216

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THE Central Committee of the Communist Party of India declared in the *Statement of Policy* which it adopted in May last that, "*Our real freedom today means taking the land from the feudal landlords and handing it over without payment to the peasant. This anti-feudal task, when fulfilled, alone will mean the real liberation of our country because the main props of imperialist interests in our country, as they were in China, are the feudals. So, like the Chinese, we have to fight feudalism and imperialism. Our revolution is anti-feudal, anti-imperialist.*

The Central Committee, therefore, said that "*the struggles of the peasantry are of prime importance*" in our revolution. It, at the same time, warned the Party against the outlook which either ignores "*the fact that we have a big working class and that it has a role to play which can be decisive in our struggle for freedom*", or, in the alternative, "*minimised the role of the working class*" by accepting the leadership of the working class "*only in theory, only through the Party, because the Party is defined as the Party of the working class.*"

It is stated that the essence of the path of Indian revolution consists in this that "*the working class, relying on agricultural workers and poor peasants, in firm alliance with the peasantry, together with the whole people, leads the battles in towns and rural areas to liberation, to land and bread, to work and peace.*"

The Central Committee further stated that "*such an understanding of our perspective gives us a new outlook on how to build our mass movement, our trade unions, Kisan Sabhas, and also a new way to build the Party.*"

Now that this general perspective has been accepted by the entire Party, the time has come to apply it to the peasant movement. We shall therefore examine the state of the peasant masses in India today, the various issues that affect their daily lives, the new ways and means adopted by the feudals and imperialists to exploit and oppress the peasantry, the various ideologies that are spread by enemy agents in the peasantry, *etc.*, and, in the light of these facts, try to find out the *"new outlook on how to build the Kisan Sabhas"*.

PEASANTRY IN THE POST-WAR UPSURGE

JUST as in the case of other sectors of our national liberation movement, just as in the case of other classes and sections of our fighting people, so in the case of the organised peasant movement, in the case of organised or unorganised millions of our peasant masses, the years since the end of the war have been years of a new wave of militant actions.

Shoulder to shoulder with the democratic masses of Calcutta and Delhi who initiated the campaign for the release of INA prisoners, with the RIN personnel who raised the banner of revolt against imperialist domination, with the working class which entered a new stage of mighty strike struggles, rose the millions of peasantry in the various provinces of India.

The year 1946 witnessed five major actions in the various parts of India in which the peasantry came out in their thousands against feudalism and imperialism.

The peasants of Kashmir rallied as one man behind the militant battle cry of *"Quit Kashmir"* raised by the national organisation of the Kashmiri people against the notorious stooge of British imperialism, Maharaja Hari Singh. They gave solid support to the leadership of the Kashmir National Conference in their struggle to end

feudal autocracy and establish democratic rule in Kashmir.

So too did the peasants of Telengana rally behind the national organisation of the Telengana people, the Andhra Mahasabha, in its struggle against the Nizam and his stooges. Led as they were by the Communist Party, the peasants of Telengana organised themselves in self-defence squads, beat back the foul attacks of the Nizam's police, Razakars and landlords' goondas. Basing themselves on the strength of these self-defence squads behind which stood the entire poor people of the villages, the peasants put an end to the system of *vetti* (forced labour) and other feudal practices: they also seized landlord's lands and distributed them among the landless and land-hungry peasants of the villages.

Agricultural labourers and poor peasants of Ambalapuzha and Chertalla taluqs of Travancore rallied behind the two slogans of the militant democratic movement of Travancore: *"End the Diwan's Rule"*, *"American Model Constitution into the Arabian Sea"*. Organising themselves behind the powerful working class movement of Alleppey, they resisted the arbitrary evictions resorted to by the landlords and, to this end, formed their own local committees and volunteer squads. It was this powerful support given by the landless and poor peasantry of the neighbouring areas that made the working class of Alleppey famous for its historic actions—Punnapra and Vayalar.

The share-cropping peasants of Bengal launched their epic battle for *Tebhaga*—reduction of the landlords' share from one-half to one-third. Tens of thousands of share-cropping peasants, for the first time in their lives, refused to carry the sheaves of corn that they had harvested to the *golas* of the zemindar or *jotedar* and started threshing it in their own houses. The landlords and their government saw that the peasant of 1946 was entirely different from the peasant of old, that no

amount of repression would force him to part with what he considered to be his rightful share.

So also did the peasantry of North Malabar refuse to carry the harvested grain into the granaries of the *jenmis*. Extremely anxious to see that their fellow countrymen get every ounce of the harvested grain, they agreed to hand over the entire stock of their produce to the government; they however refused to fill the *jenmis'* granaries because filling these granaries mean fattening the blackmarketeer. Behind this moderate demand of the peasants and the people stood the majority of people in North Malabar at whose head stood the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party.

Peasants in other Provinces and States also came out on the field of struggle for securing their demands, set up their fighting organisations and secured many of their demands. As the General Secretary's report to the Sikandra Rao (1947, May) session of the *All-India Kisan Sabha* said:

> "In *U.P.*, specially in the eastern district of Basti, tenants spontaneously rose in large numbers against the landlord offensive of ejectment from *sir* land. The struggle spread into other districts — Ballia, Azamgarh, Fatehpur, Rae Barelli, Aligarh, *etc.*, where it was based on several other issues also, such as: increase in wages; right of grazing cattle; stopping of *begar* or forced labour, and various other forms of illegal exactions. Generally, the struggles were victorious despite violent actions by landlords.
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> "In *Gujerat,* a struggle resulted in stopping the illegal exactions of Re. 1 to Rs. 7 per *bigha* of share-crop land from 2000 acres, saving nearly Rs. 8,000 per year for the share-croppers. A 40-day strike of seasonal labour who cut wood in the forests of Chikhli Taluq resulted in an increase in wages by 25%. Similarly in Anand Taluq seasonal tobacco

factory workers got a 25% increase in their wages after a month's strike....The Sabha fought for the abolition of the *hali* (serf) system which has not been abolished yet, but the wages have been substantially increased.

"In *Surma Valley*, kisans started a struggle for land and against eviction for non-payment of rent at enhanced rates and for *Tebhaga* rights. Partial victory was won. Another struggle was against the leases of fisheries artificially created by landlords to the detriment of *boro* paddy (summer crop) cultivation....The most important battle of Surma Valley was fought at Udarbund where the *bhagi* and *chukti-bhagi* peasant refused to pay the half-share of the winter crop unless the land-owners bore half the expenses and also refused to pay rent, except in cash.

"In *Punjab*, a struggle was launched in the Amritsar District, known as the *Mogha Morcha*. It was directed against the Irrigation Department which reduced water supply. Government yielded and increased the water supply.

"In Montgomery and other districts, sharecroppers refused to give any illegal dues. This also ended in victory...In 25 out of 84 villages in Firozpur District belonging to the Nawab of Mamdot, the Muslim League leader, tenants are fighting the *Tebhaga* battle. A similar struggle is being waged against a Sikh *guru* who is a big landlord in the same district.

"In *Patiala State*, tenants-at-will of 180 villages under the *biswedari* (landlord) system (total number of *biswedari* villages—420, of which 200 are inhabited by tenants-at-will) refused to pay anything to the landlords and occupied land claiming the right of ownership. So far they have occupied 25,000 acres. The Maharaja was forced to make an announcement giving 3/5ths of landlords' lands to tenants.

"In *Utkal*, a spontaneous movement of kisans on the demand of two-thirds share for them spread to many villages in Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam Districts where cultivators on their own harvested and shared the paddy according to their own demand. In Kanika, milkmen clashed with the oppressive zemindar over their pasture rights in course of which one *goonda* of the zemindar met with death....the movement for rent reduction in Ganjam district and for distribution of rent in proportion to the land held forced government to publish a bill providing for rent reduction. Kisans however did not wait for this bill to come into force and started enforcing their demands in the Sheragada, Dharakota and Sanakhmedi zemindaris of Arka Taluq.

"In *Maharashtra,* the Warli (tribal) kisans of Thana district fought for (1)Abolition of *begar* (forced labour), (2) abolition of slavery (which was in vogue till then), (3) reduction of rent, and (4) increase in wages, and succeeded in realising their demands for which they fought bravely.

"In *Andhra* (Madras part), the struggle was launched mainly against eviction, for reduction of rent, and for raising daily wages to a minimum of Re. 1 and particularly covered certain big zemindari estates of Kistna district....The people of Munagala are engaged in a heroic struggle against their landlord, who, in violation of a compromise made in 1939, were evicting tenants for *inam* and home-farm lands and encroaching on communal lands...Tenants of Utukuru estate fought in defence of their rights to cut *tunga* grass to roof their houses with, to fish in the communal tanks and to the usual rates and rights of pasture....At Tippalakatla village, tenants are resisting the zemindar's attempt to evict them.

"In *Tamilnad*, peasants in quite a number of areas in Tanjore, Madura, Ramnad, Tinnevelli and Chinglepet districts fought for (1) abolition of semi-serf conditions of *panneyals* (agricultural labour), (2) occupancy rights in land for tenants, (3) stoppage of eviction, (4) reduction of rent to one-fourth of gross produce, (5) increase in wages to a minimum of Re. 1 per day.

