

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A selective report
following a visit to South India

July 1977

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Contents

	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PARAGRAPH</u>
Preface	(i)	
Summary of recommendations	(iii)	
Terms of reference and interpretation	2	1
Books and Periodicals	2	3
recommendations .	5	12
Professional Values	7	13
recommendations	8	17
The UK Rural Development Cadre	9	18
recommendations	10	23
APPENDIX A : ITINERARY AND PEOPLE SEEN		
APPENDIX B : PRELIMINARY LIST OF BOOKS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT		
APPENDIX C : THE FUTURE CADRE FOR DEVELOPMENT		

Preface

This report is based on a visit to India organised by the British Council. I was in India from 9 June to 3 July, and visited Bombay, Madras, Trivandrum, Madurai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Delhi, in that order. The arrangements made by the British Council were excellent, and I am most grateful to those concerned - Geoff Court, Grace Krishnaswamy, Roy Misser and Eric Richards - for the smooth, efficient and imaginative organisation of the visit. The details are given in Appendix A. I was able to meet a wide range of people, including senior academics and civil servants, and to gain insights which I could never have obtained in such a short time on my own. I was also able to benefit from the informed criticism of ideas I have been putting forward on the planning of technologies for rural futures in seven separate seminars and lectures as well as from a number of individuals, and also to develop useful personal contacts. I am grateful to the British Council for these opportunities.

The visit was timely. The new Indian Government has rural development at the centre of its policies. There is already a widespread movement for educational institutions to adopt villages and to make their syllabi more rural. Discussions in Delhi suggested a more open attitude to foreigners, including volunteers and researchers, than had prevailed under the former Government. The initiatives recommended in this report appear to come at a good time.

I hope my recommendations will be accepted and implemented. My information is of course incomplete and my perceptions selective. Nevertheless, I believe the comments and suggestions to be well founded. They are offered constructively, trying to see the best way forward in the relevant fields for which the British Council is or might be responsible, and should apply to whatever organisation now or in the future is responsible for the activities covered. If I question some of the activities of the British Council, this is done in a positive spirit. The problems of rural poverty in India are so enormous, so intractable, and so

(ii)

important, that outside organisations such as the British Council have an awesome responsibility to make sure that their contributions do truly benefit the rural poor. In seeking to fulfil that responsibility, even the most central assumptions may have to be called into question.

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Summary of recommendations

Three main thrusts are recommended. First, the supply of free and subsidised books on rural development should be drastically increased, in particular adding some 50-100 books to the FLBS scheme and marketing them at about 10 rupees each. Second, the visits organised for Indian professionals to the UK should be evaluated for the extent to which they reinforce inappropriate urban, industrial and rich country values and also facilitate the brain drain. Selective termination of these visits should be considered. Third, a deliberate attempt should be made, reversing the donor-recipient relationship, to persuade the Indian Government to be the donor of direct rural experience to more people from the UK thereby augmenting the UK rural development cadre.

The full recommendations are in paragraphs 12, 17 and 23.

Terms of Reference and Interpretation

1. My terms of reference were to examine the situation in South India and the activities of the British Council there, and to see what recommendations I could make for the future in the light of the British aid policy of more help for the poorest and the priority of rural development.
2. Some of the outcomes of the visit were in the form of discussions, contacts and insights gained jointly with British Council staff. Discussions at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore and at the Administrative Staff College of India at Hyderabad were two special cases where proposals for collaboration with UK institutions were raised and are being followed up. Elsewhere, the results of interviews and visits are being reported separately by those who accompanied me. Here I shall confine myself to general issues, illustrating them occasionally from the particular. This is not an evaluation of the work of the British Council in relation to rural development. That would require a much more thorough study. It is, rather, a selective set of comments and suggestions. They fall under three heads :

Books and periodicals
Professional values
The UK rural development cadre

Books and Periodicals

3. The existing services provided by the British Council are impressive. Some three million books are lent out from British Council libraries in India each year, over twice the number lent by the United States Information Service. Many Indian libraries receive book presentations. The ELBS (variously Educational Low-priced British books Series, and the English Language Book Society) puts a very large number of cheap textbooks onto the Indian open market. For its existing tasks relating to books, conceived in terms of traditional concerns and relationships, the British Council's activities appear to be carried out competently and effectively.

