

BOOK REVIEWS

Tenancy Abolition and the Emerging Pattern in Gujarat by M. B. Desai (Report of the Research Project sponsored by the Research Programmes Committee, Planning Commission, Government of India), Baroda, M. S. University of Baroda, 1971, xii+194 pp.

I

The United Nations' aid policies for economic development of the so-called underdeveloped or developing countries find their origin at the beginning of the 1950s. For instance, the United Nations' *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries*, 1951, by J. W. Schultz and four other scholars, is known as a most inclusive search for an ideal aid policy, and almost all the issues of aid policy in dispute today were already discussed in that work.

Broadly speaking, there are two basic attitudes. One is the position advocating economic aid to promote capital flows from developed countries to developing countries, and the other the position advocating social reforms to be executed in the developing countries themselves. The central item of the latter is land reform. Economic aid has increased to a point near the levels advocated in terms of amount and scale, although the terms and conditions of the aid do remain unsatisfactory in certain respects. But the latter approach, especially in respect to land reform, has lagged behind in implementation in most of the developing countries. This is especially true for Asia, excluding a few countries such as Korea and Taiwan as well as Japan where land reform was carried out immediately after the end of World War II.

"Measures" proposed for economic development require a will for progress on the part of the people as a prerequisite to economic progress, and for this will to exist, the progress must bring benefits to them. And yet in many developing countries such conditions as unequal land ownership, unstable status of tenant farmers as cultivators and high land rents are said to prevent the appearance of precisely this phenomenon. Why is land reform so difficult? And, if the reform is carried out, what are the conditions that made it possible and what are the results that should be expected? These are issues to be studied concerning land reform. Various conclusions have been suggested for the reforms done in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

India, which is the subject country of this work, is known as a country where in general no proper land reform has been conducted in spite of the gravity of such land problems as unequal land ownership, high land rents, and unstable tenant rights. But Gujarat, where tenancy abolition was executed, is an exception. This work tries to explain how the reform was carried out and what new patterns began to emerge in cultivation and social structure. It sets for itself an ambitious task of immense interest.

To summarize the conclusion at the outset, however, it is regrettable that the study lacks analyses of some important aspects in spite of the fact that systematic research was indeed carried out based upon abundant materials secured through the cooperation of the Planning Commission. The following is a brief review of the work suggesting

some viewpoints which further studies of this nature conducted by those with equally advantageous research facilities will hopefully take into account.

II

In the two states of Gujarat and Maharashtra in India tenancy cultivation was abolished. This study takes the former state and analyzes the legal processes involved in arriving at tenancy abolition and the results engendered in land ownership and agricultural production structure.

Concerning the legal aspects, the book describes the legal processes neatly, starting with the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1939, through the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1946 and the Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948, and leading to the Tenancy and Lands (Amendment) Act of 1956.

Under the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1939, those tenant farmers who had cultivated the same piece of land for more than six consecutive years as tenants were called "protected tenants." They came under protection against landowners' demands for the return of the land; it was recognized that the landowners needed to compensate the tenants' investments in their land, and suspension or remission of rent along with land revenues at the time of general distress was recognized, all to strengthen the rights of tenants. But before this act could be put into full effect, the government changed, and in 1941 the act was only partially enforced in areas where problems were particularly acute. The reason for this partial execution was apprehension that "it may lead to a state of a chaos and create serious problems." (p. 23) But after World War II when the Congress Government was restored, the act was made applicable throughout the country and at the same time it was revised to become the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1946. Now all tenant farmers were to be regarded as "protected tenants" unless landowners could successfully prove otherwise, and the maximum rent was set at one-fourth and one-third of the value produced for irrigated land and un-irrigated land respectively. The revised act also provided certain procedures for commutation from rent in kind to rent in money, and granted the status of tenancy to sharecroppers.

The Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948 further strengthened the policy of tenant protection. Non-protected tenants too were to have guaranteed tenancy contracts for the duration of at least ten years; landlords now cultivating fifty acres or more were not allowed to resume the land under tenancy; and landlords cultivating less than fifty acres but more than a set amount were limited in various ways in reclaiming their land. Special administrative authorities were also installed for the execution of the act. Furthermore, in 1952 a way was provided through which tenants could obtain land on an installment basis. Finally the Tenancy and Lands (Amendment) Act of 1956 provided the legal ruling for tenancy abolition, i.e., tenants should own all the land they cultivate. In each *taluka* a tribunal was established which was to determine land prices within a limit of 20 to 200 times the land assessment, to be bought by tenants either in a lump sum payment or in installments, not exceeding twelve. For tenants remaining after this tenancy abolition, the rent had to be reduced to the limit of 2 to 5 times of the land assessment and would be fixed for five years.