"In Bihar, two waves of *bakasht* struggle developed: in the first, covering Gaya, Shahabad, Monghyr districts, kisans asserted their occupancy rights in nearly 5,000 acres of *bakasht* land; in the second wave, covering the above districts as well as Champaran and Darbhanga Districts and even Manbhum and Singhbhum, kisans harvested paddy from nearly 10,000 acres of *bakasht* land. Kisans of 200 villages under the *bhowali* system, under which they have to pay 45% of their gross produce to the landlord, refused to pay it. Strikes of rural labour took place in hundreds of villages in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Saran, Darbhanga, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, *etc.* The result was that *begar* (forced labour) was stopped and wages increased."

Summing up, the General Secretary observed as follows:

"The new wave of kisan struggles has the character not of just an ordinary kisan struggle. It has fundamental differences from the character of earlier struggles. The following characteristics mark the present struggles:

"(i) They are spontaneous, being generally started on the initiative of kisans themselves.

"(ii) They are unprecedented in intensity and sweep.

"(iii) They have behind them greater unity and solidarity of kisans of whom all sections are in

struggle—poor peasant, share-cropper and agricultural labourer, as also women and children.

"(iv) They enjoy greater solidarity with non-kisan fighters—workers, students, women.

"(v) They are more vital to the interests of kisans who are therefore more militant,resolute, self-confident and self-sacrificing.

"(vi) They are more political and revolutionary, as is evident from the combination in them of the anti-zamindari slogan with the anti-imperialist slogan.

"(vii) They are suppressed with more ruthless and frantic measures.

"Abolition of the zamindari system and national independence are not unreal slogans; the kisans demand for them is only too real today."

It was these actions of the peasantry, this rallying of the million-headed peasantry behind their national organisations like the Kashmir National Conference or the Andhra Mahasabha or their class organisations (like the Kisan Sabhas and Agricultural Labour Unions in the various provinces) or under the organised leadership of their class allies (like the Alleppey Trade Union, which made the post-war revolutionary upsurge in India what it was—the initial form of *"the grand alliance of the working class and peasantry, acting in unison."*

It was a combination of these peasant actions with the strike struggles of the working class, with anti-imperialist demonstrations and actions of the urban petty bourgeoisie and with the rebellious actions of the armed forces and Government servants that forced imperialism to make a tactical retreat, that forced the British Government to make the 1947, February (Attlee) declaration and to work out the 1947, June (Mountbatten) plan for "conferring independence on India".

RULING CLASS UNLEASHES TERROR

THE landlord big bourgeois leaders of the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League also realised that this new peasant upsurge was a threat to their own selfish interests, the interests of a narrow clique of parasites. They therefore joined hands with imperialism in suppressing the rising peasantry.

Hardly had the much-heralded "independence of India" been formally declared when imperialism through its trusted agents in both the Indian Union and Pakistan, started its offensive against the peasants and common people of Kashmir, an offensive which was a cunning device to divert the anti-British and anti-feudal movement of a united democratic movement of the Kashmiri people into a struggle between the Indian and Pakistani Governments for control over Kashmir. And the reactionary leaders of both the Indian Union and Pakistan acted as willing instruments in this disruptive game of imperialism, so that, after four years of the "freedom" of India, Pakistan and Kashmir, that beautiful land is today being despoiled by the military and diplomatic representatives of Anglo-American imperialism.

So too, in Hyderabad, the advent of "freedom" meant that the peasants of Telengana who successfully defied landlord, Razakar and Nizam military terror had now to face the military might of the entire Indian Union behind which stood the "democratic" facade of an organisation which had been, for over 60 years, the acknowledged leader of the Indian National Movement. This military might and political power of the erstwhile leaders of the Indian National Movement was used not to end the Nizam's autocracy, but to buttress it still further; not to establish civil and political liberty but to institute a military administration; not to complete the agrarian reforms which the peasants themselves had introduced in certain parts of the State, but to take back

the lands seized by the peasants and hand them over to the landlords. In order that this act of restoring and strengthening feudalism may go forward successfully, the "freedom Government" of the Indian Union concentrated 50,000 troops in that area, arrested and imprisoned over 5,000 foremost leaders of the peasantry, and shot hundreds of partisans to death.

The reign of terror that the August "freedom" brought to the peasants of Telengana, though the worst that the country has ever seen, does not stand alone. In Malabar (1948, April-May), in the coastal districts of Andhra (since 1948, July-August), in the Ballia district of UP (1950), in Kakdwip in Bengal (1949), in Tripura, Manipur and parts of Assam—wherever the peasants rose in struggle to get their rightful demands conceded, the bourgeois-landlord government of the Indian Union sent its military forces. State Governments increased the number and activities of the police and semi-military forces, Congress organisations organised goondas, and a combination of all these official and semi-official forces of fascism were flung against the peasantry. So also did the Government of Pakistan unleash a reign of terror in the areas of peasant revolt in East Bengal, particularly in the Hill Border Regions of the Mymensingh District.

In fact, even before the August "freedom" was formally declared, the various provincial and State Governments manned by the leaders of the Congress and the League had proved their "worth" and convinced their imperialist masters that they are as capable of crushing the people's movement as the imperialists themselves. The Congress Government of Madras promulgated the Public Safety Ordinance in January, 1947 and detained over 100 working class, peasant and student leaders because, it said, that is the only way in which mass struggles like the South Indian Railway Strike, peasant struggles like those of Malabar, Kistna and Tanjore districts could be suppressed. The M.S.P. (Malabar Special Police)

terror in North Malabar (1946-47), the shootings of Karivallor and Kavumpayi (both in North Malabar) as well as Challapalli (in Andhra) were the first signs that the landlord-bourgeois Government of Madras was going the way in which fascism makes its first appearance. Similar legislations (providing for detentions without trial, *etc.*) were adopted in various other provinces long before the "August freedom".

The Sikandra Rao (1947, May) session of the All-India Kisan Sabha, in its resolution on kisan martyrs named one martyr in UP, 5 in Andhra, 8 in Malabar, 21 in the Punjab, 2 in Gwalior and 77 in Bengal, killed by the police or zemindars' men in order to crush the 1946-47 struggles.

The advent of "freedom" however made a basic change in the situation. While the reactionary bourgeois leadership of the Congress wanted, in pre-August days, to make skilful use of the peasant upsurge to put pressure on imperialism to allow a dependent "national government" to be set up, it felt, after August 15, that "its own national" regime was threatened by any kind of peasant actions. It therefore gave up all restraint in the use of the methods of terror, made ruthlessness one of the watch-words of its rule, thus justifying the confidence put in it by imperialism as the watch-dog of reactionary vested interests.

GAME OF DISRUPTION

REPRESSION, however, was by itself ineffective in totally suppressing the post-war revolutionary upsurge and had to be supplemented by disruption.

It was when the kisan and other sections of the toiling people of India rose up in the mighty revolutionary struggles of 1946-47 that imperialism and its reactionary Indian allies organised the Calcutta, Noakhali,

Bihar and other massacres. The anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggles of the common people of India were sought to be drowned not only in the blood flowing from the bodies of the fighting people as a result of military and police attacks, but also in the blood flowing from the common people as a result of anti-Muslim, anti-Hindu and anti-Sikh riots. The RSS, Muslim National Guards, *etc.*, were to be the close comrades-in-arms of the military and the police in suppressing the revolutionary mass actions.

The August 15th "transfer of power" and the partition of India greatly strengthened these forces of disruption and virtually smashed the great organised peasant movements of Bengal and the Punjab. The partition of Bengal and the Punjab, with the accompanying massacres of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh masses by the organised bands of reactionary, chauvinistic elements were not only the worst tragedy that has occurred in the history of India; they virtually smashed the glorious Bengal kisan movement by disrupting every local Kisan Sabha unit in the areas of the great and immortal Tebhaga movement; so also did they break up the seats of great kisan struggles in the Punjab, Patiala State, *etc.*

Even in the rest of the country—outside Bengal and the Punjab—the August 15 "transfer of power" helped the ruling classes to break up the unity of the kisan movement. A good section of the peasants thought that now that "our own Government" is ruling the country, they need not fight the government as they used to do in the days "when the foreigners were ruling". They thought that it would be unpatriotic and contrary to their own best interests if they sought to do anything to weaken the "national government". They therefore fell victims to the slanderous propaganda of the ruling class that the Communists are "out to weaken the National Government."

