperation but rather to the development of industry, transport, banking, communications, and commerce. Last month Prime Minister Gandhi again reiterated the importance of pursuing more radical land reform policies in the states, but she and her national government are by no means so influential in state governments as were the Union government and her father a decade to two decades ago--and he always insisted upon the importance of more radical land reform and of more cooperation with little effect.

It would be best to treat the rhetoric of Indian land reform as one treats the perhaps analogous rhetoric of American politics--that is to say, one did not take seriously statements by the Eisenhower Administration that the budget would be balanced, nor does one today take seriously statements of Americans for Democratic Action that inflation must be stopped.

Therefore to emphasize the history of land reform in India, its present status, its future prospects; therefore to devote effort to persuading the Indian government, which is not in any case in control of the state governments which are in control of land tenure, to go in for a more active and radical land reform policy; therefore to devote efforts and resources of the American government to furthering land reform in India; therefore to make land reform a criteria for or guide to aspects of American economic policy toward India--therefore all such emphases and efforts are probably a misallocation of energy, money, and personnel. Indian agricultural development did not, does not, and will not depend upon land reform: success in agriculture will not depend upon carrying through land reforms; land reforms will not contribute much to the success of Indian rural development policy--nor is it likely that land reform will undermine or retard Indian rural development policy. Land reform was a promise of the Congress independence movement; it was a validation and consequence of the shift in political power away from the rich, the upper castes, and the civil administrators to the rural and urban middle classes and castes and to the elected politicians--land reform was a consequence of these shifts in Indian society, not a cause. And the roots of these changes lie in the history of the contact between India and the European World and in the history of the Indian movement for national independence.

A study of the significant policies and changes which have occurred in rural India (and in rural U. P.) over the past two decades would do best to focus upon the related histories of community development, of the politicalization of India's villagers in state legislatures, zila parishads (district councils), samitis (community development block councils), panchayats (village councils), and of the growing commercialization of India's countryside. And it will be found, I believe, that land reform played one of the lesser roles in these histories.

Prologue

I

The Sections of this paper which are most relevant for an understanding of the land reform in U. P. (and in India) are:

II-A	III-A
II-B-1	III-E-2
II-C-1	IV (which is largely covered in the Prologue and V)
II-D	
III-Introduction	V

I. SUMMARY

The Zamindari Abolition Bill was introduced into the U. P. state legislature in 1948, passed two years later, approved by the President of India a year later, and put into effect on July 1, 1952. This reform made the tenants of former landlords in effect tenants of the state government, abolished the rights of noncultivating landholders in the lands they had been leasing to tenants, and prohibited leasing of agricultural land. In the process former private tenants farming two-thirds of the land of U. P. became tenants of the state; former tenants farming another seventh of the land became owners, and former owners farming 20 percent of the land of the state continued in possession of their lands.

Two years later a process of consolidating the fragmented plots of the holdings in the state was begun. The process of consolidation is now virtually complete, I believe, but does not appear to have had much effect upon the size of the holdings, the distribution of holdings, or agricultural practices.¹

Finally, in 1960, an act was passed putting a ceiling of 60 acres on holdings of "fair quality" land, declaring land above this ceiling "surplus" and providing for the distribution of this surplus land to (1) the local government of the village, (2) cooperative societies, and (3) landless laborers. However, the total amount of land which has been or can be--I do not have any figures on this matter--declared "surplus" is probably less than 1 percent of the total arable and certainly not much more than 1 percent.

1. The changes in practices appear to be much more convincingly attributed to community development and commercialization than to land reform.

II. PRE-REFORM PERIOD

A. Introduction: Economic and Political Background

The Planning Commission's characterization of Indian land reforms--"The objectives formulated were to remove such motivational and other impediments to increases in agricultural production as arise from the agrarian structure and to eliminate elements of exploitation and social injustice within the agrarian system"¹--applies in the general way well enough to the state of Uttar Pradesh, so far as it goes, but it does not indicate the intensities of the emotions involved nor explain the history and the reasoning about it which gave rise to land reforms in U. P. The demand for land reform and the resulting legislation was in part a product of the stagnation of agricultural output during the 20th century; in part a humane, a democratic, and a socialist response to the inequalities of wealth and incomes, and of power, status, and opportunities in rural U. P.; and in part a product of the re-evaluation of Indian history; but it was also a consequence of the political history of the Congress movement between the two World Wars and of its alliances with the peasantry.

I shall take up each of these elements in turn, but first it might be well to characterize the regions of U. P., which can be defined both geographically and historically.

Geographically U. P. extends in a rough third-moon westward and north-westward from Bihar, bounded by and extending into the Himalayas to the Tibetan border on the north and similarly bounded by but extending into the Vindhyan Hills on the south. These two borders are economically and agriculturally significant boundaries. The eastern boundary with Bihar and the western boundaries with Rajasthan and Haryana (formerly Punjab) are politically and administratively significant but do not mark any break in economic or agricultural characteristics. The Himalayan districts of the northwest are large, and important in international politics, but they have small populations and are economically and agriculturally insignificant. The northernmost portions of all the northern districts are too steeply mountainous to be either populous or agriculturally important. In the hilly regions along the southern boundary of the state the population is denser and much of the area is cultivable (and some reclaimable, but only with difficulty and at appreciable expense). But it is the central area of U. P., the Gangetic Plain including the Doab area between the Ganges and the Jumna, which contains most of the population, produces most of the agricultural output, and has almost all of the potential for agricultural growth. The eastern third (hereafter eastern U. P.)

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1. Government of India, Planning Commission, Fourth Five Year Plan, 1969-74, Draft, pp. 132-33

II-A

has more rainfall than the central and western thirds of the state, but it also is the most densely populated part of the state, agriculturally the most backward part, and has fewer public irrigational facilities (both large- and small-scale) than the rest of the state. As one moves westward through the state the density of population as well as the average rainfall declines, although throughout the Gangetic Plain the density of population is high by comparison with almost any developed or developing agricultural region outside of India.¹ Prior to land reform, as today, the more progressive cultivating castes were found in the western districts.

Large-scale public irrigation facilities are found in the central and western portions of the state, including some, like the Doab Canal system, dating from the 19th century. The central third and even more the western third of the state now show increasing numbers of private irrigation wells, but these are most accurately ascribed to the decade and policies of the 60's. Despite the existence of large-scale government irrigation projects, in pre-reform days the agriculture of U. P. could be described as essentially dry farming, for the irrigation facilities were built and managed primarily to provide a minimum supply of water to prevent complete crop failure rather than to supply sufficient quantities of water to allow (let alone encourage) the development of irrigation-intensive cropping patterns. This is still the case today (especially in the eastern districts) despite the increase in irrigation facilities, especially in the number of small private wells.²

Historically, the state divides into three major areas. The first are the eastern districts centering around Banaras which were acquired by the British toward the end of the 18th century and in which the Bengal Permanent Settlement system of land tenure was adopted (these districts are still the least developed and the least developing districts of U. P.). During the first two decades of the 19th century the British acquired the southern and the more westerly and northwesterly districts (the "Ceded" and the "Conquered" districts) of what became U. P. The Banaras, Ceded, and Conquered districts were combined at the beginning of the 19th century to establish the North-Western Provinces.

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1. The Chinese river valleys, the Nile Valley, and Japan are obvious exceptions to this generalization.
 2. In spite of a good deal of publicity, notably during the 50's, tube wells have not been particularly important for the state as a whole.

The land system established in these newly acquired districts was, in principle, the mahalwari or village-wide settlement with a headman or group of dominant castemen. It became more commonly known as a zamindari settlement, but it differed from the zamindari settlements of the Bengal Presidency in that the "zamindars" were the local powers-that-were in a village, in part of a village, or in a few villages rather than large-scale tax farmers or petty and not-so-petty rajas. Then, in the 1850's, the British acquired the Kingdom of Oudh, filling in the north central districts of the state. It was in this area that the now notorious Talukdari Settlement was made with local talukdars who ruled over petty kingdoms or principalities embracing several to hundreds of villages. This Talukdari Settlement (of 1868-70) more closely approximated the earlier Permanent Settlements of the Presidency of Bengal than they did the settlements of the first half of the 19th century made with the dominant villagers of the North-Western Provinces.

As a consequence of this history there were, during British rule and at the time of land reform, three distinct kinds of "zamindari" settlement: (1) the (Bengal) Permanent Settlement of the Banaras region; (2) the Mahalwari Settlement of the North-Western provinces; (3) the Talukdari Settlement (in some ways not unlike, but by no means identical with, the Bengal Settlements) in what had been the Kingdom of Oudh. By the 20th century the landholding pattern of the North-Western provinces, including Banaras region, showed some large landholding zamindars but, by comparison with the sizes of holdings of the talukdars of Oudh, these zamindars were by-and-large "small" rather than "large" landholders.¹

In the early part of the 19th century, when the British moved into the North-Western Provinces, what is now U. P. was relatively sparsely populated and much of the area was uncultivated as a consequence of the various invasions of the Rohillas, the Marathas, and the internecine wars following upon the collapse of effective Moghul power at the death of Aurungzeb at the beginning of the 18th century. If the "law and order" enforced by the British was rudimentary by the standards of 20th century western Europe, it was revolutionary compared to the conditions existing during the century prior to British rule. The existence of this law and order--the end of large-scale raids and gross banditry and wars--combined with the origins of the canal system and the maintenance and development of the transportation network (including railroads) allowed and encouraged extensive resettlement and settlement of underutilized and unutilized lands and led to an increase in the productivity and efficiency of land use.²

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1. The zamindars of Oudh, as will appear below in Section B, were not landlords in the sense that the zamindars of the North-Western provinces or the talukdars of Oudh were.
 2. See, for instance, Hla Myint's model in Chapters 3 and 4 of his The Economics of Developing Countries (full citations are given in the Bibliography); and John Q. Adams, Economic Change, Exports, and Imports: The Case of India, 1870-1960, (cont'd)

There is some evidence¹ that output per acre may have risen in some places by as much as 75 percent and the general rise in rents and land prices, in a century when agricultural prices did not rise secularly, indicates that the 19th century was a time of relative prosperity for agriculture in U. P. This period of prosperity came to an end about the turn of the century (sometime between 1890 and 1910). There is little or no evidence of increasing agricultural productivity in U. P. during the first half of the twentieth century, and little evidence of an expansion in the arable area or of increasing irrigation.²

It would be a fair generalization to say that by this time the only area of U.P. which had appreciable underutilized agricultural capacity was the terai and bhabar region lying just at the foot of the Himalayas--and this amounted to only 350,000 acres. This is an area of wet and often water-logged soils and difficult to farm without the creation of extensive facilities.³

unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1966, on file at the University of Texas Library. Myint's model shows how this development occurred generally, and was likely to be the case during the first stages of contact between the developed and the underdeveloped areas of the world; Adam's study of India shows how this model in fact fitted the economic history of India prior to the Second World War.

1. Walter C. Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, pp. 143-44
2. Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, pp. 145-48; George Blyn, Agricultural Trends in India, statistical appendices, passim.
3. It has been largely developed since independence, mostly through the settlement of refugee cultivators from Pakistani Punjab. There were (are) members of progressive cultivating castes, many of them Jats.

It was the economic history of these decades that gave evidential weight to the Congress assertions that British rule had a markedly deleterious influence upon Indian agriculture. The Congress view, as expressed in the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee, Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces¹ was supported by British inquiries in the third decade of this century.²

The economic history of the 19th century will not support the Congress view that British rule was bad for Indian agriculture from the beginning--despite the sincerity and intensity of belief among both leaders and followers in the independence movement that this view was correct--but the view that Indian agriculture, and agriculture in U. P., was stagnant for four or five decades before independence accords not only with the statistical data available but also with the impressions of British rulers as well as their Indian opponents: therefore the views, which British administrators and observers held too, that "something needed to be done" to develop Indian agriculture and that (very probably) a thorough-going land reform was an essential part of the change needed.³

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1. See also Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee.
 2. See Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, Report on Agriculture in the United Provinces (1962), and Report of the United Provinces Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1: 1929-30.
 3. My assertion that British views on the matter were consonant with Indian views is not inconsistent with the absence of such thorough-going reform during British rule. During the decades between the two World Wars the British were limited in the extent to which they could undertake reform by the political principles that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" (i.e. the landlords were the enemies of the Congress) and the primacy of political and administrative problems in the face of Congress activities. Also contributing to the absence of a thorough reform were (1) the British belief in due process, (2) the British penchant for "gradualism;" (3) British faith in "compromise;" and (4) the immensity of the problems of thorough-going reform when the administration was so "extended" in its conflict with the Independence Movement and worldwide British Imperial policy was "retrenchment." However, it should be noted and appreciated that the British did pass and attempt to make effective extensive rent-fixing and security of tenure legislation during the inter-war years and gave their blessings to the U. P. Tenancy Act (XVII of 1939) passed by the Congress-controlled Provincial Legislative Assembly.

The extensive margin of cultivation having been reached with the increase in population during the 19th century, the failure of the agricultural sector to enjoy an increase in productivity per acre during the 20th century was certainly one major impetus to the demands for land reform.