4. In terms of the new aid strategy, however, a great potential is unrealised.
5. First, the vast majority of Indians, including most of the literate but poor Indians, are out of reach of the library services, not only because a fee is charged for borrowing but also because all the libraries are in large urban centres. This could be partly remedied by more gifts of books to rural libraries.
6. Second, the books stocked in the British Council libraries may show some rather strange omissions. I did not carry out any systematic survey but by way of illustration Michael Lipton has written or co-authored two books concerning India (The Crisis in Indian Planning and The Erosion of a Relationship). However, the only book by him listed in the catalogue in the British Council library at Trivandrum was on chess problems. Is the ordering of books a bit timid? In the fourth quarter of the twentieth century, it is surely right to stock books which are critical of British policies. From USIS one may expect one-sided propaganda, perhaps; but from the British end one would expect a mature readiness to make available a range of self-critical views.
7. Third, and most important, the ELBS scheme, admirable as it may be in conception, does appear, for whatever reasons, to be narrowly interpreted in practice. I was told that it was very popular with Indian academics. One reason suggested was that many of these textbooks have been reprinted and reprinted again and again and are favoured by second-rate university lecturers because they are the textbooks from which they themselves were taught. If this is so, the question arises whether the ELBS is sustaining an archaic and semi-fossilised market which is failing to change with the times. I do not make this as a judgement; but it is sufficiently plausible for the question to demand an answer. Is the ELBS providing a market for out-of-date textbooks, or for textbooks which have been only partially or inadequately updated?
8. The titles in the ELBS list heavily represent medicine (61 titles), nursing (26), mathematics (25), engineering (56), chemistry (25), and business, commerce and accountancy (26).

The biological sciences are rather less strong with agriculture and veterinary science (15), botany (13), biology (12), and zoology (6). With the exception of economics (20), the social sciences are negligible in numbers with political science (2), psychology (3), and sociology (4). Of the two books listed under political science one is on public administration and the other on modern political constitutions. Of the four books on "sociology" one is on agriculture (Famine in Retreat?), one on biology (Biology and the Social Crisis), and one on social psychology (The Social Psychology of Industry). Despite the fair number of good books written in the UK on rural development, there appears to be not one book, with the possible exception of Famine in Retreat? which is directly and primarily concerned with rural development.

9. In short, at a time when rural development is a priority, these books demonstrate a heavy urban bias. The extent to which in addition they present an industrial, rich country bias and set of values I am not competent to judge. It is difficult to imagine, however, that they do not contribute to the tendencies for qualified Indians to prefer to work in cities and not with the rural poor, and for them to emigrate to the richer world, making it easier for them to qualify for jobs in the National Health Service in the UK, or in engineering firms or universities in the UK or elsewhere. The question to be confronted is not just one of trying to achieve a better balance between subjects; it is also one of assessing the extent to which the influences of these books may be anti-developmental, inculcating inappropriate values, and accentuating urban, industrial and rich country biases.
10. A very high priority must surely be to expand the ELBS scheme dramatically to include perhaps 50 to 100 titles relevant to rural development. It is distressing that now, nearly two years after the publication of the White Paper on aid, this has not already been done. A preliminary suggested list is attached at Appendix B.
11. The price at which these books are sold is important. University staff, civil servants, and students in India are not well paid. The net salary including allowances of a university

professor (let alone a reader or a lecturer) is in the range of approximately 1,800 - 3,000 rupees a month. Many quite simply do not buy imported books. One said that all he could afford was Reader's Digest at 30 rupees a year for 12 issues. Another complained sadly about a sense of intellectual isolation. Many others may not be fully aware of their isolation from currents of thought and developments outside India. Put books from abroad are, by Indian standards, often outrageously expensive. The recent book Green Revolution? Technology and Change in Rice-growing Areas of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka* edited by B.H. Farmer, and which represents the main outcome of a research project costing ESCOR and the SSRC over £60,000, is likely to cost 110 rupees on Indian bookstalls, and the importers have ordered only 150 copies for the whole of India. If its UK list price is translated into rupees, Michael Lipton's latest book Why Poor People Stay Poor: A Study of Urban Bias in World Development will cost over 140 rupees a copy. One is tempted to write on why people in poor countries cannot afford to buy Why Poor People Stay Poor. It would seem to be an excellent use of UK aid funds to subsidise books like these to be sold in India at low prices, of the order of 10 rupees. At one blow, many Indians would be enabled to establish contact with insights, values and discussion which are directly relevant to the objectives of British aid policy.