This, however, was not a phenomenon that was universal among the whole peasantry. As a matter of fact, the very illusion of "freedom", "people's own Government", *etc.*, brought tens of thousands of common people into activity; people in their thousands thought that since "their own Government" is in power, the nefarious activities of blackmarketeers, landlords, corrupt officials, *etc.*, would be put an end to and hence rallied aganist the blackmarketeers, landlords, corrupt officials, *etc.*, though not against the Government. What is more, that section of the people who are politically conscious to a sufficient degree to know that August 15 "freedom" is a spurious freedom, fought tenaciously. It was thus that the great North Malabar struggle, the struggle in Azamgarh (U.P.), *etc.*, took place in 1948. It was thus that the peasants of Telengana, who had received land in the course of the anti-Razakar actions, stuck on to these lands even after the "people's own freedom government" sent its troops to Hyderabad and tried to bring the landlords back. It was thus that agricultural labour and other sections of the rural poor rose up in various provinces in struggle against the conditions of serfdom under which they were forced to work. It was thus that new centres of anti-landlord resistance grew up—the Hill Border Regions of North Mymensingh in East Pakistan or the Assam-East Bengal border, Kakdwip in West Bengal, Tripura State, *etc.*

The landlord-bourgeois governments found that under these circumstances, repression alone would not save them, that is should be accompanied by some actions on their part which would help fostering illusions among sections of the peasants. They, therefore, combined the prosending of military forces to North Malabar with the promise to amend the Malabar Tenancy Act; "anti-commise to amend the Malabar Tenancy Act; "anti-communist" military activities in Hyderabad with the abolition of *Sarf-e-khas* (Nizam's personal property) lands and *jagir* lands; country-wide repression against kisan

workers with "anti-landlord" bills in the various provinces and states, *etc.*

PRE-WAR AND WAR-TIME PROPOSALS OF AGRARIAN REFORM

IN FACT, it was not in the post-war period that the ruling classes thought of this technique for the first time. This has always been their technique as much in pre-war and war as in the post-war years.

Though they are themselves connected by a thousand threads with feudal landlordism, the bourgeois leaders of the National Movement had very early seen that our land relations cannot continue in the old way. They therefore considered the reform of the land system as part and parcel of the struggle for national freedom. At the same time, they were also particular that any reform in the land system should be of such a type and on such lines that it would not disturb the basic economic structure of the country.

Imperialism, too, had, even before the outbreak of the Second World War, come to the same conclusion as the bourgeoisie. It is true that it came to this conclusion later than the bourgeoisie. It is also true that its concrete proposals for agrarian reform were far more halting than those of the bourgeoisie. It is nevertheless true that imperialism knew as much as the bourgeoisie, that the system of landholding in India is so out of accord with the needs of the situation that its continuation in its old form will hamper all attempts at ensuring economic or political stability for its own regime.

This can be seen from the fact that, as early as 1938-40, the *Bengal Land Revenue Commission* presided over by a British expert had exposed the weakness of Permanent Settlement and advocated its abolition.

It can also be seen from the fact that almost all the provincial governments (which were then manned by the

governors' advisors) in their replies to the Questionnaire issued by the *All India Famine Commission* of 1944-45 stated their view that the zemindari system should be abolished. The Commission itself (presided over by a British knight) came to the conclusion that *"the programme of rural economic development which has to be undertaken in the immediate post-war period, will encounter special difficulties in permanently-settled areas."*

Though there was thus a basic agreement between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie on the need of reform in the land system of the country, their approaches to the problem were different and therefore their solutions were also different in several material respects.

It is to be particularly noted that, while the majority of members of the Commission (the chairman was an Englishman and among the three members were an Indian civilian and a British nutrition expert) *"considered it necessary that the possibilities of reform of the system should be investigated"*, the one member of the commission who is an acknowledged spokesman of Indian Big Business (Sir Manilal Nanavati, for years Director of the Reserve Bank of India) said: *"If the energies and money proposed to be devoted to the removal of the defects were applied to the abolition of the system, to the creation of an efficient administrative machinery under Government and to the other essential forms of land improvement, it would pay far higher dividends in the restoration of the happiness of the people concerned."*

The difference between his own approach and the approach of his colleagues on the Commission is explained by Sir Manilal himself in the following words:

> "The permanent settlement system has been looked at in the report from the narrow viewpoint of its economic usefulness while wider issues such as

the moral implications of the system, its inequitable basis, and the degenerating influence it exercises on the vast population under it have been completely ignored."

Again:

"Administrators generally take a short-sighted and indulgent view of such important issues but the cultivators have long memories of times they had to go through. So long as any vestige of old oppression and injustice continue it would be no easy task to persuade them to adjust themselves to any new system of zemindari settlement. There is no doubt that the cultivator in the zemindari areas still carries with him the painful memories of his complete subjection to the landlord and the consequent hardships which are referred to at length by the Famine Commission of 1880 in their Report".

He then goes on to quote the views of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha and says:

"Any attmpt at modification of the permanent settlement which does not take into account the viewpoint of the cultivators who have to bear the burden of its operation is bound to fail in practice, because the conflict of interests would continue and would grow even stronger with the kisan organisations and the present no-rent campaign. There is no hope of ending this tension so long as we have the permanent settlement under which there is no direct contact between the cultivator and the Government or between the zemindar and the cultivator, or again between the Government and the zemindars, except for the limited purposes of collecting rent and revenue. Nothing less than removing the sense of injustice and oppression from the mind of the cultivators and thereby ending this clash of in-

terests can ensure a successfully working land tenure system. But this cannot be done so long as the Permanent Settlement in any modified form continues as these defects are inherent in the system and would disappear only with it."

While thus emphasising the need for something which will *"remove the sense of injustice and oppression from the mind of cultivators"*, Sir Manilal is sure that this can be done without attacking the vested interests of the landlords. Not only does he suggest a process of abolishing the Permanent Settlement which will keep intact *"the share of the zemindars in the profits to be paid to him after deducting the cost of cultivation"* by fixing its capitalised form as compensation. He actually suggests that this is the only way in which the zemindars can keep their share of the profits intact and that therefore *"the zemindars who are feeling nervous about their own future would be too willing to cooperate if their assistance was sought to facilitate the whole procedure of liquidation."*

It is thus clear that, while imperialism takes *"a short-sighted and indulgent view"* of the problem of the land system and hence proposed only such reforms in the system as would facilitate a more efficient administration of the country, the spokesman of big business demands such radical changes as would meet the situation in which the revolutionary peasant movement is growing. Though the latter is as anxious as the former to see that disturbance of the existing system is reduced to the minimum he knows that this cannot be done without *"removing the sense of injustice and oppression from the minds of cultivators."*

It is also to be noted that, in making these proposals of agrarian reforms, Sir Manilal is not alone. He has the general support of Indian big business. In fact, one of the arguments that he advances to show that his pro-

posals are eminently practicable is that the scheme that he had suggested *"has secured the approval of the authors of the "Plan for Economic Development of India"*, popularly known as the Bombay Plan (Vol. II, Page 16), *"drawn up by hard-headed businessmen who know the financial implications of the scheme."*

The conclusion is therefore irresistible that, long before the post-war revolutionary upsurge actually was on, the bourgeoisie had foreseen the need for such a change in the land system as would help the *"removal of the sense of injustice and oppression from the minds* of the *cultivators"* without removing the cause of that sense of injustice and oppression; in other words, creating an illusion among the mass of peasants that they are being freed from the clutches of the zamindars while actually helping the zamindars. The bourgeoisie had come to the conclusion that unless the unity of the revolutionary peasant movement is broken and a narrow stratum of kulak peasantry created, no amount of repression would suppress the fighting peasants.

MAIN PROVISIONS OF LAND LEGISLATIONS

THE land reform legislations which the various State Governments have introduced and passed in their Legislatures or are in process of passing are attempts to implement this programme laid down in the war years—the programme of making some adjustments in the land system without smashing the feudal order.

Each of these legislations has got its own specific features, firstly because the land system as it evolved through the centuries and as it was stabilised by the British through their early settlements, is different in different areas; secondly, because the various states are different from one another with regard to the degree of development of class differentiation and therefore of class antagonisms—*e.g.*, differentiation among the

peasants as between landless, poor, middle and rich; differentiation among landlords owing to the growth of new types of landlords from among the former tenants, from among the moneylenders, from among the professionals and merchants, *etc.* The specific manner in which these differentiations and antagonisms have developed may naturally lead to a specific relation of forces as between different sections in the ruling circles which, in its turn, will give rise to specific slogans of reform. It is as a result of these pushes and pulls as between the ruling circles and the peasant masses, as well as between different sections of the ruling circles, that each State Government has evolved its own specific form of agrarian reform.

It is therefore of the utmost importance for us to make a concrete study of each of these legislations and see how they change the existing system, who benefits from these changes, what are the actual benefits that they obtain from them, *etc.* For, it is only such a study that will help us to expose concretely how in each Province an attempt is made to delude the people by showing them that something big and substantial is being done while in fact the old order is essentially kept intact.

But, without attempting such a concrete study of each land legislation that has recently been introduced or is proposed to be introduced, it may be broadly stated that they follow a general pattern. For, in spite of the specific character of each of these legislations, they are all based on the general principles laid down by the most clear-headed spokesman of the bourgeoisie. And these principles are the following:

1. The various categories of landlord and tenant interests in land should be reduced to only one category; *zemindari, jagirdari, malguzari, khoti, etc.*, should all be ended; so also should tenancies of various kinds like occupancy, non-occupancy, exproprietory, free of rent, *etc.*, be abolished. In place of all these landlord and

tenant interests should be created what may be called the *ryoti* interest which is a modified form of the interest of the *ryotwari* landholder.