U. P. is probably as good an example--or test case--of the Nurksean proposition that there exist densely populated areas where the marginal productivity of labor is at or close to zero.¹ The problems of measuring unemployment and underemployment in Indian conditions is virtually insurmountable, but the growth of rural population without a corresponding growth in output and the impressions of most observers are convincing evidence that U. P., with some kind of rural re-organization and off-take of population from the land, could have produced as much food and fiber in 1940 as it did in 1900, with perhaps two-thirds of its rural population. Industrialization, which began in the 19th century, accelerated during the inter-war period, but at nowhere near a rate sufficient to relieve the pressure on the land. In fact, the natural rate of increase in the cities was perhaps almost enough to supply industrial and commercial demands for more labor: at least, the proportion of people in industry and other modern urban pursuits did not rise significantly during the two inter-war decades.

Because of this increasing rural population which produced no more, it was hoped--with what cause-and-effect reasoning is not entirely clear--that a land reform program would increase employment opportunities in the countryside. One can assume from the general tenor of the arguments for land reform in U. P. (as in all India) that an increased use of labor would be a consequence of more intensive and productive use of land when the cultivating farmer had title to the land and when, as a result of improved techniques and of investments in the land consequent upon the acquisition of title by the cultivating farmer, the productivity of labor would rise. Economic analysis, however, suggests that the reduction in underemployment in the countryside would occur mostly, if not exclusively, among the cultivating farmers and not among the landless laborers. In fact, such analysis would suggest that unemployment would rise among the landless laborers because the rural supply of labor increases "...in each of two distinct categories--(1) the supply available from the kin of the landholding peasants; and (2) the supply of Harijans. From the point of view of an Indian peasant family, sentiment gives a higher priority to employing a brother

1. Cf. Daniel and Alice Thorner, "Agricultural Manpower in India: Labourers," Economic Weekly, November 9, 1957; do., Land and Labour in India, pp. 21-38, 173-188.

or cousin than to hiring a Harijan; and sentiment is reinforced by the moral obligation to provide for one's kin. Not only, then, should we expect all new employment opportunities to be reserved for the new members of the land-holding caste, but we should also expect that peasant farmers will discharge Harijan laborers in order to replace them with the additional family laborers becoming available."¹

It was certainly the case that Indian leadership believed that equity, ownership, and productivity were equally integral aspects of land tenure systems and land reform. It is also true that quite aside from landholding itself Indian Congress leadership wanted a far more egalitarian distribution of incomes, power, and privileges in the countryside than then existed. Indian social structure was (and is) among the most inegalitarian, among the most hierarchical in the world. The view of the world as essentially hierarchical, a system of relationships between unequals, is a basic perception or pattern of thought among virtually all Indians. The conflicting view of all men as essentially equal and of the "good society" as one in which all men are treated as absolutely equal is held by only a few, highly western influenced Indian political leaders and the modern reformers acting within the Indian tradition.² Although the view of men as equals and of society as egalitarian was (and has been) completely internalized by only a few, it was (and is) equally true and important that these few wielded a disproportionate and often charismatic influence in the independence movement and in the Indian National Congress, and that various aspects of the idea of all men being equal and having equal rights and opportunities did become increasingly widespread in India as the independence movement grew and spread its views. The contrast between the egalitarian ideal and the marked differences in status as one went from top to bottom in the caste hierarchy, the marked differences in wealth between the most-well-to-do and the mass of Indians, and the extreme disproportion between the political power of the dominant caste members in villages and the subordinate ranks in the villages--the strong contrast between ideal and the socioeconomic structure of rural India seemed intolerable to the humane, the democratic, and the socialist strands of thought in the independence movement and to modern Hindu thought.

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1. Walter C. Neale, "The Marginal Laborer in Economics and the 'Marginal' Harijan in Rural India," in The Untouchable in Contemporary India.
 2. e.g., Gandhi, Bhave: both of whom, however, were much influenced by the Christian/democratic/socialist traditions of the west.

The system of land tenure appeared to be an integral part of this inegalitarian society and even, to many, the cornerstone or keystone (as you prefer) of the hierarchical structure of rural India. The systems of land tenure were certainly consonant with the hierarchical structure, unquestionably an important aspect of this structure, and certainly strongly reinforced the inegalitarian nature of Indian society. But that they were the foundation of inequality is much more doubtful, as is the associated assumption that inequality would disappear if land systems were reformed. It seems, rather, that the inequalities of landholding reflected the basic superior/subordinate structure of all Indian social relationships and patterns of thought about them; and reflected as much the realities of relative political power (and ritual prestige) as that power (and prestige) reflected relative economic standing. It would appear that, through the last millenium of Indian history, "clout" in its more elemental forms was more influential in achieving wealth and land than wealth and land have been in achieving "clout."

When the British introduced representative government into the Indian states during the decade of the 30's, they restricted the suffrage to a small minority. One of the demands and promises of the Congress was universal suffrage. Congressmen thought, quite consistently with thought in western democracies, that the enfranchisement of the entire population would not lead to effective representation of the views of many large groups if these groups were left without economic security and therefore the courage to make their views and desires known. Thus land reform--in the sense of creating greater equality of income and wealth and economic security--was thought to be essential to the effective functioning of the promised and intended democratic forms of government at the local as well as at the state and national levels.

In the views of Indians and of many foreign observers, then, purely economic considerations (the desire for growing productivity, the desire for greater employment and income security), morally economic considerations (equality of wealth, equality of effective opportunity), and political considerations (democratic, egalitarian), all combined to give impetus to the Congress proposal that land tenure systems be radically altered upon the achievement of independence; and each of these considerations tended to reinforce, to explain, or to rationalize the others. In short, land reform was "good;" it was economically developmental; it was egalitarian; it was democratic; it was nationalistic; and it was Indian.

B. Land Tenure Structure

The structure of U.P. land tenure before the reforms was complicated. It was possible to find the following classes of landholder (using the term broadly) from "highest" to "lowest:"

- (1) The talukdar, a large landowner in what had been Oudh;
- (2) The zamindar, generally a smaller holder than the talukdar, and found throughout U. P., but mostly outside of Oudh;
- (3) The under-proprietor, a former zamindar in Oudh, whose right to perpetual tenure subject to paying rent to his talukdar was expressly written into the talukdar's settlement;
- (4) The "tenant on fixed rates," a tenant in Banaras division who paid his superior holder a rent fixed in perpetuity;
- (5) The exproprietary tenant, a former owner or heir of a former owner, who could not be evicted so long as he paid a rent slightly lower than the current rents of occupancy tenants;
- (6) The occupancy tenant, who held on terms similar to the exproprietary tenant at rents about one fourth less than hereditary tenants, having acquired his rights by farming the same plot of land for twelve years;
- (7) The hereditary tenant, who paid a rent fixed by the state, and who had acquired hereditary but inalienable rights to cultivate the land by virtue of the tenancy acts of the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties; and
- (8) The share-cropper, who perhaps supplied some of the inputs but who had no security of tenure (although he often share-cropped for the same superior landholder for years).
- (9) A landholder of classes #1 through #8 might employ a laborer who in turn enjoyed a share of the crop.

While there was no plot of land over which each class on the list had a right, the layering could be four, five, and six deep. Further to complicate matters, a single person might have more than one kind of interest in the land: that is, he could be, say, a zamindar on one plot of land and an occupancy tenant on another plot.¹ The Zamindari Abolition Committee found that, as of the end of the 40's, there were 12.3 million individuals listed as holders of land in the records, but 21.6 million separate interests in land.² This ratio of almost two interests per one individual probably understates the ratio because frequently sharecroppers (and always laborers) who worked for a share of the crop were not recorded in the land records. Furthermore, the figure of 12.3 million individual holders may well be an overstatement on account of recording the same person as two or more people when he held land in two more more different revenue records. If families averaged, as is frequently asserted, five members each, then the 12.3 million either included two or more individuals in the same nuclear family or the figures necessarily implied the statistical anomaly of the landholding individuals and their families equalling the total population of 63 million living in U. P. at the time. Since censuses report that about 20 percent of the population depended upon nonagricultural pursuits, even a family size of four would exhaust the population dependent upon agriculture--still a statistical anomaly since there was an appreciable group of landless laborers, generally thought to constitute more than a fifth of the population of the state. Thus it is quite possible that the rural families with one or more interests in land actually averaged as many as three different interests per family.

Whatever the size of the talukdars' or zamindars' ownership holding, the pattern of cultivation throughout U. P. was that of small farm units, managed and farmed by petty zamindars, by one or another of the kinds of tenants, or by share-croppers without any security of tenure. Since tenants on the records also farmed land as share-croppers whose interests were not recorded, and since the records were often (if not almost always) inaccurate, arguments over the exact numbers can last forever. However, an analysis of the holdings of the approximately 12.3 million people whose interests were recorded cannot misrepresent significantly the general situation in U. P. prior to land reform. At the one extreme, 21.5 percent of landholders had holdings averaging one-third of an acre in size; while at the other extreme 1 percent of the landholders held land

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1. Thorner, Agrarian Prospect for India, has appropriately called this complex system "a ladder of rights in land:" see pp. 3-11.
 2. Report, p. 243 and Report 2: Statistics, statements 5 and 6 (pp. 6, 8).

averaging 46.3 acres each. The holders who owned 6.25 acres of land or less--6.25 acres being the "minimum economic holding" as computed and adjudged by the Zamindari Abolition Committee--constituted 86 percent of the landholders. Controlling 47 percent of the total land area they averaged 1.88 acres each. Those holding less than 10 acres, ninety-four percent of the holders with 65 percent of the total area, averaged 2.3 acres each; while six percent of the holders, with thirty-five percent of the total area, averaged holdings of 19.5 acres. The average sized holding of all--at 3.4 acres--probably overstates the average size of operating farm unit since the largest holders almost always subdivided their holding by leasing to sharecroppers (effectively, if not in law), thus dividing their larger holdings into smaller operating units.¹ However, by contrast with the average size of holding of 3 or a little more than 3 acres per holder, 60 percent of the total area was held by landholders whose holdings exceeded 3 but did not exceed 20 acres. Over one-half of total acreage fell in holdings exceeding 6 acres.

While on the one hand these figures indicate extreme skewness in the distribution of land, on the other hand they do indicate that probably at least one-half of the land was held by cultivators whose holdings were at least minimally economic. Actually, a case could be made that over three-quarters of the land fell into holdings which would support, at a biological minimum, a family of four.² On the one hand this meant that one half of the acreage was in economically feasible holdings. But, on the other hand, this did leave some two-thirds of the holders with holdings which, on the average (that is, with the exception of irrigated land), could not be expected to support a family. And none of these figures takes into account the certainly 10 million and perhaps 15 million people in families which had no recorded interest in the land.

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1. The consolidation of a number of very small landholding parcels into larger operating units--as by sharecropping very small units held by widows, minors, idiots, and aged people--had much less effect on the average size of holding than the subdivision into sharecropped operating units of the larger holdings.
 2. (3 acres) x (600 lbs. of grain/acre, about the minimum estimate of output per acre in U. P.) gives an output of over 400 lbs. of food grain per man/woman/child. I pick this figure as an ultimate referent, not because it is even nutritionally satisfactory but because it does provide an income above the "famine line."

Actually, if we do not use the official, recorded landholding figures, but rather begin with the census population (1950) of 63 million people in U. P.; deduct 20 percent as nonagricultural and a further 20 percent (generally thought to be a low estimate) as landless agricultural laborers; then the remaining 38 million people contained about 9 million adult males, which, with about 40 million acres of arable, gives 4.4 arable acres per adult male with some claim to a "property" interest in land. Since census data, particularly the gross rural and urban and age figures, are much more accurate than the land records, figures of an "average holding per adult landholding male" of upwards of four acres and a figure of an "average acreage per rural adult male" of upwards of 3 acres are probably as roughly accurate as we can arrive at for the late 40's. The comparable figures today, based on a population of 91 million in 1970 (estimated) would be 3 acres per adult landholder and a little over 2 acres per adult rural male. The distribution of ownership was even more skewed than the distribution of land in operating holdings. Of the two million persons with zamindari (ultimate ownership) holdings¹ 1.7 million paid a land revenue not exceeding Rs. 25--which implies holdings smaller than 15 acres, averaging about 3.5 acres each. At the other end of the scale, 30 thousand (1.5%) of zamindars had holdings whose land revenue payments exceeded Rs. 250 per holding, or by implication averaging over 700 acres per holding. These large holdings were disproportionately to be found in the districts of Oudh. These talukdars constituted most of the 390 "zamindars" (mostly talukdars?) with holdings whose land revenue obligations exceeded Rs. 10,000 per year, or 23 percent of all revenue payable and who, we may assume, owned approximately the same proportion of arable land in U. P.