12. Against this background, I submit the following recommendations :

- (i) an effort should be made to identify further potential recipients of book presentations, including rural colleges, voluntary agencies working in rural areas, institutions which have adopted villages, etc. There must be thousands of institutions and organisations in rural India which could and should benefit;
- (ii) books ordered for British Council libraries should (as may indeed usually be the case) reflect a range

* I must declare a personal (though not financial) interest as one of the contributors.

- of political and other views relevant to development and rural development;
- (iii) a list of British books relevant to rural development should be prepared (perhaps building on Appendix B);
 - (iv) the books in the ELBS scheme should be critically reviewed to assess the extent to which they embody values and detail which avoidably accentuate urban bias or encourage the brain drain out of India. Inappropriate books should be phased out and others revised as necessary;
 - (v) the ELBS scheme should be expanded without delay with 50 - 100 new titles consonant with the White Paper on aid, and in particular relevant to rural development;
 - (vi) the books on rural development should be marketed at low prices, of the order of 10 rupees a copy;
 - (vii) a longer list of books on rural development should be prepared and sent to all libraries which have had book presentations, inviting them to order some or all of them;
 - (viii) the ordering by libraries of multiple copies should be made easier in the case of books on rural development, in the hope that they will be used as textbooks or for courses;
 - (ix) the British Council in London should review the dissemination of information and ideas about rural development. There are various possibilities including :
 - support, subsidy and dissemination for existing news-sheets (such as the Reading Rural Development Communication Bulletin).
 - the production by the British Council of a periodical bulletin of reprints of key articles, the bulletin to be sent to all institutions which have received the rural development book package.

- provision for a minimal fee of copies of UK theses relevant to rural India to any Indian institutions requesting them.

(This list is by no means exhaustive).

- (x) giving every Indian who has been a British Council visitor to the UK (a) one book of his/her choice per year, to be selected from a continuously updated list including titles in rural development, and (b) a three-year subscription to a UK Journal;
- (xi) extension of the SDI (selective dissemination of information) system as practiced by the British Council in India to make rural development the main focus.

Professional Values

13. As a person committed to internationalism I am sad to make the points which follow; but they are, I believe, consistent with a higher value, the eradication of extreme poverty, which is the central objective of the British aid policy.
14. Rural development in India suffers from urban bias in many forms. One of the most pervasive is the powerful influence of urban, industrial, and rich country values. Doctors, engineers, university teachers, and even agricultural scientists are socialised into value systems which incline them to prefer urban work, and work in rich countries. Students in institutes of technology are reluctant to work on appropriate rural technologies because they do not see advantages for their future careers, such as opportunities to go abroad. The ASTRA (the Cell for the Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas) group at the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore has an international reputation for its work on rural technology, yet the journal of that Institute is unwilling to publish their articles. "High" and "sophisticated" technology has a superior status and appropriate technology is a poor country cousin. India has a vast research establishment, said to be second in numbers only to the United States and the USSR,

yet its orientation is away from the rural areas, still more from the poorer rural people, and towards the international prestige system in which so many outstanding Indian scientists have distinguished themselves.

15. But if rural development and the eradication of rural poverty are to receive the attention they deserve, these urban-industrial-rich country values have to be challenged. There appear to be many scattered attempts to do this in India at present, and universities and colleges are trying to turn outwards to the villages. But in doing so they have to fight against professional value systems which, for example, will give greater rewards to a scientist engaged on "sophisticated" research on aerodynamics which could equally well, or better, be done in a rich country, than to an engineer who, say, improves the bullock cart on which some 13 million poor Indian families depend partly or entirely for their livelihoods.
16. Unfortunately, it seems to me very likely that most of the present visits by Indians to the UK organised by the British Council aggravate and reinforce the problem. Two questions are relevant: (a) would rural development and the rural poor in India be better served if all but that small minority of visits which are concerned with rural development were to be terminated? I cannot give an informed answer, but I suspect such termination would be in the interests of the rural poor. And (b) are there ways in which visits and contacts could be reoriented so that they would not perpetuate inappropriate value systems but, to the contrary, would help to support more appropriate professional values?
17. Pursuing these questions, I submit these recommendations :
- (i) existing programmes of visits should be critically reviewed from the point of view of inappropriate professional values and selective termination should be considered;
 - (ii) those responsible (scientists, academics, etc.) for the UK end of visits should be invited to discuss these issues, perhaps at a one-day workshop, and