It is true that this principle has so far been applied only to the landlord rights of princes or their families in Part B and Part C States (*sarf-e-khas* lands in Hyderabad, *khandukrishi* lands in Travancore, *etc.*) and the lands of the *zemindars, jagirdars, malgulazars* and other statutory (permanently or temporarily settled) landlords (in U.P., Bihar, Assam, Orissa, C.P., Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras, Madhya Bharat, Bhopal). It is also true that there are still some provinces where this category of what may be called "feudal estates" are yet untouched by any such legislation; the most notable example being Bengal, the classical land of Permanent Settlement. It is nevertheless true that the general tendency is towards the abolition of all such interests, as can be seen from the fact that, even in states which are predominantly *ryotwari,* the few tenures that partake of the character of "feudal tenures" are being reduced to ordinary *ryotwari* tenure, *e.g.,* the Khoti Abolition Act of Bombay; the virtual abolition of *khanam* and other like tenancy rights already effected in Malabar and proposed to be effected in Travancore-Cochin (ref. the report of the 1950 Land Policy Committee) also shows the same tendency.

2. The above reform has to be brought about through the process of extinguishing the rights of feudal landlords, paying them compensation. Though the basis on which the amount to be paid out as compensation varies from state to state, it may be stated as a broad principle that the amount is lower than the market value of the interests that are being extinguished. The amount however is not "unfair to the landlord", since, if invested in industrial or commercial enterprises, it will fetch more or less the same amount as profit or interest as they are receiving today in the form of rent from their tenants.

This is made possible because the price of land is,

in relation to actual return from it, far higher than the prices of capital invested in industrial or commercial enterprises. (*Cf.* Marx, *"Since landed property is considered, in all old countries, as a particularly noble form of property, and its purchase also as an eminently safe investment of capital, the rate of interest at which ground rent is bought is generally lower than that of other investments of capital for a long time, so that a buyer of real estate draws for instance, only 4% on his purchase price, whereas he would draw 5% for the same capital in other investments. In other words, he pays more capital for the ground-rent than that he would for the same amount of income in other investments."*—Capital, Vol. III—Ch. XXXVII. It should be noted that Marx is here speaking of conditions in countries with fully developed capitalism which has penetrated agriculture as much as industry. Conditions in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries where the only avenue for investment of capital is land—that too not for improvement of the technique but for purchasing the right to extract feudal rent or interest—are far worse than this. In India, for example, return on the capital invested in buying land is almost half of the return on capital invested in other spheres.)

3. The amount of compensation as fixed above will be paid by the State, either in cash or in bonds—mostly the latter. The amount fixed so far comes to Rs. 15 crores in Madras, Rs. 140 crores in U.P., Rs. 150 crores in Bihar, Rs. 825 crores in Madhya Pradesh, Rs. 25 crores in Bengal (only for the Sundarbans area where a pilot scheme is being tried), Rs. 10 crores in Orissa, Rs. 5 crores in Assam, Rs. 18 crores in Hyderabad, Rs. 1.75 crores in Mysore and Rs. 10 crores in Mydhya Bharat, which adds up to Rs. 385.5 crores.

On the state paying these compensation amounts, it becomes the landlord and collects rent from tenants, as the landlords used to do before. The rents thus collec-

ted by the state will not only pay the interest on the bonds issued to the landlords but also the amount that has to be paid as amortisation charges, so that in the course of periods ranging from 15 to 25 years, all bonds issued to the landlords will be cancelled. Nay more, even after paying interest and amortisation charges on the bonds as well as incurring expenditure on settlement, preparation of land records and organisation of administration in the former landlord areas, allowing further for the fall in the revenue from stamp duties that should be expected, the State will gain from the operation. This is made possible because the payment on the bonds (which are themselves for amounts that are less than the market price of the land) is considerably below the rent to be collected.

It is thus the state that benefits from the "reform" at the expense of the peasants who have to pay more or less the same amounts of rent, the only difference being that, instead of paying to the landlord as hitherto, it has now to be paid to the state. There are of course certain cases, as for example in parts of Madras where zemindari rates of rent have been reduced to *ryotwari* land revenue rates, but they are rare. The state benefits also at the expense of the landlords whose net return on the bonds is considerably below what they get today as rent.

4. Peasants with cash to pay for it can acquire full proprietory rights on land. For example, the U.P. Act provides that peasants can become *bhumidars* by paying 10 times their present rents in one lump sum or 12 times in four instalments. In return, they will get 50% reduction in their rents. Corresponding rates in Madhya Pradesh are three and four times for absolute occupancy tenants and occupancy tenants respectively and in future they will be required to pay only 7/8 of the rent as land revenue. In Madhya Bharat, the rates are 6 times the annual rent for occupancy tenants and fifteen times for sub-tenants.

5. Apart from the compensation that they get, landlords would also get their home-farm lands, variously know as *sir, khas, seri, etc.*

6. While the above pattern of abolition of intermediaries is applicable for the *zemindari* and other statutory landlord areas, certain principles have also emerged for the *ryotwari* areas. These have been incorporated in the acts already passed by the Bombay and Hyderabad governments and in the proposals made by the Land Reform Committee of Madras. The characteristic features of these legislations already adopted or under consideration are:

(a) The continuation of all those leases that are in force but restriction on new leases. While the Hyderabad Act makes a general prohibition of leases after three years from the commencement of the Act, the Bombay Act prohibits only leases to non-agriculturists.

(b) A similar continuation of existing rates of rent but prohibition of further enhancements. The Bombay Act lays down the maximum rent as 1/4 of the gross produce (on irrigated land) and 1/3 (on unirrigated land) while the Madras Report recommends 40% and 45% of the gross produce. In Hyderabad, it is 1/3 for irrigated lands and 1/4 for the rest. A study of the relevant documents shows that these different rates of rent are recommended just because these are the prevailing average rates in the respective areas.

(c) Right of the tenant to buy the rights of the landlords by paying the market price. This however is conditioned by the provision that the landlord should have in his possession a certain amount of land—50 acres in Bombay, the acreage that will constitute an economic holding in Hyderabad (the exact area of this is to be fixed by the Government

for different areas of the State) and land paying an annual land revenue of Rs. 250 in Madras.

(d) Wide powers for the Government to take over the management of ill-managed estates and manage them efficiently, as well as to take over lands that remain uncultivated. These provisions have been incorporated in the Bombay and Hyderabad Acts as well as in a Madras Bill which had been published in 1949 but was subsequently withdrawn.

(e) Positive encouragement and various concessions to agricultural cooperatives going as far as the use of compulsion against the unwilling minority in an area in which 2/3 of the small holders—those below a minimum size of holdings—have expressed their willingness to form the cooperative.

7. One thing that is common to the legislations in *zemindari* and *ryotwari* areas is that the machinery for carrying out their various provisions is either bureaucratic *(mamlatdar, taluqdar,* Government-nominated Land Tribunal, *etc.)* or superficially-democratic *(panchayat* whose composition is such that the landlords will be able to dominate). It is to be noted that it is the bureaucratic machinery that is entrusted with the most vital jobs (fixation of rent rates, acreage of land to be left in the possession of the landlords, the purchase price to be paid by the peasant, *etc.)* Again, some state acts (Bombay and Hyderabad for example) have no provision for constituting *panchayats.*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

ALL these steps taken together are claimed by the Congress leadership to constitute a veritable social-revolution "eliminating all intermediaries between the State and the cultivator", "distribution of the surplus land of the landlords", "prevention of further fragmentation and

subdivision of holdings", "fostering cooperative cultivation," "encouragement of modern scientific methods of cultivation", *etc., etc.*

The criticism of these measures by both the right and the left critics of the Congress and its government also lends support to these claims, made by the Congress and its government.

Landlords in every province raised a hue and cry against these land legislations which they characterised as "expropriatory", "revolutionary", "communistic", *etc.* Not only did they oppose these proposals when they were made in the Land Reform Committees, or when they were introduced in the Legislatures, they also had recourse to High Courts, some of which upheld some of their contentions.

The left critics of the Congress made various points against these measures which, added together, mean no more than this: that the measures have not gone far enough. For example, one of the criticisms is that these legislations seek to abolish landlords with compensation as if payment of compensation is the only objectionable feature. There is again the criticism that too much land is allowed to the landlords as *sir, khas, seri, etc.*— as if reduction or total abolition of all these land grants to landlords would make the legislations acceptable. A third criticism is directed at the fact that the legislations are confined to the statutory landlord (*zemindari, jagirdari, malguzari, etc.)* areas—as if their extension to *ryotwari* areas is all that is needed. There is finally the criticism that the reforms are calculated to facilitate the growth of capitalism in agriculture, that the reforms are a victory of capitalist elements in the villages both over feudalism as well as among the peasants, that these agrarian reforms are the capitalist path of agrarian reform in our country, *etc.*,—as if the only trouble about these reforms is that its benefits do not extend to classes and sections beyond the rich peasant.