In summary form, we may say that the operating holdings were effectively managed by the tenants or by the 1.7 million small zamindars who were, in respect of income, political power, and social status little better off than the typical sort of cultivator. The large land owner was very seldom indeed a manager of his land in any active farming way. He was sometimes an absentee landlord, but frequently a resident of the village, or one of the villages, in which he owned land. My own interviews in the field (1955) and with people who had worked in rural U. P. indicated that the absentee landowner was often to be preferred to the resident, non-farming owner who, being closer to the situation and to the cultivating tenants and sharecroppers, was more able to collect his rents in full and to take advantage of his power by extracting favors, bribes, and extra labor

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1. In her dissent from the Zamindari Abolition Committee's Report, pp. 601, Begum Aizaz Rasul says that the original returns to the Abolition Committee showed 2.9 million zamindars, but that the Committee asked for a recount, upon which a lower number was returned.

from his subordinate clientele. By the end of British rule most of the recorded tenants (over 90 percent) had been given hereditary security of tenure--in law if not in fact--largely as expropriatory tenants, occupancy tenants, and hereditary tenants (classes #5-7 in the list above). How many share-croppers there were is a matter of doubt. Many tenants and small zamindars took some land from other tenants or zamindars on sharecropping arrangements and many also have let out some of their land to other tenants and petty zamindars on cropshares. Furthermore, the line dividing the landless, unprotected sharecropper from the landless laborer who received a share of the crop from the land which he helped farm was so vague as to make the line between sharecropping tenant and laborer impossible to draw.¹

2. Changes

The evolution of tenancy arrangements in U. P. is described below (Section III-B). Here suffice it to say that "protected" expropriatory and occupancy tenants date originally from the third and fourth decades of that century (except in Oudh, where there was no protection of tenants other than under-proprietors until the eighth decade of the last century). Hereditary tenants date from the Acts of 1921 and 1926. By the end of British rule two-thirds of the land was held under protected tenancies, perhaps another one-eighth was directly farmed by petty zamindars, leaving only some 20 percent farmed by tenants-at-will.

Affairs in rural U.P. were certain "in flux" at the time the land reform legislation was passed. From the early 1920's on there had been a number of protest movements, in large part originated, led, or encouraged by the Congress: "no-rent campaigns" and "no-revenue campaigns" in 1931; and as early as 1920 there was rioting against the abuses of power by the talukdars. In the early 1920's the Eka (Unity) Movement spread among the peasantry with the objective of persuading tenants to pay no more than the rents due as recorded in the registers and to insist on receipts for these rental payments. But this movement, like all other movements except the Congress, was short lived. The "no-rent" and "no-revenue" campaigns were led by the Congress, but it is difficult to differentiate the protests on economic issues led by the Congress from its general, widespread agitation against the British on any issue which looked as if it would further the achievement of the goal of national independence.

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1. Wage labor for cash became increasingly common after the First World War, but became a common form of labor only in the last two decades. But even today it is probable--here data is highly impressionistic--that cash wage labor is, and certainly was until, say, 1950, still largely restricted to casual labor at the times of planting, weeding, and harvesting, although cash does and did play a partial role in the total emoluments of "permanent family servants."

There is ample evidence, indeed more than ample evidence, that protest, dissatisfaction, and disaffection were widespread among many rural classes for 30 years prior to the land reforms, but it is difficult to differentiate this economic protest against the systems of tenure from the more general Congress movement for national independence. No purely tenant, primarily economically oriented protest organization lasted for more than a matter of months. What was happening was that agrarian unrest fed the Congress movement for national independence, while the Congress nurtured and supported agrarian protest against the existing system.

C. Land Resource Information

1. Land Availability

The total cultivated area in U. P. was about 38 million acres (and the "owned" area about 44 million acres). There was still some land available, if properly drained and managed, in the terai area lying just below the Himalayas; and with the proper employment of conservation practices, some further land available in the southern, hilly areas of the state. But the still unused but potentially usable land area was not large--the maximum attainable at a reasonable estimate would be five percent--and, it should be emphasized, land under crops included an appreciable portion of land (probably 10 percent and perhaps 20 percent) which might much better have been employed as rough or improved pasturage or in reforestation. It is land which in most parts of the world would never be used as arable. In fact, in U. P. as in the rest of India, the land under crops as a percentage of total land area far exceeds that of any comparable region in the world. Fifty-four percent of the total land area in this state is cultivated, and the uncultivated area consists not only of the area in cities and village sites, land in use for railroads, roads, canals, and other public purposes, but also large, totally unfarmable areas in the steep Himalayan mountains. The figures given above (Section II-A) of 3.2 acres per adult rural male available for agriculture probably overstates the land/man ratio since a good many women among the poorer portions of the population (especially among the landless Harijans) were (and are) always ready, willing, and able to work. Similarly today, the 2.1 acres available per potential male member of the agricultural labor force can also be regarded as an overstatement. An additional tenth of an acre per rural worker from extension of the arable margin through reclamation is probably an overly optimistic estimate.

2. Classification

At the time of the land reforms the soils of U. P. had been classified in each locality by rough-but-relevant rules of thumb. In making the settlements, a Settlement Officer evaluated the land in terms of its relative (local) productivity. Thus higher assessments of the revenues reflect more productive land. Since the revenue assessment was intended to be proportional to the rental value of the land, and since the only use for most land was agricultural, the revenue settlements were supposed to be in some proportion to the productivity of the land. The rough-and-ready system used--topography as it appeared to the eye, the character of the soil as it appeared to the eye and hand, local opinions about the land, its nearness to the village (and hence the amount of manuring it received), and the availability of water--gave at least a reasonable rank-ordering of the soils at the time of the settlement. Within a district, which was settled under the direction of one Settlement Officer, the relative rates of revenue assessment as amongst villages was probably not wildly inconsistent. But since different settlement officers at different times settled different districts--often under revised rules of settlement--all except large differences in the revenue rates are probably unreliable guides to the relative productivity of the soils across the whole state.¹

As of 1950 most of the settlements had been made from 20 to 50 years before and no account had been taken of (possible) changes since the date of the settlement. In carrying out the land reforms, and particularly in re-alloting land under consolidation of holdings procedures, the revenue assessment was used as the primary (but not the only) guide to the value of a piece of land. Errors and falsifications aside, it was probably as good a base as anyone finds in the under-developed world. As of the time of land reform the major surface sources of water had been surveyed and were known but detailed maps were not available, and very little was known of the subsoil flows of water. In the last two decades, since the reforms, further mapping of the water resources, especially subsoil water resources, has been pursued. It would be fair to say that knowledge of the soils and water resources was, at the time of reforms, sufficiently great (when one takes into account the local records) to provide the information necessary to avoid gross mistakes or inequities in paying compensation or re-alloting land--which is a very different proposition from the statement that such information was accurately conveyed to the authorities concerned, or that the authorities concerned acted upon this information rather than upon temptations and fears arising from opportunities and threats.

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1. More recently the Department of Agriculture and the experiment stations and other agencies of the Union and State Governments have been making surveys and analyses of the soils, but the coverage is still spotty and serves more to characterize large regions or small localities than to provide appropriate soil maps of the state.

3. Identification and Titling

"Each and every" plot of land in U. P. had been mapped for the settlements; and "each and every" plot of land was entered in a local register along with the names of everybody who had legally recognized rights in that plot. But this implies an overly optimistic picture of the accuracy and usefulness of the records as they stood in 1950. First, the surveys had often been made "by chain" and boundary markers had been moved or lost. Secondly, there was constant encroachment and re-encroachment upon the lands of others. Thirdly, and most importantly, the entries in the records were themselves corrupted, in some cases simply because the records were not kept up to date, but perhaps more frequently because the patwaris (local record keepers) made entries as instructed by members of the locally dominant castes and faction groups, or as tempted by bribes or by other ties of obligation. These faulty records of right provided the basis for the pre-reform information upon which the reform was based (and upon which the figures in this paper are based) and for the administration of the reforms after the legislation was passed. However, in administering the land reforms, the officials investigated the accuracy of the record of rights and attempted to bring them up to date and to correct them. This proved a time-consuming process since virtually no records of right were complete, or up to date, or accurate. There still remains a good deal of doubt that the records were ever made completely accurate. It is generally agreed that even after the correction of the records they contained sufficient misinformation to deprive numbers who were entitled to rights under the reform of those rights, and to give more than the law intended to those more powerful people who succeeded in falsifying the records. But, taking the 44 million acres involved, far more justice than injustice was done on the basis of the records, and, in the end, title to over 80 percent of the land was transferred to tenants.

D. Rural Production and Productivity.

As indicated in Section II-A, there had been little, if any, growth in agricultural output in U. P. during the first half of this century. Outturn of food grains per acre was remarkably low by any standard: it appeared to vary from 600 lbs. to 800 lbs. per acre (say, 10 bushels per acre but probably seldom more than 15 bushels per acre). Since rice was a "rain-fed" crop, usually without regular sources of irrigation, gross weight of output per acre of paddy or husked rice was, on the average, not appreciably greater than the output of wheat or the millets. Had its entire acreage been devoted to the production of food grains at the low productivity estimate of 600 lbs. per acre,

U. P. would have been just about self-sufficient at a minimal quantity of 400 lbs. per capita for a population of 63 million. However, there was diversification of cropping (see below) so that U. P. should be regarded as at least slightly below the minimal level of self-sufficiency as of 1950 in respect of the staple food crops basic to everyone's diets.¹

There has always been some diversification of cropping in the state. The cultivation of oil-seed crops has a long history and, especially in the southwesterly districts, there has been a large acreage of mustard. During the 1920's and 1930's there was a rapid expansion of the area under sugarcane, largely in response to the building of sugar-mills. This development was most noticeable in the northern tier of districts. But, allowing for the size of the state, sugar was never as successful an economic enterprise in U. P. as it was in Punjab or in the wet areas of the Deccan. Near the towns and cities, especially the KABAL towns (Kanpur, Allahabad, Banaras, Aligarh, Lucknow) and, in the west, Delhi, there was a growth of dairying and some vegetable farming to supply the urban market. But by and large--and despite the existence of small mango groves (especially in the districts of Oudh) and some orchards in the foothills of the Himalayas--it would be accurate to characterize the agriculture of U. P. as producing staple food grains (wheat, rice, millets, and various pulses) without benefit of modern scientific agricultural technology or of much in the way of an assured regular supply of irrigation water. These crops have always been supplemented by dairy products from the low-yielding milch buffalo and some output of oil-seeds and spices. Poultry products were (and throughout most of U. P. still are) insignificant. As of the time of land reform diversification into vegetables, fruit, and commercial crops such as cane and cotton was more prophetic of the future than a dynamic element in the agriculture of the time.² If growth of the newer

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1. Since that time the productivity of agriculture in U. P. has risen, but along with Bihar, U. P. has shown about the least progress in agriculture of any state in the Indian Union. While output per capita is slightly higher than it was twenty years ago, the state can still be regarded as on the margin of self-sufficiency in food production. In fact, the relative constancy of agricultural output during the early 60's in India as a whole consisted largely of progress throughout India combined with some retrogression in U. P.
 2. While short-staple cotton was grown, and some of it was marketed, the production of cotton was limited and it was largely used within the household. It is becoming a much less important crop with the increasing purchases of mill-made cloth.

crops (especially sugarcane, but to a lesser degree also vegetables) were large as a rate, it was a small portion of total output and cultivation of these newer crops was frequently at the expense of acreage devoted to the staples (although not entirely in the case of sugarcane). The effect of the new crops upon indices of total agricultural output and upon the average level of rural or farm incomes was negligible.

There is virtually no evidence about differences in farm productivity by size of holdings or by types or tenure-holders. Guesses have been made that the smallest holders enjoyed a lower productivity, but these guesses were based largely upon the beliefs that more land per acre was devoted to field-dividing bundhs (low mud walls) and that capital-intensity of techniques was lower among the poorest farmers. But since larger holdings were usually divided into small operating units; since virtually all holdings were agglomerations of a number of very small field plots (whatever the sizes of the entire holdings); since much the same techniques of cultivation were used on all plots within a region; it is probable that productivity did not vary much with size or with type of ownership but rather with the caste, region, and occasionally the personalities involved.

E. Rural Population, Employment, and Underemployment

In these respects, as in so many others, one can make general comments and characterizations about the state of affairs with a good deal of confidence but cannot provide even approximate, let alone precise, figures by regions, districts, castes, or social or economic classes. To anticipate the discussion in the following few paragraphs, in respect of the labor absorption capacity of U. P.'s agriculture, it is safe to say that agricultural development in U. P. cannot absorb productively any more people, although it will employ more fully and more productively some (but not all) of the existing rural population. At a rough estimate, a developing, irrigated, and more scientific agriculture will be able to employ full time and productively 15 to perhaps 20 million adult males and there are already more than that number available.

There have been sample surveys and census counts¹ and a number of micro-studies by anthropologists and interested economists.² But

1. See Daniel and Alice Thorner, Land and Labour in India, chapters 10-11 & 13-15 for a critique of the accuracy and meaningfulness of these efforts.
2. For discussions of the problems involved in making the data from such village surveys meaningful, see my "The Limitations of Indian Village Survey Data," Journal of Asian Studies (May, 1958) and "Economic Accounting and Family Farming in India," Economic Development and Cultural Change (April, 1959, Part I).

problems of definition, of overlapping roles, or phrasings of questions, of the meaning of questions to the respondents, and very strong doubts about the accuracy and even honesty of field interviewers make one doubt that the larger-scale surveys give data of more precision than the personal observations of people involved in the study or administration of rural India; and these doubts seem persuasively substantiated by the inconsistency of the results from the various computations (for instance, see the wide variation in estimates for landless labor or for number of zamindars mentioned in Section II-B). The micro-studies often induce more confidence in their specific results, but since they do not constitute a proper sample and the classificatory criteria used by the people who make these studies do not correspond to the criteria used in macro-studies, it is impossible to "blow-up" village survey data or anthropologist's impressions into district or state-wide figures. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I attempt to characterize the situation but not to measure the variables.