see whether there are ways in which harmful effects could be minimised;

- (iii) the British Council should carefully brief UK visitors to India and try to ensure that while in India they will support values relevant for rural development and the poorer rural people;
- (iv) the British Council should arrange tours for outstanding figures who command professional respect and who will speak to and reinforce appropriate values. (The forthcoming visit by Schumacher is an example);
- (v) visits to the UK directly connected with rural development should be carefully judged (see Para 20 below) to make the best use of the rather limited UK capability in this field;

The UK Development Cadres

18. As suggested in Appendix C, the cadre of people in the UK or based in the UK who have competence and experience in rural development appears to be too small for the tasks required of it, and is not being adequately replenished. This has three implications for the British Council.
19. First, the training and orientation of British Council staff is a high priority. There are courses and seminars in hand as a start, but a more radical approach on the lines advocated in Appendix C, including periods of village residence, is needed. There will always be plenty of "old hands" who consider this unnecessary, but this should not be allowed to stand in the way of those who see the need for themselves.
20. Second, the demands made on the rather restricted rural development expertise in the UK should be carefully judged. An intermittent flow of individual visitors who spend half an hour each with three or four people at an institution is an efficient use of everyone's time. Much better is a lightly organised programme with a number of visitors taking part simultaneously. The British Council might wish, if it has not already done so,

to make an inventory of UK resources in the rural development field and to relate these resources to the demands made upon them by visitors.

21. Third, the British Council might be able to help in augmenting the rural development cadre through making it easier for people from the UK to obtain rural experience in India. At present the cumbersome clearance procedures initiated by the previous Government in India deter UK researchers. The Indian Government is also, or was before the Government changed, engaged in phasing out VSOs. It may be that the problem is partly one of attitudes. The donor-recipient relationship has to be reversed. The UK has to ask India to be the donor, the donor in this case of precious and scarce direct rural experience. When I have put this point to Indians (several times in the presence of British Council staff) the response has always been positive. But such an approach will only be acceptable to the Indian Government if it reflects a genuine set of attitudes among British High Commission and British Council staff.
22. It would, indeed, be sad for both countries if there were not an expansion in the experience of rural India gained by people from the UK. India's population is greater than that of the whole of Africa and Latin America put together. Botswana, with one thousandth the population of India, has some 450 British technical cooperation personnel. The same proportion in India would amount to some 450,000. There is an imbalance of experience and perception in the UK, with India grotesquely under-represented. If India's interests and the interests of the rural poor in India are effectively to be served by the UK, then the cadre of people in the UK who have a direct understanding of rural India must be sharply increased. This may be much more in the interests of the rural poor in India than sending Indian professionals to the UK. A reversal of priorities and flows of people is needed, and a reversal of ideas about who is the donor and who the recipient.
23. Against this background I recommend :
- (i) that in their dealings with the Indian Government,

British High Commission and British Council staff should show that they regard themselves as recipients as well as donors and should request the Indian Government to be a donor of experience especially for younger people from the UK;

- (ii) that the British High Commission and the British Council actively explore the possibility of rescuing and expanding the VSO programme;
- (iii) that arrangements for links between UK and Indian institutions which have any connection with rural development should make provision for UK personnel to gain direct rural experience, preferably doing research or other work which involves rural residence;
- (iv) that the British Council should enter into discussions with the Indian Government about research clearance procedures, should communicate the outcome to British institutions likely to sponsor research, and should as appropriate help British researchers over the various hurdles.