It is just because the Communist Party itself was a party to these "criticisms" from the "left"—the 1948 Political Bureau's document on the Agrarian Question is the fullest and clearest elucidation of the view that the various agrarian reforms of the Congress governments represent a capitalist solution of the agrarian question and that they strengthen the capitalist elements in the villages as against feudalism as well as against the toiling peasantry—that the Party could not, in the last three years, maintain the unity of the peasants as expressed in the All-India Kisan Sabha and its provincial, district and local units. Far from rousing the entire peasantry against the Congress Government and its deceitful demagogy of working out "land reforms", our Party actually handed over the rich peasant to the Congress by suggesting that he stands to gain by these "reforms". Having thus painted a picture of landlord-big bourgeois-rich peasant alliance with the big bourgeois in the cities and the rich peasant in the villages as the leader of this alliance, the Party considered it to be its sacred duty to expel the rich peasant from the organised kisan movement, to look with extreme suspicion on the middle peasant, who, after all, is the nearest to the rich peasant, and to organise an uncompromising struggle against capitalist elements in the villages.

It is true that the May (1950) Central Committee meeting corrected this crude "leftism" of the 1948-50 Political Bureau. It rejected the slogan of "rich peasant, the main enemy in the villages" and restored the concept of anti-feudal struggle as the key task. It however had not wiped out all remnants of "leftism"—many of which still persisted, as for example, the exclusion of the "rich peasant with feudal tails" from the Democratic Front. It is also remarkable that, in the course of discussion in the Central Committee meeting as to the degree of development of capitalism in agriculture, the question raised and differently answered was whether and how far capital-

ism is growing in agriculture, it being assumed that, if it is actually growing, it should be fought at least next to feudalism. Nobody had the vaguest idea that capitalism in agriculture, like capitalism in industry, is an advance on the present situation in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country. The Central Committee could not accept and apply the lessons of the Chinese Revolution which through its agrarian reforms, is carrying out a policy of deliberately building a rich peasant economy which means nothing but promoting capitalism in agriculture.

Now, however, we have got the new Programme of the Party which is based on the correct Marxist-Leninist thesis that the struggle in India today is not between capitalism and Socialism, but between imperialism and feudalism on the one hand and the mass of our people on the other; further, that in this struggle capitalist economy, the capitalist class, has a role to play and that the mass of the people led by the working class can make use of it, provided they take all precautions that the capitalist elements are not allowed to drag the people into the arms of imperialism and feudalism. It has thus become possible for us to work out a policy inside the organised kisan movement which, while it relies mainly on the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the country-side, will firmly unite them with the middle peasantry and rally all the anti-feudal elements including the rich peasant.

This however requires a proper evaluation of the significance of the concrete measures taken and the several slogans popularised by the ruling circles and their parties on the agrarian question. For, as we have seen above, the various land legislations do confer some benefits on some sections of the peasantry; *e.g.*, the right of well-to-do peasants in U.P. to acquire *bhumidari* rights, the right of "protected tenants" in Bombay and Hyderabad to purchase landlords' rights by paying reasonable price, reduction rent in *zemindari* areas in Madras to the

rates of a *ryotwari* land revenue in the neighbouring areas, *etc.* These and the demagogic slogans of irrigation, multi-purpose projects, *etc.*, create the illusion in the minds of several thousands of peasants that something is being done for them. Similarly, slogans of cooperative farming, consolidation of holdings, planning of crops, *etc.*, appeal to hundreds of Socialist and democratic intellectuals who have been impressed by the rapid strides made in socialist countries through their collective development of agriculture and think that the same should be done in India. Only if these thousands of kisans and hundreds of intellectuals are disillusioned regarding the exact character of the land policy pursued by the Congress governments shall we be able to unite all the anti-feudal elements for those decisive changes in the land system which constitute the main content of our People's Democratic Revolution.

This, to be really concrete, will of course have to be done separately for each province, since it is in relation to the prevailing tenures in the provinces that new measures are introduced and illusions created. It would however be possible to make a general evaluation of the all-India policy and slogans that have all-India application. It is, in fact, necessary to make such a general evaluation on an all-India level, to see the significance of even provincial legislations in proper perspective. It is such an evaluation that is attempted below.

FOSTERING OF CAPITALISM IN AGRICULTURE?

FIRST of all, let us take the question whether these land legislations constitute a replacement, or at least pave the way for the replacement, of feudal society by capitalist society in relation to rural areas.

The 1948 Political Bureau document on the agrarian question answered this question in the affirmative on the

basis of statistics showing a rapid growth of landless proletarians. These statistics are an indication, it said, that capitalist relations, relations based on the purchase and sale of labour-power, are becoming the dominant relations of production. This domination of capitalist relations of production were stated to be further advanced by the land reform legislations of Congress governments which were calculated to further increase the ranks of the landless labour in the villages. From this analysis of the growth of capitalist relations of production in agriculture, which is further facilitated by the various land reform legislations, the conclusion was drawn that it is capitalism that is dominant in Indian agriculture and is being further developed by the Congress governments.

Now, it is a well-known doctrine of Marxism that capitalism in agriculture means not merely the growth of landless labour. Together with this is what Marx calls *"the transformation of agriculture from a merely empirical and mechanically perpetuated process of the least developed part of society into a consciously scientific application of agronomics, so far as this is at all feasible under the conditions going with private property."* It is because capitalism brought about such a transformation, thereby advancing the technique and increasing the productivity of agriculture, that Marx, Kautsky and Lenin declared unhesitatingly that capitalism is a progressive factor in agriculture as much as in industry. Against the Revisionists of Europe and Narodniks of Russia, Kautsky and Lenin upheld and defended Marx's teaching—*"The rationalising of agriculture on the one hand and thus rendering it capable of operation on a social scale, and the* reductio ad absurdum *of private property in land on the other hand, these are the great merits of the capitalist mode of production. Like all its other historical advances it brought these also by first completely pauperising the direct producers."*

It is therefore un-Marxist to isolate the phenomenon of the growth of landless labour (which, at best, proves only the growth of capitalist relations of production) from the development or deterioration of the technique of production and of the productivity of land. Marx himself cites the case of Ireland as an example of conditions in which *"ground-rent, the form of landed property adapted to the capitalist mode of production, formally exists without the capitalist mode of production itself so that the tenant is not an industrial capitalist nor the mode of his management a capitalist one."* The Communist International in its *Colonial Thesis* applied this Marxian idea to the colonial world in general when it stated: *"Partly owing to unequal exchange, and partly to direct exploitation, the peasants in these countries are not in a position to raise the technical or organisational level of their economy. The productivity of their labour, as also the demand for it, is falling....Big land ownership is hardly connected in any way with large-scale agriculture, but serves only as a means for extorting rents from the peasants."*

Had this position any way changed after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International wrote the above, or at least after August 15, 1947? Does the Congress programme of abolition of the zemindari system with compensation, as it has emerged in the form of various state legislations, lead to any change in the situation, any improvement in the technique of production, any increase in productivity?

The answer is furnished in all the economic publications that have recently appeared in our country—official or unofficial. We would only quote two extracts from the unofficial but authoritative organs of Indian big business.

The *Eastern Economist* in its 1949 Annual Number made a review of India's economic development during the first 50 years of the present century (1900-1950)

which obviously includes nearly 2½ years of "Free India". The following are extracts from the chapter on "India's Land and its Fruit":

> "The residue of physical expansion left over from the preceding century was soon exhausted and, by the close of the first decade, the pattern of land utilisation and crop production had assumed, in outline as well as in its larger details, the static form which it has substantially preserved down to the present times. The land, since then, has been a Procrustes' Bed, in which has been fiercely crushed every expansionist impulse or pressure, so much so that an increase of some 60 millions in the population of British India made but little impression on the cultivated area, although agriculture still remained far and away the principal source of employment and earnings. There was no permanent change in the net area sown in British India between the years 1911-12 and 1940-41. The area varied from year to year, determined primarily by the rainfall—by its seasonableness as much as by its adequacy—but outside the range set by these variations, there was no steady upward trend at all. In 1916-17, the area hit the heavens at 215 million acres; in all the thirties, the highest level reached was only 214 millions."

Added to this stagnation in acreage is the fact that, "*barring the remarkable performance of cotton and to a less extent of sugarcane, there has been no instance of any sustained improvement in the technical level of farming*". Coming concretely to three major aspects of technical progress, the *Eastern Economist* goes on to point out:

> (a) *Irrigation:* "The aggregate capital outlay on all state irrigation works was, in the year 1900-01, already of the order of Rs. 40 crores.... Since

the beginning of the century and upto 1945-46, the capital outlay has increased by another Rs. 110 crores to Rs. 150 crores. It cannot be said that, having regard to the greatly varying circumstances of the years before and after 1900, this higher rate of progress in the latter period adequately represents all the greater zeal and drive that could have been possible. In fact, during all this period, the general tendency to avoid any really large commitments for financial considerations were only too frequently apparent as was well illustrated by the endless and futile consideration of the Tungabhadra Project.... All the major works that have been constructed were completed in the years between 1920 and 1935 .... In terms of the area irrigated by state works, the progress has been even less satisfactory. In the years before 1875, the gross area irrigated from state works was of the order of about 10 million acres; in the twenty-five years that followed, this area went up by about 8 million. In the first 25 years of the present century, a further 8 million acres were added and towards the close of the thirties the area irrigated by Government works had increased to 30 million acres. In other words, while state works succeeded in extending irrigation to some 8 million acres in the 25 years before 1900, they have been developed to serve only some 12 million acres over all the succeeding 40 years.