During the first half of this century the population of the state, like the population of India, grew at about 1 percent or a little more per annum. In the past two decades this rate of growth has increased appreciably and the Fourth Five Year Plan (p. 30) estimates a current 2.5 percent rate of growth of population. On the face of it there does not appear to be a significant differential in rates of growth of population by residence, by occupation, or by caste--but one cannot be sure. There is a wealth of data buried in the census reports, particularly the earlier census reports. Joseph E. Schwartzberg (Department of Geography, University of Minnesota) has been doing intensive research into the data on caste and regions from the old censuses but until his work is complete it would be foolish to attempt definite statements. From all studies and impressions, it is clear that both population and the available labor force are growing more rapidly than are the productive job opportunities, whether rural or urban, traditional or modern. If industry in Kanpur has been growing sufficiently fast to absorb additional population, industry in Lucknow and Banaras could grow appreciably without calling upon the rural areas for additional labor.

Estimates and analyses of rural employment and underemployment present problems of a different order from estimates in an urban industrial context. Thus, for instance, the rural labor force is largely "unemployed" from mid or late April until the end of June (the hot, rainless season) but where wells have been sunk during the last decade some farmers have been intensively employed during these months in irrigated vegetable farming. Therefore a meaningful estimate of unemployed or underemployed can be made only in the light of the specific opportunities, the particular agricultural cycle in a village, and the local view of what constitutes a "work-year."

Another complication is the wide variation in the seasonal need for labor, the highpoint of demand coming during harvesting in October and early November, in January (cane), and in late March and April (wheat). Thus much of the landless labor is "unemployed" for long periods during the year but intensively employed for short periods. Yet even this picture must be qualified by the division of labor by sex, men being in most demand during planting and harvesting while women and children (but not men) are in occasionally intense demand for weeding during the growing seasons. Numbers of people argue that there is "full employment" at the seasons of peak demand and there is some evidence that this is the case. But, on the other hand, the fact that the rural population grew between 1900 and 1950 without any corresponding growth in agricultural output can be interpreted as evidence that there is an over-supply of labor even in the peak periods and that the apparent "full employment" at peak periods is an adjustment within rural society to the large supply of labor in a socio-political situation in which the loyalty of a large clientele is important to leading farmers and members of the dominant castes.¹ Furthermore, in India, as elsewhere, complaints about the "shortage of labor" are associated with complaints about the attitudes of labor and the level of wages, an association which tempts one to doubt that there is some absolute "shortage of labor." Finally, unpublished data from the 1950's collected by J. Michael Mahar (University of Arizona) indicate that even in untouchable families fathers and elder brothers work a shorter day than do the "lesser" members of the families (which is perhaps an intra-familial adaptation to the oversupply of labor).

There has been a continuous rural to urban migration dating back to the 19th century. In fact, people from U. P. have been migrating as far as the city of Bombay to take up residence and work in the textile factories. But while some of these migrants have taken up permanent residence in the cities, it is also true that many have moved to cities for short to medium term stays and then returned to their villages. Cohn found, in his study of a U. P. village, that whereas less than a fifth of adult untouchable Chamars were employed in towns, over half of the adult males had

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1. Although not about U. P., the points are clearly explained in Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, pp. 43-44; Epstein, Economic Development and Social Change in South India, pp. 72-81; Epstein, "Productive Efficiency and Customary Systems of Rewards in South India," in Firth (ed.), Themes in Economic Anthropology; and also discussed with U. P. in mind in Walter Neale, "Land Is To Rule," ch. 1 in Frykenberg, Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History. Supporting evidence is frequently found in village studies, which, through the time of reform, are well surveyed in Thomas O. Beidelman, A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System.

worked in a city at some time.¹ Although rural to urban migration is easy and one could perhaps say frequent, it was (and still is) highly impermanent and there is no clear, meaningful, measurable definition of migration to provide a number for the numerator in computing a rate of migration. Suffice it to say, the ease of recruiting labor to the cities (an ease which dates back at least a century) and the existence of unemployed and of clearly under-employed in the cities are convincing evidence that the limit to rural-to-urban migration is the absence of remunerative employment once the rural migrant gets to the city, and that neither motive nor opportunity prevents migration from the rural point of view.

In summary, there is an over-supply of labor in U. P., both rural and urban. There is ample opportunity for the expansion of productive employment in each sector without drawing further upon the other sector; and it is not at all clear how a significant increase in the number of productively employed could be achieved in the rural areas.

A rough rule-of-thumb is that a masonry well with a water table 20 to perhaps 30 ft. below the surface with a Persian wheel powered by a pair of bullocks can irrigate about 5 acres of land. If water percolated throughout the year this will allow intensive cropping of land: kharif from June to November; rabi from November to April; and a summer crop from April to June (which will fully and very productively employ a family).²

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1. Cohn, "Changing Traditions of a Low Caste," in Singer (editor) Traditional India: Structure and Change, pp. 209-11.
 2. To my very great surprise, during field work in Etawah district (the "pilot project" area of Albert Mayer's original community development scheme) I discovered that such a farm operation could net upwards of Rs. 2000 or Rs. 3000 and, in a particularly good price year up to Rs. 5000. Although I tried to break down the figures because this rate of net return seemed so enormously high, I could not do so. Such farming operations in the area were rare in 1964-65, but they did occur. However, and this is the point here, while such farm operations required a lot more labor, and at times lots more intensive labor, it did not appear that it caused a large incremental demand for permanent wage-labor. If some of the land in U. P. can be farmed more intensively than these (still few) Etawah farms, a still larger area cannot be farmed as intensively (e.g. the hilly areas, areas in which the water table is more than 30 feet below the surface, land where the drainage is poor). But if we allow two adult males to each such five acre farm (and assume all U. P. can be farmed this way), total employment would approximate 16 million people; which, in family terms, means probably not more than 50 million men, women, and children out of a 1970 population of 91 million in the state (and an appreciably larger population at the future date when such intensive agriculture might actually be achieved).

F. Income Distribution

In pre-independence U. P. the incomes of the urban population were 3 to 4 times higher than the incomes of the rural population.¹ In the past two decades this differential has probably been narrowed-- unquestionably narrowed within the last five years, at least in so far as the cultivating farmers are concerned. On the other hand, landless laborers, except in the western-most districts and in the areas immediately around towns are no better off and probably relatively worse off.²

The more accurate estimates of incomes in India are derived from crop-cuttings for estimate agricultural output, from a few farm cost surveys, and from the returns of the "organized," modern sector firms and from the Agricultural Labour Enquiries, but the estimates of incomes for small-scale industries and for all the service trades and petty dealings in the towns are largely "assumptions." It might therefore be better to stick to "in the ballpark" estimates of incomes for some limited classifications. In 1950 an urban employee in the modern industrial sector would generally have an income of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500. A cultivating farmer with an acreage of 10 to 15 acres would have a similar net income (whatever "net income" may mean: see my two articles cited above, on village surveys and farm accounting.) Entrepreneurial incomes in the developing sectors of the urban economy (other than in petty trades) probably run from Rs. 5000 to as much as Rs. 100,000 (skewed, of course). People in petty services and street trade made less than those in modern employment. A landless laborer made upwards of Rs. 200 per annum, but probably seldom more than Rs. 500.

The income distribution among rural people at the time of independence, or now, is not accurately known. Probably the best way to estimate the distribution of income would be to assume that it roughly corresponded to the distribution of land holdings, as given above in Section II-B-1, but also that from one source or another the incomes of holders of land of less than an acre (or perhaps two acres) was about equal within that group and not much more than the income of the average landless Harijan laborer. Bailey,³ Epstein,⁴ and Mencher⁵ found

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1. Tiwari, The Economic Prosperity of the United Provinces, pp. 262, 270-71.
 2. Rosen, Democracy and Economic Change in India, pp. 165-176, 195-203 discusses the problems of making estimates and provides as good a considered judgment as is or is likely to become available.
 3. Bailey, Caste and the Economic Frontier, pp. 47-58
 4. Epstein, Economic Development..., chs. 2, 5, and 7.
 5. Mencher, Joan. Oral and Written Communications, Winter of 1967-68.

that it was extremely difficult to estimate incomes meaningfully although rank-ordering between groups or between individuals within a village was not so difficult. Income distribution was (and is) highly skewed, with a large portion, perhaps a quarter, perhaps up to a half of the population earning something like the physiological minimum necessary to maintain a rate of increase in the population of 2 percent to 3 percent. Before land reform, while some of the talukdars of Oudh and a few other zamindars had extremely large incomes, even by international standards, almost all of the population probably enjoyed incomes in proportions of "1" (lowest) to "5" or "6", markedly skewed toward the bottom of the distribution.

G. Supplementary Services and Supplies

Prior to independence and the land reforms the major off-farm supplementary services were the merchants and moneylenders, the godowns (warehouses), and the village and small town markets. Off-farm supplies other than locally made plows, wooden harrows, iron mattocks, and the purchase of local seeds were rare.

1. Information

Although the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, with its headquarters near Delhi, was contributing to knowledge of Indian crops, soils, and techniques, there was no effective means of spreading this information throughout the countryside. Similarly, although the Allahabad Agricultural Institute engaged in research in U. P. (as did a few other experimental stations), the results of regional research did not penetrate to the countryside. The only important exception to this generalization was the spread of knowledge about the cultivation of sugarcane, largely through the private and cooperative sugar mills which began to operate in the 20's and grew in number in the 30's. The existence of district officers from the Agriculture Department with a few assistants in a district with a population of upwards of a million people hardly constituted an extension service at all. The rural population was very largely illiterate and there were at that time few if any radios and no programs designed to spread information via the airwaves. Occasionally there was the rare district officer or assistant who tried to spread information and encourage farmers to adopt new techniques, but these instances were so rare as to be negligible in total effect. It is impossible to gauge the effect of word-of-mouth spread of information, but this was almost the only effective network for spreading information throughout the countryside. The Congress did have a network of people extending into many villages, but they were not technologically competent in agriculture and the main thrust of

their effort, understandably, was political and, secondly, social rather than economic. In so far as their activities were economic, they were largely devoted to organizing protests against the land tenure system and its associated rental payments. Nevertheless, the slow spread of some vegetable farming and the more rapid spread of sugarcane growing does indicate that information did spread by word-of-mouth.

2. Credit

For the last century or more there has been no shortage of money-lenders who provide credit to the farming population. However, the moneylender system so operated as to make it impossible to differentiate short, medium, and long term lending, or to estimate the amounts made available for financing crops, for financing capital improvements, and for financing land purchases. From early in this century there were credit cooperatives and cooperative credit officers of the government (Registrars and Deputy Registrars of Cooperative Societies), and official policy favored the encouragement of the cooperative movement. However, the growth of the cooperative movement, while steady, was slow and its total lendings per acre never amounted to one-third of a rupee. Since, in order to achieve "sound" finance, the cooperative societies required the mortgaging of land in order to secure credit, the market for cooperative loans was effectively restricted to landholders who had the right to dispose of their interest in the land--which meant that hereditary tenants after 1921 really did not have access to the cooperative societies. Because of the way it was conducted the Rural Credit Survey did not provide data for computing either the total rural credit outstanding or the relative share of cooperative credit,¹ but it did make clear, what had been assumed all along, that cooperative credit was not a significant source of finance to cultivators.

The only other organized, institutional means of providing credit to farmers was the system of taccavi loans, issued by government officials in kind, consisting of equipment and improved seeds. These loans too did not provide a significant source of finance for crops or for longer term investments.

Most of the credit was provided by moneylenders from nearby small towns and by resident moneylenders (who were sometimes local tradesmen and sometimes local landowners). Their system of lending depended upon a knowledge of the cultivators, upon getting

1. See Daniel and Alice Thorner, Land and Labour in India, pp. 189-224.

cultivators to mortgage their rights in land, and upon their access to people in power locally. Moneylending was often also intimately tied in with the privilege of marketing what the cultivator produced, so that it is difficult to separate the "rate of interest" from the "profits of marketing." It also is difficult to differentiate the moneylending motive from the marketing motive. Since some formally short-term lending was continued year after year and since some of the apparently long-term lending was to tide a man over a particularly difficult spot (crop failure, marriage of a daughter, funeral in the family, death of a bullock) there is no way to sort out the long and the short, the consumption and the investment, and the working and fixed capital components of the moneylender's business. There is widespread agreement that much more of the moneylending was done for consumption purposes than for investment purposes, but whether we are dealing with 70 percent or 90 percent of an unknown total cannot be determined.

The typical reported rate of interest on moneylenders' loans was 24 percent to 50 percent (and sometimes higher), while the typical rate of cooperative society loans was 12 (and sometimes 9) percent. However, since no one seems to have proper access to moneylenders' books; since reports on the rates of interest charged are derived from the stories of borrowers who have reason to exaggerate (if not actually to lie); and since moneylenders do not appear to have amassed the fortunes which would be implied by an effective net rate of interest of 50 percent compounded annually (astronomical in a few years), it would not be unreasonable to conclude that effective rates of collection were significantly below the formally stated rates of interest. Observers do agree that moneylenders did postpone demands for payments and did make adjustments when it was clear that it would be unreasonable to try to collect in the particular circumstances--so that, at a guess, moneylenders effective, collected rates of interest may have run from 15 to 20 percent.¹ But one thing is certain: the game as played by the moneylenders, and the game as understood by the borrowing farmers, was not an economically productive or developmental game. On the other hand and in the circumstances, without access to supplies, information, or the wherewithal to engage in modern productive capital investment, it is not at all clear that the absence of credit was significant contributor to stagnation in agricultural output. That is, without the appropriate infrastructure for bringing supplies to the farmer and making their use effective and for providing the farmers with growing and profitable markets, it is doubtful that any appreciable increase in the supply of rural credit would have had the effect of turning a stagnant into a dynamic rural economy.