Appendix B Preliminary List of Books Related to Poverty and Rural Development

The purpose of this list is to illustrate the point that there is a considerable number of British publications related to poverty and rural development in India which should be readily available to the Indian public on the bookstalls at very low prices. Some of these books are social science classics based on Indian materials; others are more recent works based on research in India or on issues relevant to India; yet others are books of readings about poverty and rural development. They reflect a range of points of view. The list could be lengthened, especially with Penguins and similar paperbacks.

On investigation it may well emerge that some of these books have been published in India by Indian publishers as well as in the UK by British publishers. On careful consideration, some of these books may not be considered to warrant inclusion in the ELBS series. All the same, at least half these books may deserve inclusion; and certainly a much larger list should be more systematically canvassed and sifted through. Hopefully this list will provide a starting point and some of the most clearly relevant titles can be accepted without delay.

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| Bailey, F.G. | 1969 | <u>Stratagems and Spoils: a social anthropology of politics</u> , Blackwell, Oxford |
| Bailey, F.G. | 1960 | <u>Tribe, Caste and Nation: a study of political change and political change in highland Orissa</u> , Manchester University Press |
| Bailey, F.G. | 1957 | <u>Caste and the Economic Frontier: A Village in Highland Orissa</u> , Manchester University Press |
| Bernstein, Basil (ed) | 1972 | <u>Development and Underdevelopment</u> , Penguin Books, Harmondsworth |
| Blaikie, Piers | 1975 | <u>Family Planning in India: Diffusion and Policy</u> , Edward Arnold, London |
| Boserup, Ester | 1970 | <u>Woman's Role in Economic Development</u> , Allen and Unwin, London |
| Boserup, Ester | 1965 | <u>The Conditions of Agricultural Growth</u> , Allen and Unwin, London |
| Bunting, A.H. (ed) | 1970 | <u>Change in Agriculture</u> , Gerald Duckworth and Co., London |
| Carr, Marilyn | 1976 | <u>Economically Appropriate Technologies for Developing Countries: an Annotated Bibliography</u> , Intermediate Technology Publications, London |
| Cassen, Robert | forth-coming | <u>India: Population, Economy, Society</u> , Macmillan, London |
| Chenery, Hollis et al | 1974 | <u>Redistribution with Growth</u> , OUP, London |
| Connell, John | 1975 | <u>Labour Utilisation: an annotated bibliography of village studies</u> , Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex |
| Dasgupta, Biplab | forth-coming | a book on agrarian change and the new technology in India, being published by Macmillan |
| De Kadt, Emanuel and Gavin Williams | 1974 | <u>Sociology and Development</u> , Tavistock London |
| Dickson, David | 1974 | <u>Alternative Technology and the Politics of Technical Change</u> , Fontana Collins, Glasgow |
| Dore, Ronald | 1976 | <u>The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification and Development</u> , Allen and Unwin, London |

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| Dube, S.C. | 1958 | <u>India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development</u> , Routledge and Kegan Paul, London |
| Earl, D.E. | 1975 | <u>Forest Energy and Economic Development</u> Clarendon Press, Oxford |
| Elkan, Walter | 1973 | <u>An Introduction to Development Economics</u> , Penguin Books, Harmondsworth |
| Elliott, Charles | 1975 | <u>Patterns of Poverty in the Third World</u> , Praeger, London |
| Epstein, T. Scarlett | 1973 | <u>South India: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Mysore Villages Revisited</u> , Macmillan, London |
| Epstein, T. Scarlett | 1962 | <u>Economic Development and Social Change in South India</u> , Manchester University Press |
| Epstein, T. Scarlett and Darrell Jackson | 1977 | <u>The Feasibility of Fertility Planning</u> Pergamon Press |
| Faber, Mike and Dudley Seers | 1972 | <u>The Crisis in Planning</u> (2 vols), Chatto and Windus for Sussex University Press |
| Fanon, Frantz | 1967 | <u>The Wretched of the Earth</u> , Penguin Books, London |
| Farmer, B.H. (ed) | 1977 | <u>Green Revolution? Technology and Change in Rice-Growing Areas of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka</u> , Macmillan, London |
| Farmer, B.H. | 1974 | <u>Agricultural Colonisation in India Since Independence</u> , OUP, London |
| Gilbert, Alan | 1977 | <u>Spatial Analysis and Rural Development</u> London |
| Griffin, Keith | 1976 | <u>Land Concentration and Rural Poverty</u> , Macmillan, London |
| Harvey, David | 1973 | <u>Social Justice and the City</u> , Edward Arnold |
| Haswell, M.R. | 1967 | <u>Economics of Development in Village India</u> , Routledge and Kegan Paul, London |
| Hunter, Guy | 1974 | <u>The Implementation of Agricultural Development Policies: Organisation, Management and Institutions</u> , Overseas Development Institute, London |
| Hunter, Guy | 1970 | <u>The Administration of Agricultural Development: Lessons from India</u> , OUP, |