(b) *Plant Research and Research Into Agricultural Practices:* "Of these, under Indian conditions, where the scope for improvement in technique within the limits of individual holdings is severely limited by lack of capital, plant research easily has the more important possibilities. But a quarter century of plant research in India has not appreciably extended the benefits of the epoch-making rediscovery of Mendel's work to the farmer in this land....But

even the limited results achieved in the laboratories have not been made available in any large degree to the farmers in their fields, as is well illustrated by the following data relating to the spread of improved varieties in Indian provinces and states:

Area Under Improved Crops in 1938-39

Crop	Total Area (in 1000 acres) A	Area Under Improved Varieties (in 1000 acres) B	B as % of A
Rice	**72,574**	**4,476**	**6**
Wheat	**35,291**	**7,898**	**22**
Cotton	**23,482**	**6,499**	**24**
Sugarcane	**3,113**	**2,122**	**77**
Jute	**3,200**	**1,588**	**50**
Millets	**519,000**	**615**	**Negligible**
Groundnut	**8,439**	**568**	**6**

(c) *Farm Equipment:* "There has been little improvement in the level of farm equipment. A certain amount of invention has been applied to the development of water lifts and improved village implements, particularly the plough, cutting implements and the seed drill. But it cannot be said that progress in these directions has been appreciable enough to influence either the output per man-hour in agriculture, or the wage level of agricultural labour. Cattle power still remains the main motive power apart from the human labour, and in the quality of cattle, draught or diary, there has been no general improvement, although a certain amount of selective breeding and upgrading work has been done in respect of a number of local breeds. . . . But in spite of the particular excellence, the general quality of cattle has probably deteriorated rather than otherwise, while there is no doubt at all that the land is encumbered by some millions of entirely useless cattle.

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"Of mechanical equipment or machinery, there has been little enough. Some attempt has been made to apply power to water lifting, but oil fuel has generally been found to be too expensive and uneconomic. Electricity has been relatively more successful, but even here, progress has been both meagre and localised...Tractors, until very recent years, were a rare phenomena."

What about the much-talked-of production drive initiated by Nehru, Patel and Munshi in 1949 as part of a plan to "make India self-sufficient in food by 1951"? The *Tata Quarterly* of January 1951 says:

"If the technological possibilities of intensive farming are considered, an increase of 20 to 30 per-cent in the yield of foodgrains is within the bounds of practicability. It was, therefore, natural that the Food Commissioner relied on intensive farming to contribute 30% of the additional yield necessary for achieving self-sufficiency. Information regarding the steps taken to improve the productivity of the farm is, however, very scrappy.

"In 1949-50, total imports of agricultural machinery in India were valued at Rs. 5 crores as compared with Rs. 1.9 crores in 1948-49, and on the basis of the figures for the 6 months, April to September, 1950, it appears that for the year 1950-51 the imports would not be much greater. As against this, the Colombo Plan, the objectives of which are more realistic and modest than those of the self-sufficiency policy and which is spread over a longer period, envisages an annual flow of agricultural machinery worth Rs. 18 crores. In respect of manures, foreign imports went up from 178,000 tons in 1948-49 to 247,000 tons in 1949-50 and 355,000 tons in the 6 months April to September 1950 and under the compost scheme of the Government, the quantity of

manure prepared amounted to 3.5 million tons in 1948-49. This must, however, be compared with the estimated requirement of 24 million tons of compost along with other fertilisers for increasing the yield of a crop like rice by 4 million tons."

In other words, both as regards agricultural machinery as well as manures, the progress made after the launching of the "self-sufficiency drive" is insignificant and has no relation to the magnitude of the problem or in relation to the huge amounts spent on the drive. The *Tata Quarterly* actually quotes the following conclusion arrived at in the course of a survey of the 1943 Grow More Food campaign, jointly undertaken by the Reserve Bank of India and the University School of Economics, and says that it more or less applies to the "self-sufficiency drive."

> "We could not avoid the impression that more attention was paid to achieving expenditure targets, mechanically in fulfilling the various schemes—seed and manure distribution, well-digging, *etc.*—than to accomplishing results such as extention of cultivation or improvement of efficiency. Distribution of aids which would make an impressive record for the annual report rather than optimum utilisation of limited resources became an end in itself."

It is thus clear that, neither before the August 15 transfer of power nor after it, has there been any considerable improvement in the technique of production or increase in productivity.

This does not of course mean that our technique of production remains absolutely static. There is certainly some improvement here and there. The figures given above show for example that the use of modern implements and scientific manure has increased. It is also true that the local production of modern agricultural im-

plements is increasing: according to figures quoted by the *Eastern Economist Records and Statistics,* April 1951, *"there are 231 factories engaged in the production of improved types of implements with a rated capacity of 40,000 to 50,000 tons of steel consumption on single-shift working. Besides, there are at present 8 organised units engaged in the manufacture of power-driven pumps with an annual installed capacity of about 35,000 pumps of varying sizes and five units engaged in the manufacture of Diesel engines with a capacity of 5,300 engines of varying horse power."* The use of tractors has also increased, as, according to the above source, *"During 1950, 4000 to 5000 tractors were imported and it is estimated that the demand was likely to increase to 10,000 to 15,000 tractors per annum."*

Nor would it be correct to ignore the fact that the landlords who are being "abolished" as well as the well-to-do tenants who get full proprietory rights under the various land legislations will get an opportunity to make use of these modern implements, manures and seeds and thus improve technique in their farms (the landlords will be left with enough of *sir, seri, khas, etc.,* lands to do this). If only this is meant by what is called the "growth of capitalism in agriculture", it is true that the recent agrarian reforms of the various state governments facilitate the growth of capitalism in agriculture.

DEVELOPMENT HINDERED

THE important point about these "reforms" however, is not that they facilitate the "growth of capitalism" in certain limited spheres of agriculture, but that they prevent the same in the major part of the country. For, while it gives enough land to the landlord to transform himself into a capitalist farmer, while it also enables the well-to-do peasant who can pay for it to get land with

full proprietory rights and use it for purposes of applying the modern technique of cultivation, it saddles the overwhelming majority of peasants with such heavy burdens that they are in no position to have two square meals a day; this being so, it is impossible for them to invest capital for manuring their lands with scientific fertilisers, for substantially replacing animal with mechanical power, for acquiring and using the knowledge of plant research and other agronomical inventions, for digging wells, *etc.*

We have already seen that, in the case of *zemindari*, *jagirdari* and other statutory landlord areas, the change that is taking place is mainly this: that the State secures for itself the rights of the landlord and in that capacity collects the rent from the *ryots;* it is only those who pay a certain multiple of the present rent that get a certain reduction in rent. As for the *ryotwari* areas, even in those few cases where the tenants are entitled to buy off the rights of their landlords under certain conditions, they have to pay "reasonable price" at market rates. This means that, in the case of the overwhelming majority of peasants, they will continue to pay the same rent as they are doing today. Added to this is the fact that these reforms do not incorporate or envisage any reduction in the burden of interest which will continue in the same old way. The main feature of the land legislations of the various states is thus the continuation of the two forms of exploitation that are dominant in feudal society —rent and interest.

It is true that this continuation of feudal forms of exploitation is sought to be hidden behind the demogogic slogan of "making the peasant himself the owner of the soil." That, however, is all the more reason why the deceptive character of this slogan—the fact that behind the smokescreen of "bestowing proprietory rights on the peasants" is concealed the reality of the old feudal relations—should be unmasked. All the more important is the reason why it should be clearly stated that all those

reforms of the land system are worthless which do not emancipate the peasantry from the heavy burdens of rent and interest along with arrears of both and that, in the absence of total cancellation, or at least substantial reduction, of peasants' indebtedness to the moneylender and their rent liabilities to the landlords, any proprietory rights that they get are as illusory as the August 15 "independence" with all the British capital in India kept intact.

The theory of "the growth of capitalism in agriculture" is particularly dangerous because instead of the real enemy, *i.e.*, the rent-receiving landlord and interest-receiving usurer, it concentrates fire against the capitalist whose growth, if true, is a factor of progress in the development of the forces of production. It thus assists that very illusion to grow in the public mind which the ruling class is deliberately fostering—that land legislations of the various Congress governments are a heavy blow to feudalism—while, as a matter of fact, the crux of these legislations lies in this that they preserve feudal exploitation in a modified form but with the same intensity as before.

Now the question arises: Since we have found that at least the landlords and well-to-do peasants have before them the opportunity of developing into capitalist farmers, can it not be said that, at least in this limited sphere and to this limited extent, capitalism is growing and is bound to grow? An answer in the affirmative immediately strikes itself. The position, however, is not so simple. For, there are some factors working against them also.

Firstly, there is the fact that the meagre advances in agricultural technique that are likely to take place in the next five years (Ref. Planning Commission's Report) are accompanied by a disproportionate increase in the taxes on the agricultural sector. The recent measures of taxation that were proposed by the Government

of Madras, acording to which some crops are to be taxed at 400 and 500 per cent of the present land revenue, are an indication of what is coming all over India. (It is true that, due to the hue and cry raised on the floor of the Assembly and outside, some of these taxes have been given up and some others reduced, but in spite of all that, new taxes have been levied).