1. Since the question of how moneylenders conduct their business is emotion laden, a literary field of myth and horror story, and an area of sparse data, "facts" should rightly be regarded as matters of "faith." And this applies no less to my guesses in the text above than to any other estimates.

3. Supplies

As stated in the introductory paragraph to this section, there were few improved seeds made generally available in U. P., no fertilizers to speak of, let alone pesticides or modern farm machinery. In so far as there was the provision of improved seeds (and cane-cuttings) they were provided by the few government officials of the agricultural department on taccavi loan (or by the sugar mills). Cooperatives were allowed to, even encouraged to, supply improved farm inputs, but they were not a major source of supply.

4. Infrastructure

As indicated in Section II-A, irrigation in U. P. consisted of large-scale public canals, some smaller scale public canals, and some wells. About 11 million acres were reported under irrigation at the time of independence, but since so much of the public irrigation facilities were designed to prevent famine rather than to provide water for an intensive cropping pattern, the truly irrigated areas was probably less than one-half that amount. The reader should refer to Section II-A for further comments on irrigation. Almost the entire amount of the irrigated area was in the western part of the state.

Rural roads were few; they were more in the nature of rough, rutted, cart tracks than roads. There were matted or macadamized roads between the major towns; and extending from one end of U. P. to the other was the U. P. section of the Grand Trunk Road. The cities of U. P. were well served by comparison with most of the underdeveloped world by the railways, largely built in the 19th century. The heavy demands put upon the Indian railway network during the Second World War, the impossibility of maintenance (to say nothing of expansion) at that time, and the subsequent growth of the Indian economy since independence had put a strain on the railroad network; but except for the last decade before land reform the basic transport infrastructure may have had some excess capacity. This was not true locally in rural areas where there was very little in the way of a modern transport network--a disadvantage to the agriculture of the time which has probably been much overrated since the native two-wheel bullock cart can get to market over tracks without benefit of modern roads.¹

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1. For evidence that modern roads are not closely related to the marketing of rural produce, see Walter C. Neale, Harpal Singh, and Jai Pal Singh, "Kuruli Market: An Economic Geography of Marketing in Northern Punjab," Economic Development and Cultural Change (January, 1965), pp. 125-168.

5. Crop Procurement and Marketing

A large portion of the output of the farmers of U. P. was never marketed at all. A further large portion was marketed locally within the village or turned over to the local merchant or moneylender who stored it and sold it to villagers later while they were waiting for their next crop to come in, or for seed. No one knows what proportion of the total crop never left the village, but estimates of two-thirds to three-quarters do not seem unreasonable. Until the 1950's a good deal of the crop which was marketed outside the village was bought by merchants and petty traders who came to the village, bought there, and transported to the larger rural markets. Another portion was brought by the farmers to these rural markets. But either way, there is general agreement, the farmer did not do very well. First, in order to repay debts accrued during the season (a common occurrence) and to raise money to pay the rent or the land revenue, the farmer marketed the crop very shortly after the harvest. The result was a most marked seasonal dip at the time of harvesting (30 to 40 percent). Also, the purchasing merchants and agents were notorious for false weighing, for false reporting, and for cheating the farmer on the statement of the amounts he had borrowed prior to the harvest.¹

The problem was not one of technical monopsony; but in many cases the effects may have been much the same since the farmer felt obliged (or was obliged by the anticipation of further credit or the threat of physical abuse) to market through his moneylender-merchant and in any case was neither sufficiently powerful politically nor sophisticated commercially to deal "at arms length" with the specialists in the market. I do not believe that any satisfying study has been made of the specific relationships between moneylenders, petty traders, moneylender-merchants, and others in the rural "bulking" markets and the chain of wholesaling to the towns and cities. But the situation in this respect would seem to have been moderately competitive. Farmers, townsmen, and others accused the baniya caste merchants of rigging the market; baniya merchants accused Marwari merchants of rigging the markets--but these charges appear in form, in lack of substantial specific evidence, and in historical context to be but the common response of people to merchants, merchandising, and markets during a period of increasing commercialization. Even in the villages there was probably much less monopoly than has been commonly asserted; for although there were certainly many villages with only one moneylender or one contact with the mercantile world, in many other villages there were several moneylenders or other contacts with the larger mercantile world. The strong element of monopoly stemmed not from the economic structure of the village or rural markets, but from the social and political nature of alliances and factions of patron and client in a multiplex set of tenure, labor, marketing, moneylending, kinship, political, caste, and

1. Which kind of cheating, if it were as common as it was reported to have been, throws further doubt upon the relevance of the formally stated interest rate as a measure of the cost of credit.

religious relationships. In fact, an analysis of the rural situation in terms of monopoly and monopsony, or interest rates and prices, is not nearly so relevant to an understanding of how rural India operated as is an analysis in terms of power, faction, and of access to opportunity and knowledge.

The prices paid to farmers were not stable, but it is doubtful that the fluctuations in prices had much to do with the stagnation of agriculture in U. P. Secularly, prices were rising during the first three decades of the period of stagnation, and the spreading commercialization of agriculture actually accelerated during the period of depressed prices after 1929. There was official procurement during the Second World War, as there has often been since; but, at least until quite recently, most output evaded or avoided the procurement officers. Procurement has been effective enough to feed the towns, although not effective enough to prevent the townsmen from feeling that prices have risen too rapidly and that they are the victims of the merchants ("speculators") engaged in wholesaling foodstuffs. Marketing cooperatives were (and are) insignificant in the purchasing, wholesaling, and distribution of agricultural produce (with the single significant exception of sugar processing and marketing cooperatives).

During the first half of this century, the marked weaknesses in the marketing network were: (1) multiple relationships between people in the rural society such that one could not choose to deal independently with different buyers in an open market because to do so would jeopardize a large number of other important relationships; (2) the farmer's need to sell immediately at the time of harvest; (3) ignorance of (a) market opportunity and (b) how the merchants kept their accounts and did business; and (4), perhaps most importantly, the general poverty of the country and hence the low level of demand of agricultural produce.

These problems have been magnificently cured by the growth of the Indian economy and the great rise in the monetary demand for foodstuffs, particularly in the last 10 years. In fact, today the marketing problem is one of assuring a flow of produce from countryside to town at what townspeople are willing to accept as "reasonable" prices.

H. Peasant Associations and Power

Prior to independence there were really no effective peasant and farmer associations in U. P. of any duration except the association of the cultivating tenantry, emotionally and sometimes politically actively, with the Congress movement. For short periods riots and refusals to pay rents were the weapons of protest and bargaining. But taking the period from 1920 to independence as a whole one can say that the effective leadership in the rural areas was Congress leadership and that this leadership directed its efforts toward organizing a mass national movement directed toward the transfer of power from the British to the Indians.

The pressure directed toward reform of land tenures--which was the major rural reform objective of the pre-independence and immediately post-independence period--was largely formulated, given focus, and carried through by the Congress, which, with the coming of universal suffrage, depended upon support from the rural electorate, but had itself the major organized network of political power and did not depend on independently powerful local organizations. Whereas British government prior to the Reform Bill of 1832 has been described as aristocracy tempered by rioting, the history of peasant and farmer movements in U. P. can be characterized as "Congress, reinforced by rioting."

III. LAND REFORM PROGRAMS

Introduction

As stated in the Prologue to this paper, the post-independence land reforms in U. P.--"The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950" and "U. P. Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1953"--are best thought of as the culmination and final product of a century and a half of tenure policy and legislation under the British, rather than thought of as a new departure for post-independence agrarian and agriculture policies. I shall therefore review this history before taking up the post-independence legislation in Section III-A.

Five major and somewhat overlapping periods can be discerned in the history of British land policy in U. P.: (1) introduction of British concepts and laws, 1800-1833; (2) adaptation of land policy to existing Indian structures and processes, 1833-1859; (3) the post-Mutiny Settlements in Oudh, 1859-1870; (4) extension of tenant rights without "undue" violation of the precepts of property and market behavior, 1870-1903; and (5) transfer of property rights to tenants, and restriction on the content of the "total package of property rights," 1903-1939.

During the first period the British assumed that the world was either built on the model of ideas, laws, and processes of late 18th and early 19th century England, or that such ideas and arrangements were the proper ones for all peoples everywhere. It was assumed that, given incentives, land owners would improve their holdings, encourage their tenants to adopt improved practices, and generally act as progressive and responsible economic and political leaders in the countryside. Before this period was over--in fact during the second decade of the 19th century--it had become clear to the officers of the East India Company that their ideas and procedures did not fit Indian conditions, that their policies were either incapable of being administered or were causing more troubles than they were benefits. But it was not until the 1830's that policies were changed. At this time it was recognized that there were many kinds of customary or informal rights in the land enjoyed by those beneath the top level of the rural social, economic, and political hierarchies; that justice required that these subordinate rights be protected; that orderly administration of the countryside also required that these rights be protected; and that these rights could only be protected if recorded and enforced by British officials and their Indian subordinates in the Revenue Administration.

III

There was then a period of two decades in the North-Western Provinces during which Settlement Officers attempted to record the rights of those who held subordinate interests in the land. The basic principle was that those who had been cultivating on what they and their superiors regarded as a permanent basis, who had inherited their cultivating rights from their fathers and who had expected to pass on these rights to their sons, should be listed as "occupancy tenants" who could be evicted from their holdings only if they failed to pay the annual rents; and in making the settlements, the Settlement Officers tried to record the legitimate claims to occupancy rights and to fix the rent for those holding occupancy rights at about three-quarters of the rents paid by other, unprotected tenants. If historians doubt that the Officers managed to record anywhere near the total of those cultivators who were in principle entitled to occupancy rights; if it is pretty clear that powerful people could deprive occupancy tenants of their rights; nevertheless the objective of the British was clear--to protect the lower orders of cultivators in the countryside--and the primary course of British policy in U. P. was set.

Bengal Act X (which applied also to the North-Western Provinces) was passed in 1859 and provided that any tenant who had cultivated the same plot for 12 years (the "12 Year's Rule") was to be considered an occupancy tenant. This provision could be regarded as the culmination of the effort to record all tenants who "really" had occupancy rights and therefore as the end of the period 1833-1859; or it could be regarded as the first of the efforts to create legislatively classes of protected tenants, as described below, beginning with the Oudh Rent Act of 1886 and continuing throughout British Rule. That it was passed in 1859 immediately after the Mutiny, and that it was extended to the North-Western Provinces immediately is evidence that the period of the settlements with the talukdars of Oudh (described in the next paragraph) was an exception to the trend and to the intent of the British policies in regard to land and tenancy.

The outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 in the Kingdom of Oudh, which had been annexed the year before, and its spread through much of North India brought a halt in the progressive recognition of the rights of tenants. This was an hiatus in policy, not a move toward what the British administrators regarded as a better state of affairs, and was induced only by the power of the talukdars and the behavior of the peasants in Oudh. The peasants rallied to their traditional leaders, although by modern standards they had been abused and exploited by these same leaders, and although British policy had

been to grant more rights in the land to the lower orders of society than they had previously enjoyed. It was because of this mass support which the traditional leadership of Oudh received from the lower orders during the Mutiny that the British made the famous, or infamous, talukdari settlement with the old leaders, a settlement which gave the cultivating peasantry far fewer rights and privileges than the British had already granted to the cultivating peasantry in the rest of U. P.

As soon as matters had been settled with the talukdars (perhaps to the dissatisfaction of both talukdars and British administrators), the British reverted to the policy of protecting the rights of those beneath the "owners" with whom the settlements had been made. The British were hesitant to record additional rights in the area of Oudh, having just promised the talukdars that they would not do so, but in the 70's passed further legislation extending and attempting to secure the rights of occupancy tenants in the North-Western Provinces. By 1886 the British had become so dissatisfied with the behavior of the talukdars that they limited the enhancement of rent for all tenants to once in every 7 years by not more than 6.25 percent.

Beginning in 1903 with the passage of the "Bundelkhand Encumbered Estates Act" and "The Bundelkhand Alienation of Land Act"--which restricted the ownership of land in this area in southern U. P. to those who were members of "cultivating castes," in order to prevent money-lender and merchant caste people from gaining title to land--the British embarked upon a policy of increasingly rapid transfer of the substantive rights in property to the cultivating tenantry. For 20 years there was no further significant legislation but in 1921 "The Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act" and in 1926 "The Agra Tenancy Act" created "statutory tenancies" which gave life tenancies to tenants-at-will, whose heirs could hold the land for five years on the same terms as the deceased. "The Tenancy Act of 1939" turned the "statutory" tenants into "hereditary" tenants whose heirs held on the same terms in perpetuity, and it formalized permanently the system of having government officials fix the rents of tenants, a system which had originally been created by the emergency legislation of the 1930's which was designed to alleviate the distress of falling prices and the rising burden of debt. Whether this Tenancy Act of 1939 should be regarded as "Indian" because it was passed by an elected legislature of Indians, or as "British" because the British held the veto power and the electorate was limited in franchise, is not important. In either case, the creation of hereditary tenancies and the continuing virtual elimination of the rights of "owners" to evict tenants or to enhance rents was a continuation of a trend clearly marked, as one traces

backward, by the statutory tenancies of the 1920's, the restriction of ownership to cultivating castes in Bundelkhand in the first decade of this century, the limitation of rents under the "7 Year's Rule" in the 80's, and "12 Year's Rule" of 1859, Thomasson's Instructions to Revenue Officers of 1844, and the policy of recording the rights of those who had recently lost landlord status in the 1830's under Regulation VII.