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| Hunter, Guy | 1969 | <u>Modernising Peasant Societies</u> , OUP, London |
| Hunter, Guy et al (eds) | 1976 | <u>Policy and Practice in Rural Development</u> , Croom Helm, London |
| Hunter, Guy and A.F. Bottrall (eds) | 1972 | <u>Serving the Small Farmer: Policy Choices in Indian Agriculture</u> , Croom Helm, London |
| Hutchinson, Sr. J. (ed) | 1969 | <u>Population and Food Supply: Essays on Human Needs and Agricultural Prospects</u> Cambridge University Press |
| Islam, Nurul (ed) | 1974 | <u>Agricultural Policy in Developing Countries</u> , Macmillan, London, for the International Economic Association |
| ITDG | 1977 | <u>Hand Dug Wells and Their Construction</u> Intermediate Technology Publications London |
| ITDG | 1976 | <u>Manual on Building Maintenance Vol. Methods</u> , Intermediate Technology Publications, London |
| ITDG | 1976 | <u>Tools for Agriculture: A Buyer's Guide to Low-Cost Agricultural Implements</u> , compiled by John Boyd, Intermediate Technology Publications, London |
| ITDG | 1975 | <u>Manual on Building Construction Vol. Management</u> , Intermediate Technology Publications, London |
| ITDG | 1975 | <u>Water Treatment and Sanitation. A Handbook of simple methods for rural areas in developing countries</u> , Intermediate Technology Publications London |
| Joy, J.L. and Elizabeth Everitt (eds) | 1976 | <u>The Kosi Symposium: the Rural Problem in North-east Bihar. Analysis Policy and Planning in the Kosi Area</u> , Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex |
| Kay, Geoffrey | 1975 | <u>Marxism and Underdevelopment</u> , Macmillan London |
| Lambert, Claire (ed) | 1976 | <u>Village Studies: data analysis and bibliography Volume I, India 1950-1970</u> Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex |
| Lehmann, David (ed) | 1974 | <u>Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reform</u> . Faber, London |
| Lipton, Michael | 1977 | <u>Why Poor People Stay Poor: a Study of Urban Bias in World Development</u> , Temple Smith, London |

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| Long, Norman | 1977 | <u>An Introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development</u> , Tavistock Publications, London |
| Mamdani, Mahmood | 1972 | <u>The Myth of Population Control: Family, Caste and Class in an Indian Village</u> , Monthly Review Press, London |
| Moseley, Malcolm | 1974 | <u>Growth Centres and Regional Planning</u> , Pergamon Press |
| Myrdal, Gunnar | 1968 | <u>Asian Drama</u> , Penguin/Allen Lane, London |
| Oxall, Ivor, Anthony
Barnett and David Booth
(eds) | 1975 | <u>Beyond the Sociology of Development</u> , Routledge and Kegan Paul, London |
| Schofield, Sue | 1975 | <u>Village Nutrition Studies, an annotated bibliography</u> , Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex |
| Shanin, Teodor (ed) | 1971 | <u>Peasants and Peasant Societies</u> , Penguin Modern Sociology Series, Penguin Books Harmondsworth |
| Spate, O.H.K. and
A.T.A. Learmonth | 1967 | <u>India and Pakistan</u> , Methuen, London |
| Stewart, Frances | 1977 | <u>Technology and Underdevelopment</u> , Macmillan, London |
| Streeten, Paul and
Michael Lipton | 1968 | <u>The Crisis of Indian Planning: Economic Planning in the 1960s</u> , OUP, London |