Secondly, there is the problem of fluctuations in prices—the alternate outbreaks of booms and slumps—which affect the big capitalist farmers as well, though not with such intensity as the toiling peasants. It is true that some of them will be able to take advantage of these fluctuations and get richer, but a considerable section also stands to lose by them as happened during the Great Depression of 1928-33. This is particularly true of the peasants and capitalist farmers of a colonial country like India which produces raw materials and strategical goods, because it is the American and British financiers who manipulate the prices of these commodities.

Thirdly and finally, it should not be forgotten that, in the case of well-to-do peasants, they have to pay huge amounts to get full proprietory rights over their lands—"reasonable price" at market rates in the case of *ryotwari* tenants and slightly less in the case of *zemindari* tenants. This will require, in the case of many of them, resort to the moneylender at least for a part of the amount and the consequent interest payments. If, to this initial liability on their proprietory rights, is added a few years of bad crops or low prices or both, they are sure to have their liability mounting from year to year till, in the end, they have to alienate their land itself.

It is only the landlord (who gets his home-farm land free of cost, and compensation besides) that is free from this last unfavourable factor. He is, therefore, the most likely to develop into the capitalist farmer. But even

he is not free from the two unfavourable factors mentioned above—high taxation and market fluctuations.

It is, therefore, absolutely wrong to think that the agrarian policy of the Congress in general, or its land legislations in particular, will lead to the growth of capitalism in agriculture. That the ruling class would like to transform the present semi-feudal landownership into capitalist landlordism is perfectly true; that it wants to turn a narow stratum of present-day tenants into kulak peasants is also true. But the very fact that it wants to do this without ending the rent and interest forms of feudal exploitation, without freeing India from the imperialist shackles which make it necessary for ever further and fresher burdens of taxation to be put on the peasants, without enabling Indian agriculture to emancipate itself from the fetters of the Anglo-American-controlled world market, leads not to the development of capitalism in agriculture but to an increasing pauperisation of the peasants.

ABOLITION OF INTERMEDIARIES

LET us now pass on to the claims made by Congressmen for the land legislations that their Ministries are enacting, the main ones of which are:—

That they eliminate all the intermediaries between the State and the actual cultivator.

That they prevent the fragmentation and subdivision of holdings, as well as land transfers by agriculturists to non-agriculturists.

That they encourage the consolidation of small holdings and formation of economic holdings.

That they lay the basis for a more efficient and really large-scale cultivation through the formation of cooperative societies, *etc., etc.*

Every one of these claims is false and deceptive.

"Intermediary between the State and cultivator" is nothing but the juridical expression of an economic reality—the reality that a class exists which appropriates a part of the agricultural product without rendering any service to society. And this reality will continue to exist so long as class society exists, *i.e.*, so long as the chief means of production are owned and controlled by non-producers. There were no intermediaries between the state and the cultivator in primitive communism (when actually there was no state); there will be no intermediaries in Socialist society (when all the chief means of production are owned and controlled by society. In all the intervening stages of human history—slavery, feudalism, capitalism—there have been and are intermediaries, transition from one form of society leading only to changes in the form in which the intermediaries appropriate a part of the agricultural product.

It is a well-known fact that the *ryotwari* land tenure which the British introduced in India was in the beginning a system under which the State dealt directly with the cultivator. It was, therefore, the ideal society in which there are no "intermediaries between the state and the cultivator." But what happened in the course of a century and a half of this system of peasant proprietorship? Here is what the recent report of the Hyderabad Agrarian Reforms Committee (1949) says:

> "Although theoretically the *ryotwari* tenure did not originally contemplate or recognise the existence of any middle-man between the State and the registered occupant, yet on account of the unrestricted right of transfer which was allowed to the occupants or the *pattadar*, inevitably in course of time, though in earlier stages imperceptibly, a class of non-cultivating owners or *pattadars* came into existence. They leased their lands and became rent receivers.

above factors, people from all walks of life began acquiring land, not for purposes of cultivation by themselves but as a source of business or commercial investment. In course of time, this tendency became more and more pronounced, as a result of which land increasingly passed out of the hands of the owner-cultivators into the hands of non-cultivating classes like moneylenders and others, who lived mostly away from the land and whose sole interest in the land was the amount of the rent they could get by letting it to others. As time went by, the disassociation between ownership and the cultivation of land became more and more pronounced and the number of cultivating *pattadars* began to decrease progressively. (*Report*, pp. 11, 12, 13)

The Punjab is famous throughout India as the land of peasant proprietorship. How this system of peasant proprietorship has worked in actual practice is seen in the fact that, out of 31.17 million acres of cultivated area, 15.26 million acres (just over 50%) is cultivated by tenants-at-will who have in general to pay 50% of the gross produce as rent. It is also to be noted that the growth of moneylenders as a class and their activities leading to the pauperisation of the peasants were considered such a vital problem of agrarian economy in the Punjab that special legislation was enacted (*Land Alienation Act of 1901*) preventing the transfer of land from agricultural to non-agricultural classes. Even this legislation however, did not arrest the process but only replaced the professional moneylender with the agriculturist moneylender. As the Bengal Land Revenue (Floud) Commission stated after its visit to the Punjab: "*It is a fact that a class of agricultural moneylenders has grown up and we were given to understand that considerable bitterness had developed. The critics of the Act complain that the large landholders are allowed to buy up the holdings of*

the small holders whereas the non-agriculturists cannot obtain any land at all. They want to amend the Act so that the term 'Agriculturist' will become synonymous with the actual tiller of the soil, and the big landlords who do not themselves cultivate are removed from the list of agricultural tribes." (*Report*, Vol. II, p. 41)

There is, therefore, no question of abolishing intermediaries in general, some type of intermediary being bound to continue till the entire country's agriculture is organised on Socialist lines. This is the lesson of all agrarian revolutions of the epoch of capitalism including the most thorough-going one of these—the French Revolution. A few decades after this latter model bourgeois democratic revolution, France developed a new type of landlordism; so too has America which, when starting on its career of capitalist development, had no feudal encumberances but is today a land of big landlordism.

The task in India today is far more modest than the abolition of all intermediaries. It is only the abolition of one type of intermediary, the rent-exacting feudal landlord and the interest-extracting moneylender—the freeing of our agricultural economy from the heavy burdens of feudal rent and usurious interest payments. It is just this that is stoutly resisted by the Indian ruling classes and their political party, the Congress. It is to cover up this protection they afford to the real and concrete intermediary of present-day India that they shout hypocritically of "abolishing all intermediaries".

THEIR OTHER SLOGANS

THE same is true of their other demagogic slogans—prevention of fragmentation and sub-division of holdings, prevention of land transfers to non-agriculturists, consolidation of holdings, collective farming, *etc.* All these are nothing but so many clever and cunning devices to

cover up the service that they are rendering to the most parasitical, the most reactionary, the most decadent classes—feudal landlords and moneylenders and their foreign masters.

(a) Fragmentation and subdivision of holdings is the natural corollary of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial economy, an economy in which the majority of the people are forced to depend on land for their livelihood, the growing population has to be absorbed in more or less the same acreage of land, or land whose acreage increases at a far slower rate than the population. The only way in which this process can be stopped is to industrialise the country so that a good part of the present agricultural population as well as the growing population can be drawn away from the land. This is exactly what is being done in China and prevented from being done in India because the former has shaken off imperialist shckles while the latter is under the firm grip of the Commonwealth financiers.

(b) Nothing need be said regarding the prevention of land transfers from agricultural to non-agricultural classes. We have already cited the example of the Punjab where this "progressive" step led to the emergence of a new class of (agriculturist) moneylenders. The moneylender can also evade the law, as, according to Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherji, the Punjab moneylender did, by *"asking the cultivator to take a mortgage and pay the real borrower in a round-about way."* (*Land Problem in India*, p. 271)

(c) As for consolidation of holdings and collective farming, these will be nothing but a means of further exploitation in the hands of landlords (who are formally "abolished") and the bureaucrats who dominate the country. For, the "consolidated" "economic" holdings and co-operative farming societies will naturally be dominated by these parasitical elements in the villages, as the bitter experience of whatever co-operative movement has been

working in India shows. No rural organisation of peasants—particularly such organisations as control the whole process of agricultural production—can fail to develop into an engine of oppression so long as the landlords and moneylenders are allowed to extract rent and interest (in whatever form) from the peasants and so long as the present bureaucratic state machinery is kept intact. Breaking the backs of the landlord, the moneylender and the bureaucrat is the pre-requisite for any reforms in the system of farming.

It is thus clear that every one of the claims of the Congress with regard to its land legislation is as spurious as its claim to have brought "complete independence" to India.

PEASANTS' ASSOCIATIONS— THE CRUCIAL FACTOR

NOW the question arises: Since it has been made plain that the agrarian reform policy of the Congress governments it nothing but a screen for the maintenance of our semi-feudal, semi-colonial economy inact, what alternative policy have the peasants and their allies to place before themselves; or rather, what are the essential principles of a democratic programme of agrarian reform?