III

In order to follow up the results of this tenancy abolition, 65 villages were selected as

samples out of 12,988 villages in ten districts, and changes as of 1957 and 1964 were studied on the basis of the records of the tenancy tribunals. The findings showed that the administrative machinery operated more efficiently than was generally anticipated and that it completed most of the work during a six to seven-year period by 1964. In the sample villages, 80 per cent of the tenancy land as of 1957 was owned by cultivators in 1964, and the number of tenant farmers was reduced by 80 per cent in the same period. Three-fourths of the land thus transferred was bought up in lump sum payments, and the remaining fourth in installment payments. As can be naturally expected, more pure tenants were seen in the latter category of payment. In 1957, when 65 per cent of the tenant land was used for food production and a small portion of it for cash crops, a prediction was advanced that an increase of cultivator-owned land would also result in more cash crops, but this did not prove to be the case, at least in the sample areas. With the idea that literacy may be a positive factor stimulating land reform, the literacy rate of the tenants was examined in the respective years. Since no major changes were observed, it was concluded that the relationship between literacy and land reform is only indirect. The relationship between caste and tenancy abolition was also examined, but no clear-cut answer appeared.

In conclusion the study states as follows, pointing out the problems of unstable status for both former tenants who had lost even their tenancy rights (2 per cent) and cultivators under annual tenancy who were trying to become tenants:

About half the area previously under tenancy passed into the ownership of their respective erstwhile tenants. About 12 per cent of the land held by 9 per cent of the tenants continued under recognized tenancy. A little over 2 per cent of the lands of tenants slipped from them in default of payment of compensation amounts. The rest where the cases in which the tenants either denied tenancy, surrendered their lands to the landowners or kept away from the hearing of the tribunals and, therefore, missed of their own volition to be owners of the land they cultivated on lease. . . . By and large they might have continued to cultivate the same lands surreptitiously after the ownership titles to them formally reverted to their owners. The terms and conditions of such unauthorized tenancies would worsen. . . . Annual tenancies are officially permitted. But annual tenancies lend instability, and are vexatious and exacting. (p. 123)

I agree with this latter point. This problem should probably be thought of as arising from the character of land reform itself as essentially a compulsory transfer of property on a non-commercial basis. Land transaction on a non-commercial basis makes it unavoidable that certain burdens fall to varying degrees upon landowners and some of the tenants, or on taxpayers in general in the form of financial support. The objective of land reform being the protection of tenants under certain given conditions, it is not at all difficult to imagine that certain other quarters of the population will have to pay the price.

I must say that the questions remaining unsolved in this study lie precisely in deeper analyses and finer elucidation of this point. To whose detriment was the land reform performed? How substantial were the burdens? In what manner was the understanding of the burden bearers secured? These are the most important questions left unanswered in this study. As long as the difficulty in enacting land reform lies in the opposition of those directly involved in the measure, it is essential that satisfactory explanation be given on this point for the study to serve as a guideline for land reform to be conducted in other countries in the future.

In concrete terms, the following should at least be made clear. How advantageous or disadvantageous was the compensation sum paid by tenants against the anticipated

cultivation income from rent payable? How were funds for buying the land secured? If it still was to the tenants' advantage to buy the land after paying interest on borrowed funds, how was that possible? If that was the case, what were the reasons for landowners to acquiesce to the compensation and to agree to the selling of the land?

I have ventured to put forward my hopes for further elaboration precisely because this already is such a thoroughgoing work based upon a wealth of materials.

(Shigetō Kawano)

Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East: From the Rise of Islam to the Present Day edited by M. A. Cook, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, ix + 526 pp.

An International Conference on Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in July 1967. The purpose of the conference was to acquire a clearer and broader concept regarding the present state and future outlook of research in this field than had thus far been attained by individual researchers. It was a conference on a global scale, with participants from Great Britain, the United States, France, and Germany, and also broad representation from the Middle Eastern countries. This book is a compilation of papers presented at this conference.

It consists of three parts, according to period. Part One comprises nine papers on the economic history of the Middle East during the Middle Ages; Part Two six papers covering the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; and Part Three twelve papers dealing with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The introductory remarks for each period include a brief description of the papers that follow and afford the reader a good idea of what was discussed at the conference. The introductory remarks will also be helpful in giving an idea of the level that has been attained by research in various areas. Here we cannot touch upon all the papers included in this book, but only some that are particularly noteworthy.

Two such papers in Part One are Gabriel Baer's (Jerusalem) "Guilds in Middle Eastern History," and Bernard Lewis's (London) "Sources for the Economic History of the Middle East," the former stressing the importance of the use of terminology in scholarly research and the latter expounding upon the significance of discovery of data in research on economic history.

The fact that Professor Baer occupies a leading place in research on guilds, which is so important to research on Middle Eastern economic history as a whole, is attested to by his authorship of *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1964). In this present paper he underlines the importance of the use of terminology in fixing concepts concerning the guild. He considers the existence of the guild in three separate periods: (1) the tenth through the fifteenth century; (2) the sixteenth through the eighteenth century; and (3) the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the absence of any evidence of rigidly organized professional guild organizations in the Middle East in the fifteenth and sixteenth century or before, he concludes that in its place there existed at most loose commercial associations. This noteworthy new view challenges the old established view first set forth in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* and also adhered to by Prof. H. A. R. Gibb in his *Islamic Society and the West*, 2 Volumes (London: Oxford University Press, 1950, 1957) that the guild made