A. Legislation

Immediately after independence the U. P. Legislature passed "The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950" and shortly thereafter the U. P. Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1953." These two acts were "the land reform program" of U. P.

The major provisions of the Zamindari Abolition Act are easily summarized:

(1) Former talukdars and zamindars and occupancy or hereditary tenants who had the right to transfer land by sale (there were few of the last two classes) were given bhumidhari tenure. Bhumidhari tenure allowed the holder to use his land as he pleased or sell it or transfer it, provided (1) that he did not transfer it to a recipient who would then hold more than 30 acres; (2) that a mortgagee could not take possession of the land; and (3) that the bhumidhar did not lease out the land. His only other obligation was to continue to pay the land revenue as assessed before abolition.

(2) Other protected tenants--occupancy and exproprietary tenants, and hereditary tenants were the major classes--became sirdars. Sirdari tenure allowed the holder to use the land for any agricultural purpose (broadly interpreted) so long as he paid to the government of U. P. the amount he had formerly been recorded as paying in rent to his superior holder. However, the sirdar was not allowed to sell or to mortgage his land; and, of course, was not allowed to lease it out. A sirdar was (and is) allowed to become a bhumidhar by paying 10 to 12.5 times his annual rent to the government, in which case his future annual payments to the government are reduced by one-half and in all other respects he becomes a bhumidhar.

(3) The zamindars and talukdars were compensated at rates which might best be regarded as quasi-expropriational. Zamindars were paid 8 times their net rentals (some moderately complex procedures for determining this figure) and then were also allowed a rehabilitation grant based upon the amount of land revenue they had been paying.

The rehabilitation grant varied from 20 times the previously paid land revenue for those zamindars who had paid Rs. 25 or less per year in land revenue to zero for those who had paid more than Rs. 10,000.¹ This procedure was adopted because, whereas the Indian Constitution would not permit discriminatory compensation, it was felt that the smaller zamindars were not in a different economic position from the protected tenants. Therefore the quasi-expropriational compensation of 8 times the net rents² was sweetened for the poorer zamindars (who, it should be noted, were also Congress Party supporters) by rehabilitation grants such that the effective multiple for the smaller zamindars averaged 25 times their previous land revenue payments on the land they had to surrender to tenants-become-sirdars.

1. The actual multiples were:

Land revenue	Multiple
Not exceeding Rs. 25	20
Exceeding Rs. 25 but not Rs. 50	17
Exceeding Rs. 50 but not Rs. 100	14
Exceeding Rs. 100 but not Rs.250	11
Exceeding Rs. 250 but not Rs. 500	8
Exceeding Rs. 500 but not Rs. 2000	5
Exceeding Rs. 2000 but not Rs. 3500	3
Exceeding Rs. 3500 but not Rs. 5000	1
Exceeding Rs. 5000 but not Rs. 10,000	1
Exceeding Rs. 10,000	0

2. More expropriational than the multiple would indicate, since the payment of compensation was in 2.5 percent bonds payable in installments over 40 years, hardly a "market" investment.

The Consolidation of Holdings Act provided for compulsory consolidation of holdings under government supervision. The idea was to draw up a scheme for each village, in consultation with the Land Management Committee of the village panchayat (council), such that cultivators would receive one plot in each of three "blocks" demarcated upon the basis of the crops grown in the village, the quality of the soil, irrigation facilities, and "fluvial action of any river." The "allotment of plots...shall be made on the basis of the rental value thereof," provided that the total of the new acreage was within plus or minus 20 percent of the holder's former acreage (Section 15 of the Act). Because of a shortage of personnel the implementation of this act has been proceeding over the last 16 years and is now, I believe but am not sure, virtually complete.¹

Both pieces of legislation had widespread support; the Congress Party was in the vast majority in the state legislature and was the originator of the legislation; the Union Parliament passed a constitutional amendment prohibiting courts from sitting in judgment upon the fairness of compensation in order to validate this (as well as other) land reform; and there has been no slightest indication since that any political party wished to reverse the legislation. The only articulate people to oppose the legislation were the wealthy zamindars and talukdars. Recently there is evidence that the landless are not happy with the results of the act--see F. Thomason Jannuzi's paper for this Review--but at the time of the passage of the Act, its implementation, and immediately thereafter this group was politically unorganized and inarticulate.

B. Institutional Arrangements

The reform legislation was carried out by the officers of the Ministry of Revenue deputed for the purposes of recording the new rights to land and then of consolidating holdings under the Consolidation Act. This did involve the appointment of additional officers to the Revenue Department (largely in the Pradesh (State) Civil Service), but since the Revenue Department, under the District Magistrate (Collector was his role in the Revenue Department), did the work the implementation of the program did not involve the establishment of a new authority.

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1. I have no more information on the ceilings on holdings than that presented in Section I and that in these proceedings compensation is relatively generous: upwards of 80 times the land revenue payable upon bhumindari land or upwards of twenty times that payable on sirdari land, in 3.5 percent bonds. I regret that I have no other information on the progress of this program of enforcing ceilings on holdings.

In U. P. the principle officer assigned to carrying out the land reform legislation was the officer who had served as secretary to the Zamindari Abolition Committee which had originally drawn up the legislation. This clearly indicates the high level government support already made obvious by the primacy which the now-governing Congress Party had put upon land reforms for three decades.

C. Program Objectives

The objectives--that is, the anticipated consequences--were several, and each was considered such an integral aspect of the others that it is not possible to attribute a rank order of priority:

- (1) To redistribute property rights in and control over the use of land from non-cultivating "intermediaries" to "cultivating ryots;"
- (2) To redistribute income from the (undeserving) rich to the (deserving) poor;
- (3) To rectify the "injustices of British Rule;"
- (4) To create a more egalitarian, more socialistic society;
- (5) To provide opportunity for and to stimulate the growth of cooperative societies--credit, multi-purpose, farming, and voluntary consolidation societies;
- (6) To give the cultivators the incentive to improve their farming practices, to invest in their land, and to raise the productivity of agriculture as well as the incomes of each family.

In the argument for abolition, most completely expressed in the Report of the Zamindari Abolition Committee, the last objective received the greatest weight but was also regarded as an inevitable consequence of the achievement of the other objectives. The only clearly quantifiable aims were ultimately to limit the holding of any bhumidhar or sirdar to 30 acres and (with a good deal less force or probability) to create minimum sized holdings of 6.25 acres.¹

D. Program Implementation and Enforcement

As indicated above, the major provisions of the Zamindari Abolition Act were carried out quickly by the existing Civil Service. Implementation presented no great problems other than the accuracy and honesty of the records because the new kinds of rights in land--bhumindhari or sirdari--followed from a literal application of the provisions of the Act to the previous kind of ownership use or tenancy recorded in the village records. As for accuracy and honesty, it is impossible to state how many tenants who had a right to become sirdars failed to become such on some or all of their land. There is widespread agreement that some did fail to gain the rights to which they were entitled; and the more radical the Indian observer, the more he is inclined to believe that the number was large. But, as Section D-1 makes clear, four-fifths of the land went to former tenants.

1. This aim was based upon computations of the "minimum economic holding."

1. Redistribution of Land Ownership

Briefly, the land of religious foundations, not a terribly significant amount, was given to the tenants on this land but there was no government arable to be turned over to tenants. A limit of 30 acres was set upon the future acquisition of land (more recently reduced to 12.5 acres) but if one of the larger zamindars received over 30 acres because he had been cultivating it by himself or with hired labor, he did not lose the excess above 30 acres. No holding of less than 6.25 acres was to be sub-divided, but this was unenforceable in practice (since sons could divide effectively without recording the division) and has been totally ignored by the administration.¹

The new proprietors were either the former zamindars on the land they had cultivated themselves or with hired labor; or were the former tenants on the land. The number of farmers after reform were approximately the same as before reform, the reform transferring titles but not changing the operating holdings. After the land reform 18 percent of the area was held by bhumindhars who had been zamindars; 13 percent by tenants who had acquired bhumindhari rights by payment of a multiple of the rent; 67 percent of the area was held on sirdari tenure (and less than 2 percent on other, temporary tenures). Thus over 80 percent of the land area had been acquired by former tenants.²

2. Changes in Tenancy Systems

In principle all forms of tenancy (other than the sirdari tenancy under the state) were abolished except for the rights of widows, minors, lunatics, and soldiers to let their land. The principle could not be, and has not been, totally enforced in practice because (1) it is still virtually impossible to differentiate between the hired laborer who is paid in kind and the sharecropper; and (2) both holders of land (bhumindhars and sirdars) and others (whether bhumindhars, sirdars, or landless laborers) who wish land (or more land) to farm can agree informally to sharecrop. Some village studies show letting of land varying from 9 percent to 26 percent on cropshare;³ another study shows 10 percent of the land sharecropped in one village;⁴ while a third reported that 0.2 to 19.1 percent of the land in 8 villages in the western portion of U. P.

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1. When I asked administrators if this provision was enforced, they smiled and said "Don't be foolish all your life; take Tuesdays off."
 2. For greater detail, see Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, p.241.
 3. Singh (Baljit) Next Step in Village India, p. 33.
 4. Gupta, (S. C.) An Economic Survey of Shamaspur Village, pp. 24-34.

was leased out.¹ The range of evasion may then lie between zero and 20 percent; but where in that range it lies for the state as a whole no one, I am sure, has any solid information.

3. Colonization

The only colonization was of the bhabar and terai lands lying along the foothills of the Himalayas. These lands were given to refugees from Pakistan. The total area amounted to less than 350,000 acres. These lands were formerly uncultivable, and were reclaimed in order to re-settle refugees from Pakistan. The program was not a part of the land reform program in U. P., although the settlers did acquire rights under the U. P. laws.

4. Consolidation and Enclosure

The boundaries of plots have been marked for upwards of a century, frequently by low earthen barriers (bundhs), and each plot numbered and recorded.

How successful consolidation has been is not clear. Certainly in some areas (e.g. Lucknow District) the number of plots has been reduced significantly. From other areas there are reports that consolidation even increased the number of plots. In the light of the human penchant for "bitching," it is probable that in the state as a whole the number of plots is much fewer, and that the reports of increases in the number of plots reflect exceptional cases, or are exaggerations. Nevertheless, for every account of a happy, mutually satisfying realignment of plots one can find an account of unhappiness--and often of consolidation officers taking bribes to falsify records or to over-rule decisions of the Land Management Committees. In summary judgment, land consolidation has probably been on balance beneficial, but not particularly important, and not particularly popular.

5. Classification, Identification, and Titling

The techniques of recording plots and interests therein were described in Section II-C-3. The local records were supposed to be brought up-to-date and corrected at the time of land reform. Certainly officers of the Revenue Department attempted to do so; and certainly the records were improved. But exactly how completely, again no one knows. However, with over 80 percent of land now

1. Mekerjee (P. K.) and Gupta (S.C.) A Pilot Survey of Fourteen Villages in U. P. and Punjab, p. 29.

belonging to former tenants, whatever the gains-by-inaccuracy-and corruption made by zamindars and talukdars, mostly the land went to tenants--but how well some tenants of dominant castes defrauded their tenant-brethern of lesser power, again we are in ignorance.¹

E. Financial Aspects

1. Valuation Procedures

The issue of how much compensation to pay was argued in terms of "fair market value," "fair market value if the zamindars had not cheated and extorted," "fair market value less value of the rights the British should not have given the zamindars," "what the zamindars deserved" (nothing), and "what the state could afford to pay" (without putting an additional burden on sirdars-to-be)--all in the context of the constitutional provision that compensation had to be paid. In the result the decision was to pay about "what the state could afford," biasing the payments toward the smaller zamindars (as explained in Section III-A).

Since the amount of land revenue assessed was supposed to reflect about 40 percent of the rental value of the land, since the legal rents were recorded in village registers, and since there was no other practicable way to value the millions of plots, the devices of paying compensation based on rents less (assumed) costs of ownership and rehabilitation based on land revenue were adopted. Valuation thus was (quasi-) automatic.

2. Program Financing

a. Landowner Compensation. See Section III-A above, including footnote.

The larger landowners did not want to relinquish their land before, during, or after the terms of compensation/rehabilitation were enacted. Since they wanted the land with the power and prestige it had brought them--quite aside from the income--it is doubtful that any compensation less than lush bribery would have satisfied them. After passage of the Act they sued on the grounds that the compensation was inadequate, but an amendment to the Union constitution banned that ground. The important point is that they no longer had the power to add "effective clout" to their dissatisfaction.

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1. It appears that fraud or other injustice did not deprive groups "wholesale," but rather that the powerful (and/or rich) received a little more than the government intended, the weak (and/or poor) a little less.

Far from protecting landowners against inflation, the issue of 2.5 percent bonds amortizing over 40 years was virtually a guarantee that much of the apparent compensation would prove illusory. No special provisions were made to induce ex-landlords to invest in industry, but in the emerging Indian planning system the center and state governments were ready to provide finance for industrialization and individual voluntarism was not needed. What appears to be happening (or was in the 60's) is that (some of) the sons of the larger zamindars and talukdars are using the remaining proceeds of compensation and rehabilitation bonds to invest in agricultural improvements and small-scale commercial and service enterprises. But this also appears to be the result more of a new generation operating in a new context of development than of former landlords taking to commerce and industry.

b. Peasant Repayment

The effect of fixing the land-revenue payments of the sirdars at the rents they had formerly paid to the superior landholder was to make the whole land reform operation just about self-financing. Computations based upon land revenue collections immediately before (1951-2) and immediately after the reforms (1952-3), and approximations of the costs made by the U. P. government in 1854, show an increase in the land revenue collections of Rs. 118 million against costs (including consequential losses of other revenue) of Rs. 98 million for a net gain to the state of Rs. 20 million.¹ Later computations (for 1956-57) show an actual loss of Rs. 3 million per year and as much as Rs. 43 million a year if actual collections rather than revenue assessments are used in the computations.² Some of the difference between the two computations occurs because Singh and Misra allowed for costs incurred prior to July 1, 1952. Another difference occurs because revenue collections in 1956-57 were only 82 percent of assessments whereas collections in 1952-53 were 96 percent of assessments. The Singh/Misra computations also include interest at 4 percent both on the Zamindari Abolition Compensation bonds (instead of the 2.5 percent actually paid) and on the Rehabilitation Grant bonds (instead of the zero percent actually paid), on the grounds that this was the alternative cost in the market to the U. P. government. This raised their estimates of cost by about Rs. 64 million, and in addition they add in Rs. 18 million for the amount of revenue increase which could have been expected if the Zamindari Abolition Act had not postponed resettlements of revenue demand in all areas for forty years. Thus reconciled, the two estimates are

1. Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, pp. 246-48.

2. Singh and Misra, A Study of Land Reform in Uttar Pradesh, pp. 114-118.

only about Rs. 20 million apart (Neale, plus Rs. 20 millions; Singh/Misra, plus Rs. 39 million as against minus Rs. 43 million). It is probably therefore fair to say that the costs of conducting the operation, paying compensation, and paying rehabilitation grants was just about balanced by the increase in land revenue resulting from the state collecting the former rents as land revenue. After forty years the entire costs will have been amortized and the state, without any change in revenue assessments, will have increased its annual revenues by upwards of Rs. 100 million. In summary, the capital and operating costs of the land reform were born by the tenants-become-sirdars who, however, were paying no more than they had before.

There was no provision of guaranteed crops prices, but the normal revenue procedures for collecting arrears of revenue (in extremis by evicting the sirdar) were continued and, in so far as any administrative system can, guaranteed the financial arrangements.

c. Government Expenditures

The major costs to the government were the compensation payments of Rs. 700 million; the rehabilitation grants of Rs. 565 million; other compensation (including that to religious trusts, capitalized), Rs. 208 million; and administrative costs, Rs. 100 million. These total costs were partly defrayed by the Rs. 406 million which had been paid by the sirdars to acquire bhumindhari rights,¹ and, as mentioned in Section III-E-1-b, the remaining expenditures were financed from the increase in the land revenue when the state began collecting the former rents as land revenue.

F. Supplementary Measures Sections #1-5

There were no provisions for supplementary institutions or policies. For comments on the relationship between land reform and other policies pursued by the governments of U. P. and India, please see my Prologue to this paper.

1. The Singh/Misra computations, pp. 114-118.

G. Mobilization of the Peasantry

1. Economic Aspects

The only group specifically mobilized for participation in the carrying out of the land reforms were the village panchayat (local council) Land Management Committees. Their duties were to cooperate with the Assistant Compensation Officer, to manage such public lands as became available to the village in the process of reform and, more importantly, in the process of consolidating holdings. However, since the law and the Ministry of Revenue together formed a virtually automatic system for carrying through land reforms, and since the Consolidation Officers operating under the law and under their instructions had most of the effective power in their own hands, the sub-committees of the village Land Management Committees did not have much function, nor did they particularly have anything to bargain about.

For a general view of the relationship between land reform and changes in local politics, please see the Prologue, Sections IV-F/9/G and Section V.

2. Political Aspects

As above, please see the Prologue, and Sections IV-F/9/G for a brief discussion of these issues.

H. The Politics of Implementation

The larger of the landlords (zamindars and talukdars) did band together to sue in the courts on the grounds that the land reforms were unconstitutional because the compensation was not "fair." It appeared to be certain that the courts would declare the U. P. (as well as other acts) unconstitutional on these grounds, so the Congress government at the Centre amended the constitution so that land reform programs could not be declared unconstitutional on the grounds that compensation was unfair. That put an end to the opposition, which had too few votes and was in much too much disrepute to challenge the program effectively. There was no opposition from within the military or civil administration, from any religious group or from most of the press; and public opinion in general and India's leadership in virtually all economic sectors approved of the land reforms. The opposition parties of the left complained only that the reforms were not sufficiently thorough-going, that landlords were treated too kindly or too generously; and the opposition parties on the right were then too weak to be important.

At the national level this was the period of the achievement of independence, the formation of the new Republic of India, and the period in which the central and state planning systems of independent India began. To attempt to say more in this context would be unprofitable; so again I refer the interested reader who would like an extended discussion of the economies and politics of the first decade and a half of Indian independence to George Rosen's Democracy and Economic Change in India, particularly pages 51-153.

IV. EFFECTS OF THE LAND REFORM

A. On Land Tenure Structure

The available information on the new structure of land tenure in U. P. is given above in Sections II-B-1 and III-D-1. The beneficiaries of the land reform were those tenants who had exproprietary, occupancy, or hereditary tenancies prior to the reform. One large group--who worked the land as hired laborers or "permanent servants" and perhaps best described by such words as "clientele" or "Hangers-on"--did not benefit. This group of landless laborers included many people of the clean castes and virtually all of the Harijans ("untouchables").

Fragmentation of holdings appears to continue, despite the process of consolidation of holdings, and this was and is inevitable as the population expands and as sons inherit. It will cease only when the off-take of the modern industrial/social-overhead/commercial/financial economy exceeds the annual increase in the rural male population--a situation we might not unreasonably (even if optimistically) hope for in two or three decades.

B. On Production and Productivity

As has been stated several other places in this paper, the increasing output of the last fifteen years is much more appropriately attributed to the other policies of rural and agricultural development. In the areas surveyed by Singh and Misra there were appreciable increases in the land devoted to commercial crops:

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Percentage increase in area</u>
sugar cane	31
oil seeds	36
potatoes	37
fiber	40

but the total effect has been to reduce the area under staple food crops only from 72.65 percent to 71.56 percent of the cropped acreage. Singh and Misra conclude that "there is little doubt about the increase in commercialization of farming. But this has been due probably more to changes in the agricultural price structure and other factors than due to zamindari abolition."¹

1. Singh and Misra, p. 169

C. On Rural Employment and Underemployment

Again, as is so often the case here and in all studies of Indian agriculture, we do not have information in a form which will permit answering the questions asked. The growth in rural population has been largely absorbed in rural areas but this appears to be the normal process in rural India, reflecting the adaptability of the society to increasing population and not a significant increase in the demand for labor man-years. It is even safer to guess that there has been no impact upon rates of rural-to-urban migration and that this migration rather reflects a balance of the increasing number of people in the countryside, the pull of the cities as "better places to live," and the (relative to population growth) small increase in the demands of the modern sector for labor. In addition to "pull," Cohn found in the early years after land reform, that landless laborers were being driven out of villages by hunger;¹ but whether this was common throughout the state or restricted to areas in eastern U. P. we cannot be sure.

D. On Income Distribution

There is no way to quantify the effect of the land reforms on income distribution. Nor is it really possible to present income figures by class of landholder or size of holding. The best estimates (guesses?) that can be made would indicate that income distribution follows moderately closely the distribution of land; that it would not be grossly in error to suggest that for the range of typical pieces of land the total net income in kind and benefits as well as in cash approximates to Rs. 300 to Rs. 600 per acre, exceptionally rising with irrigation and with the adoption of modern practices and crop rotations to as much as Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 per acre.

The net effect of the land reforms on the incomes of the benefitting tenants was to leave them in the same position as they were in before reform.

One can state, however, with confidence but without numbers, that the income of the rural population was redistributed from the few very rich landlords to the middle and smaller landlords and the protected tenants. In an absolute sense there has probably been no significant redistribution of income from the landless laborers to this large range of the "middle orders of rural society," but proportionally the middle orders have benefited at the expense of the landless since there is some evidence that the position of landless laborers has not improved.²

1. Cohn, "Madhopur Revisited," p. 963

2. Thorner and Thorner, Land and Labour in India, pp. 173-188; and Cohn, "Madhopur Revisited," pp. 953, 965-66.

E. On Services and Supplies

There is no evidence that land reform, indirectly as well as directly, had any effect on increasing the services and supplies available in rural areas. All sorts of new services and supplies have become available through the community development services and through the private enterprise of merchants and people engaged in small scale manufacture, but these must be attributed to general agricultural development policy throughout India and to the increasing commercialization of agriculture and the opportunities these have provided. The land reforms in U. P. did not further the process of commercialization of rural India. On the contrary, by making land less negotiable--sirdari land cannot even be used as security for loans from cooperative societies--it had, if anything the opposite effect.

F. On Peasant Participation in Decisions

Again as mentioned in the Prologue and discussed in Section V, there has been a marked increase in the participation of the rural peasantry in the processes of government and planning. The evidence is also strong, or so I think, that this participation is increasing and will continue to increase as experience with political organization and local and state governments lengthens. This participation involves decisions about expenditures on roads and schools; about the siting of roads, schools, and canals; and (in other parts of India perhaps more than in U. P., and certainly more in western than in eastern U. P.) in influencing and bullying community development officials, and in checking up on their performance.

This increased participation is certainly due in large part to the creation of elected governments and the introduction of universal suffrage with a secret ballot: but it is also due to the increase in social and economic equality within the middle, landholding castes--and this increasing equality can in turn be attributed in significant part of the land reforms. But if this is all to the good, the increased equality within this group has an inegalitarian by-product also attributable to the land reform. Before the reforms the complex ladder of rights in land¹ had made it difficult to differentiate people on one rung from the people on the rungs immediately above and below, but after the land reforms it was possible to differentiate clearly between the man who was a landholder--bhumindhar or sirdar--and the man who totally landless. Thus a complex hierarchy was not reduced to democratic egalitarian relationships but instead was changed in the direction of a two tier

1. For a description of the "ladder" in U. P., see Section II-B.

class system, with the middle caste landholding groups forming a more homogeneous upper class and the landless forming a more homogeneous lower class, with both now far more in conflict with each other than the different levels of the hierarchy had been before reforms.

Cohn suggests that in "a generation's time....a gap will have developed which is new to Indian history, and paradoxically enough India will develop a peasantry in the middle of the twentieth century such as we are familiar with in European history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries....The village will be in the hands of small peasant proprietors, with a floating group of landless workers."¹

The increased equality and security and income among the bhumindars and sirdars has given them the courage and confidence to participate in village, district, and state politics and to make their feelings known to their representatives; and perhaps more important, to make their feelings known to the officers of the civil administration and to use their voice with elected officials to restrain, threaten, or discipline (at least some) civil servants. The contribution of land reform to the security and courage and political effectiveness of the middle groups in the rural areas has probably been the most important contribution made by land reform to changing Indian society and probably the only change which can be attributed in significant part directly to the changes in tenurial conditions and relative status consequent upon the land reforms.

G. On Character of Rural Society, and

H. Broader Effects on the Economy, Society, and Polity

I believe that the comments in the last two paragraphs in Section IV-F above answers these questions. In addition, the extended extract from my paper to the Carnegie Seminar at Indiana University, quoted below in Section V of this paper, rounds out the analysis of the issues raised here.

1. Cohn, "Madhopur Revisited," pp. 965-66.

V. CRITIQUE AND EVALUATION

Perhaps as good a way as any to summarize my evaluation of the land reforms is to quote extensively from my own Economic Change in Rural India and from my paper to the Carnegie Seminar at Indiana University (1967) entitled "'Revolutionary Reforms' Vs. Social Structure and Politics."

From Economic Change in Rural India:

"The abolition of the zamindari system and the reform of land tenures in Uttar Pradesh was not a reversal of British policy, nor was it a radical change in the direction of policy. The reform measures were a continuation of a policy that had been going on for more than a century. The difference between British policy and the policy of the state today is that British policy transferred rights of ownership from the owners to the tenants, while the policy today is to transfer rights of ownership from the owners to the state and then to allow the localities to exercise the rights.

"To see that the land reform policy of the state government does not alter the trend of policy, it is only necessary to consider the amendments to the old system which would have accomplished the substance of the abolition reforms. The law on renting and subletting could have been amended to bar all subleases and leases of sir except in the usual cases of widows, lunatics, and so forth. Another amendment could have permitted the tenant to make any improvement he chose, while a third amendment could have required the collection and payment of rents through the agency of the village community. These amendments would have accomplished what the act set out to accomplish, except that the sirdars and asamis may now feel that they are in some sense owners and so take a greater interest in the improvement of their lands; and except that the state's income from the land is now greatly increased at the cost of the burden of paying compensation (pp. 283-4)

"If land reform is to reverse the process of agricultural stagnation and decay, it must do so because it leads to "a real burst of enthusiasm, a genuine release of energy among the working peasantry." Hopes based on reform in Uttar Pradesh rest on this hope, for the resources at the disposal of the cultivators have not been increased. And this one hope assumes that talent for farm management is widespread among cultivators -- and that enthusiasm created effectiveness, probably a naive assumption. (p. 284)

"The solution to the problem of agrarian stagnation does not lie in land reform. It lies in decreasing the ratio of people to land and capital. Since the amount of readily cultivable land cannot be increased, the solution lies in an increase in the amount of capital used by the population. Capital will help to alleviate the poverty of the rural cultivator whether it is employed in industry or agriculture. Capital employed in agriculture will directly make the cultivator's labor more productive, but capital employed in industry will indirectly make the cultivator's labor more productive, and capital employed in industry will perhaps help the cultivator more than capital employed in agriculture Not only is the ratio of people to land and capital too high at present; the ratio of people to land would be too high even if there were a lot more capital. An optimum combination of resources requires fewer people with more capital working on the land, and more people with more capital employed off the land. (p. 286)

"In the light of the history of the market for land, and in the light of the analysis of that history and the present reforms, it can be seen that the abolition of the zamindari system will not end poverty in Uttar Pradesh or even contribute much to the solution of that problem. To alleviate the poverty of rural U. P., zamindari abolition depends upon its incentive effects, but the problems of agriculture in Uttar Pradesh stem from the vicious circle of underdevelopment and overpopulation, and from attitudes embedded in a more socioreligious than economic hierarchy. Under the stimulus of the central government and its Five Year Plans, with the development of resources being undertaken by the state government, and with the spread of Community Development Projects, the lot of the cultivator may improve and the bhumidhars, sirdars, and asamis may rise from their present impoverished state to a higher standard of living with which all can be pleased. But if this happens, it will not be because the zamindari system was bad or because the new system is good, but because capital resources have been developed and alternative employments, with higher productivities, have been provided." (p. 288)

There has been criticism of Indian land reforms on the grounds that they were not sufficiently thorough or sufficiently egalitarian: that they did not give rights to the truly lowest orders of society but in fact

protected the rights of those in the upper half of the rural hierarchy. These critiques are well stated by Thorner¹ -- who represents the social and political egalitarian point of view -- and by H. D. Malaviya² -- from the Marxist or radical left point of view. I shall not here attempt to summarize their points of view, nor to engage in a critical commentary upon them, except to say that a decent, egalitarian democrat must sympathize with Thorner's point of view on social and political grounds and if one is either an historian or not a Marxist it is difficult to sympathize with or accept Malaviya's analysis. But granting that the land reforms in U. P. were not as thorough nor as egalitarian as one might hope, it might be worthwhile to analyse the reasons why the land reforms did not transfer effective title and power to the "actual tiller of the soil" or, as Thorner characterizes him, "the man with callouses on his hands." to do so I quote extensively from my Carnegie Seminar paper:

"In Europe, in England, in Ireland, and in America the problem of defining the 'cultivator' was simple: either you were a noble or you were not; either you were a gentleman landowner or a farmer; either you cleared your land and owned it, bought your land and owned it, or you rented it from somebody else. Ownership versus tenancy, absenteeism versus farming, providing capital versus managing: these were all contrasting economic categories with clear correspondences in the socio-economic structure of these countries. Not so in India. As I have learned from the British anthropologist F. G. Bailey, in a complex society such as ours relationships are simple, but in a simple society relationships are complex. The ladder of rights in land had so many rungs that it was difficult indeed to know where to draw the line between 'landlord' and 'tiller.' But the situation was in fact even more complicated. A man might be a zamindar or under-proprietor in respect of one piece of land and an occupancy-tenant or even a tenant-at-will or a share-cropper in respect of another plot of land. A landlord resident in a village might supply nothing to a share-cropper working his land except the land itself; an absentee landlord might provide his share-cropper with a pair of bullocks, a plow, and seed. The superior landholder might also provide his tenant or sub-tenant with loans in cash or loans in foodstuffs. A man on one rung of the ladder, usually a higher rung, might be the political leader of a faction of which a tenant on a lower rung was a member. The superior landholder could be a member of the board of directors of a cooperative society from which the tenant borrowed. In cases where the superior and inferior holder of the land were of the same caste there might be a kinship or marriage relationship between the two. If asked, it was frequently possible for a man to reply that another man was his "landlord-creditor-second cousin-leader-and-tenant."

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1. Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect for India.
 2. Malaviya, Land Reforms in India.

"In any one area there was (and is) a fairly well defined layering of castes so that one can make meaningful horizontal divisions in terms of ritual status. But the same is not so true of landholding. Higher caste people can be tenants; more rarely lower caste people can be landlords (although harijans -- untouchables -- never were and seldom are).

"In deciding who was a tiller to whom the land should be given the legislatures of the Indian states had to decide whether managing a farm while using the labor of others constituted "cultivating." They also had to decide whether contributing inputs other than land to the farming process constituted a cultivating or managerial (as opposed to an 'intermediary's') interest in the land. They had to draw a line between the tenant and the farm laborer and this was not an easy thing to do because many tenants still paid their rent in kind - as in the batai system of fifty-fifty sharing of the crop - and many farm laborers were paid in kind: not a fixed quantity, but a share in the product. Furthermore, many laborers farmed the same pieces of land for their employers for many years. On the other side, share-croppers on the batai system and even tenants who paid a cash rent, also often worked as wage laborers for their landlord on other plots of land. While one could differentiate clearly between the landed status of people several rungs apart -- say an expropriatory tenant from a batai share-cropper -- the space between two adjacent rungs was so narrow that it was hard to tell whether one had two significantly different rungs or essentially only one rung -- say as between a share-cropper and a permanent laborer who worked for a share of the crop or between an expropriatory tenant and an occupancy tenant.

"The legislative solutions were generally favorable to the higher rungs on the ladder of rights. Those who 'farmed' their land with hired labor, those who 'managed' their farms, and those whose farms, although large, were 'unusually efficient' were classified as cultivators. Why? The answer usually given, and insofar as it goes it is a true one, is that the members of the legislative assemblies who enacted the reforms were themselves landholders or from the wealthier and dominant castes. But this does not answer the question, why, in a democracy and in a Congress Party which had undertaken land reforms, the MIAs -- Members of the states' Legislative Assemblies -- should have been from landholding, dominant castes or, if they were from these groups, why the Party leadership allowed them to introduce so many loopholes. The answers are several, and any one alone is insufficient to explain the outcome. For one thing, the lower

orders of society were not organized to achieve political power and did not know how to use the organs and procedures of a modern state to achieve their aims. Another element in the situation, which has been widely noted, is the fact that the rural leaders of the Congress Party were drawn from the upper and middle castes, although not from the richest landholding people. The rural leaders were small and middling zamindars and privileged tenants -- perhaps one could call them the kulaks of India. Also, a large portion of the MLAs elected on the Congress ticket from rural constituencies were not rural people but urban people who were not intimately acquainted with the character of the rural constituency in which they ran. Nor were they by upbringing and experience representative of the attitudes, beliefs, and aims of small farmers and tenants. Furthermore, the Congress leadership itself was largely urban, or in the long struggle for independence had become either urbanized or 'nationalized.' Daniel Thorner's suggested reform -- to give the land to the man with callouses on his hands -- amounts to a proposal that, wherever there was a choice, the title to the land should be given to the man on the lowest rung of the ladder. This class was almost totally unrepresented in the legislative assemblies and the national parliament (except in the sentiments of the

"But I think there were deeper and more permanent roots to the frustration of the reforms of land tenures. The acts as they emerged from the legislative assemblies were not, I think, mistakes or corruptions of purpose, but anticipatable results of the nature of politics everywhere and of the specific structure of Indian politics. It was among the higher reaches of the Congress Party that the desire for revolutionary reform was strongest, and these national leaders operated through the federal Parliament and the national administration. The land reform legislation was, on the other hand, drawn and passed by state legislatures. Whether the MLAs did or did not have the same high idealism as the Congress leaders, the higher reaches of the Congress leadership did not have to worry about re-election to Parliament, about their high position in the Party structure, nor even (and at worst) about losing all political function -- they knew they would always be in demand as elder statesmen. But the MLAs position both in the party and in life in general was much more dependent on being re-elected to the legislative assembly and consequently the MLAs were much more sensitive to the immediate desires of their supporters in the constituencies. If the political structure in the countryside had divided along class and caste lines, then it would have been possible for politicians to found

V

successful political careers on an association with the lower orders of society,; but, the political divisions in the countryside cut vertically across the horizontal lines of caste hierarchy and economic interest group.

"The substance, structure, and process of Indian local politics, and of Indian national politics at the local level, is faction. Factions are vertical divisions within the village: they cut across lines of caste, of kinship and marriage, and of landholding status. Factions originate in disputes over land, marriages, inheritances, dignities, and the desire to dominate a festival organization or village council. They become, in the modern Indian democracy, associated with state -- or nationwide political parties.

"Thus marshalling electoral support in the villages by an MLA meant marshalling the support of a sufficient number of faction leaders to carry the area in an election and these faction leaders are drawn from the dominant castes. The consequence? That the people to whom MLAs in search of re-election had to be sensitive were not the smaller caste groups or the poorest people or the underprivileged or deprived. The sensitivity of the Indian MLA to the realities of the political structure assured the middle orders of Indian rural society of gentle treatment in the reforms.

"Another characteristic of the structure of Indian society which is relevant to this discussion is the diversity of interests among the population as a whole. Revolutionary reformers typically see the world as consisting of a small group of exploiters at the top and a large mass of exploited at the bottom. When the world is seen in this way it appears that, once the "broad masses" are given political rights, reform can be carried through on a wave of popular enthusiasm. But in India -- and I am sure in most places -- the social structure does not consist of a small band of 'ruling exploiters' and a 'broad mass' of powerless exploited. Rather, many different groups constitute the electorate and while some groups will have some interests in common, it is equally true that there will be points upon which they disagree and interests over which they conflict. If we break down India's population in a very rough way into several primary socio-economic classes we discover that there is no vast majority in favor of any one particular kind of land reform; in fact, only a number of minorities. Deduct from the total population the quarter that lives in towns and cities. Deduct the five to fifteen percent of people who felt themselves directly threatened by land reforms. Deduct another

quarter of the population -- landless laborers, harijans -- who would not receive land in any of the reforms seriously contemplated and so had no immediate reason to support reform. Deduct another proportion of villager-dwellers -- perhaps ten or fifteen percent -- who were merchants, village servants, and artisans but who did not rent land or work on the land and who therefore had no particular reason for supporting any one kind of land reform act as against another. This leaves us with, at a rough estimate, perhaps a quarter to a third of India's population which stood to gain by the 'abolition of intermediaries.' This was not a homogeneous group: there were divisions of interest among these people because they were on different rungs of the ladder of rights. My guess is that no more than a quarter of India's population had a clear interest in a reform which would give title to the land to a cultivating tenant defined as a man with callouses on his hands; and this group would divide along faction lines. Some members could be expected to "desert the cause" because their other interests in the success and power of their faction outweighed their interests in land reform. I doubt that more than a sixth of the population of India had an overwhelming, primary interest in land reform. Perhaps four-fifths of the population were in a general way rather favorable to the idea of land reform but the interest of most of these in reform was amorphous and indirect, so that they could not be wrought up over matters of detail.

"I now come to a most important point: it is very doubtful that more than a very small minority of clean caste Hindus wanted a law which would have given title to land to harijans; it is very doubtful that more than a small minority of middle cultivating castes wanted a law which would have given title to land to the clean castes positioned immediately below them in the ritual hierarchy; it is very doubtful that those who had title to a small piece of land or a reasonable degree of security upon the land which they farmed wanted those with less to acquire an equal amount of security and, Indian values being what they are, the enhanced status that goes with owning land.

"Indian land reform legislation was not badly drawn, mistakenly drawn, or corruptly subverted from its original intent. It was drawn up by legislators as it was because they intended to draw up the acts the way they did. They wanted to satisfy

a sufficiently wide range of interests and attachments so that they could be re-elected and continue to enjoy power.¹

In Conclusion.

Land reforms in U. P. have reduced the incomes of what were the (few) very largest landowners both absolutely and relatively. But simultaneously they have barred the landless from participating in the rising average incomes of rural India. They have increased the self-confidence and effectiveness of "middle class" and "middle caste" farmers in political life. But they have had no discernable effect upon productivity -- the increase in which are easily accounted for by other events of the past two decades. Finally, further transfers of title from present landholders to the landless will not increase productivity, and are so unlikely to occur as to make efforts to encourage land reform a waste of time, energy and expertise.

1. I do not use the term "enjoy power" in a pejorative sense. Quite the contrary. The only motive I can think of for becoming a politician and staying a politician is because one does "enjoy power." And a politician who does not have power is as useless to his constituents as a pair of scissors without a hinge pin is to a seamstress. The business of a politician, including the legislator, is to act in such a way as to be re-elected by the majority -- and that is what the MLAs were doing when they drew up the various land reform acts in the Indian states."

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Since a bibliography on Indian land reform is being submitted by Dr. Gene Wunderlich and since I do not have the resources here in Knoxville to equal (let alone to improve upon) Dr. Wunderlich's bibliography, I shall instead simply list the very few pieces of the literature which are significant for an understanding of land tenure history and land reform in U. P.

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