The foregoing analysis of the situation in regard to Land Tenures will make it perfectly clear that the basic task in any democratic programme of agrarian reforms is the ending of feudal exploitation in its two main forms of rent and interest. It is only when this is done that the crores of rupees that are today pouring into the coffers of landlords and moneylenders can be profitably utilised, utilised to raise the living standards of the peasantry (which in its turn will create the necessary home market for an enormous expansion of industries producing consumption goods) and to improve the technique of

cultivation (which in its turn will create the necessary home market for the establishment of machine-building, chemical and other industries producing capital goods). This is, therefore, the pre-requisite for any measure intended to advance the country from its backward colonial position to the position of an advanced industrial country.

This being the crucial point in any democratic programme of agrarian reforms, it is necessary to subordinate everything else to it. For example, it will be wrong to isolate the question of "to pay or not to pay compensation to landlords" from this question of making the peasant free of the huge payments that he is forced to make to landlords and moneylenders. Compensation is to be opposed not because its payment is wrong in principle (though, of course, there is no justification for it in principle either) but because its practical effect will be to saddle agriculture with so heavy a burden that it could not make all those advances that are necessary to improve its technique and increase its productivity.

This practical approach to the question of compensation will make it possible to make slight adjustments in the case of small and medium landlords—adjustments which, though slight when looked at from the viewpoint of society as a whole, may not be slight in the case of individuals and groups concerned. The need for such slight adjustments is to be seen in the fact that most of the proposals made so far of "abolishing landlordism without compensation" contain a provision that poor landlords will be paid "rehabilitation allowances" or even "compensation". Now, it will be wrong to commit ourselves to payment of compensation, or even rehabilitation allowance to every poor landlord without ascertaining whether or not its payment will saddle the peasant with fresh burdens, which, after all, is what has to be avoided. It is, therefore, absolutely correct to lay it down as a principle, as the *Programme* does very clearly, that the Agrarian Reform shall not require the peasant

to make any payment for the land that he gets, without mentioning compensation or rehabilitation allowance at all.

The same is the case with regard to land distribution. Whose land is to be taken? to whom is it to be distributed? what should be the limit beyond which nobody is to be allowed to hold land (if such a limit is to be put)? what should be the rights and liabilities of the peasants after the agrarian reform?—these and various other questions have been posed and very often answered in isolation from the crucial task of ending feudal exploitation. The following examples will show how wrong is the method of posing and answering such questions of detail in connexion with land distribution:

(a) One of the favourite methods of radical agrarian reform—for example, the one suggested by the Socialist Party of India—is that an upper limit (of, say, 30 acres) should be put on all land holdings and that the surplus lands (lands above 30 acres) should be taken over. This mechanical limit is wrong for various reasons.

Firstly, it mixes up three types of landowners in this—a rich peasant who himself does manual labour and employs agricultural labour and who owns above 30 acres; a capitalist landlord who does not himself do manual labour but carries on cultivation through hired labour and who owns above 30 acres; and a feudal landlord who collects rent or interest from above 30 acres.

Now, from the point of view of principle itself, it is wrong to allow an owner of the last category to keep even 30 acres, while the question of taking over surplus lands of owners of the other two categories is to be done —if it should be done at all—only from the practical viewpoint of the need for satisfying the land hunger of the landless and poor peasants. For, while the third category belongs to a parasitical class having no function in social production, the second category belongs to an *entrepreneur* class which itself does no manual labour

but which plays a definite role in social production. As for the first category, though the major part of its income comes from exploitation, this exploitation itself is, firstly, accompanied by the manual labour performed by it and secondly, its exploitation itself is not of the parasitical but of the *entrepreneur* type. Owing to these differences in the role they play in production, the first two categories help in the development of technique and increase of production while the third prevents both.

Secondly, this completely ignores the fact that large-scale production even on capitalist lines is an advance not only on the present position but on small-scale production in general, since it will improve technique and lay the basis for a subsequent Socialist collectivisation. It ignores the fact that certain types of scientific farming can be done only on a large scale and that to put an upper limit to all forms—particularly at such a low level as 30 acres—will be a retrograde step in the development of cultivation.

Thirdly, it is wrong to put a uniform upper limit all over the country without having any regard for the diversity in the fertility of the soil and other agronomic factors.

It would, therefore, be incorrect to put any uniform upper limit to all holdings in all parts of the country. What can definitely be stated is only this: that the lands of all feudal landlords without regard to the size of their holdings shall be taken over, as this is the crucial point in a programme of breaking the back of feudalism. As for capitalist landlords, in areas in which they have developed to a considerable degree and have monopolised land, a certain restriction of upper limit will have to be put on their holdings, taking care, however, that this limit it put at a sufficiently high level to enable them to carry on efficient cultivation. Finally, as regards rich peasants, no restriction at all should be put at this stage; whatever restriction has to be put will have to be done

only if at a later stage, it is found to the satisfaction of the peasantry in general that the unlimited holdings of rich peasants are acting against the interests of the majority of peasants.

(b) Another proposal with regard to land distribution —this again is made by the Socialist Party—is that a lower limit also should be put on holdings; in other words, the act of distributing land should be so organised that everybody who gets land will get so much land. This is very objectionable because it will amount, in actual practice, to keeping a large number of landless and land hungry peasants landless. For, it is a well-known fact that, in several provinces, shortage of land is so acute that equal land distribution will give less than the minimum required for an economic holding. That being so, there can be only two alternatives; either give some land to everybody though the holding of each will be less than an economic holding; or give some people sufficient land to constitute an economic holding and leave the rest absolutely landless. (The third alternative of giving all those who want land enough to constitute an economic holding will arise only as a result of industrial development which will draw a big section of the rural population away from their villages). And there is no doubt that as between the two alternatives, the first is preferable to the second, for the simple reason that it will give every villager the economic prerequisite to build a free life—life unfettered by feudal shackles.

(c) Again, there are various proposals calculated to restrict the right of the peasants over the lands that they hold; these are advocated in the name of "planning out and organising the utilisation of land with a view to maximum advantage to society". Now, it is quite correct to say that, after the agrarian reform, the utilisation of land should be so organised as to derive maximum advantage to society. But who will do this? A centralised bureaucratic state machinery? If so, it will

have the same dire consequences as the Congress programme of "cooperative farming", "consolidation of holdings", *etc.* The only way in which land utilisation can be sensibly planned and organised is to entrust the job to the peasants themselves who have to be helped in forming their own organisations for the purpose.

This organisation of the peasantry is, in fact, the crux of a democratic programme of agrarian reforms. It is this that will guarantee that the agrarian reform will really break the back of feudalism. For, it should be realised that the abolition of landlordism is not a question of drawing up an attractive plan of carrying out reforms as the Socialist Party and other "planners of agrarian reform" make it appear, it is a question of fierce class battles against the most reactionary classes in society. And, in this struggle, victory can be achieved only if the entire peasantry, particularly the landless and poor peasantry who constitute 70 to 80 per cent of the rural population, is organised for the struggle. As Comrade Liu Shao-chi says:

> "Agrarian reform is a systematic and fierce struggle. Our general line to be followed in future agrarian reform is that reliance should be placed on the poor peasants and farm labourers, while uniting with the middle peasants, neutralising the rich peasants in order to eliminate the feudal exploitation system step by step and with discrimination and to develop agricultural production.
>
> "The peasants' associations should be the main organisational form and executive organs of the forces of agrarian reform. Peasants' Congresses at all levels, committees of the peasants' associations and people's representative conferences at all levels, should be the centres of activity during the agrarian reform. Sound, active elements from among the peasantry, together with cadres sent by higher

authorities to do agrarian reform work in the rural districts should become the backbone of the agrarian reform."

It is these peasants' associations which tackle the innumerable details regarding land distribution in China. It is they that are legally authorised:

(a) "to unite farm labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants and all anti-feudal elements in the rural areas, so as to carry out step by step anti-feudal social reforms and to protect the interests of the peasants in accordance with the policy, laws and decrees of the People's Government;

(b) "to safeguard the political rights of the peasants, to raise the peasants' political and cultural level and to take part in the construction of a State of People's Democracy" *(The People's Government's General Regulations Governing the Organisation of Peasants' Associations"* —Article 2).

Once this objective of carrying out agrarian reform through the peasants themselves is kept in view, it will become unnecessary to go into all the innumerable details of the reform, such as: How shall the poor landlords be helped? what discrimination is to be shown between a liberal landlord who supports the land reform and an anti-reform reactionary landlord? whether the surplus lands of the capitalist landlords are to be taken over and if so, how much is to be left to them? *etc.* All these are questions which can be left to the innate, revolutionary commonsense of the peasants themselves, organised in their own associations and committees. It is only those who have no faith in the peasants that would want to foist on the peasants a grand plan of agrarian reform in which all the innumerable details are worked out so minutely that the hands and feet of the peasants are tied down to it.

PEASANTS' COMMITTEES AND PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY POWER

REVOLUTIONARY peasants' associations have a crucial role to play not only in working out the details of agrarian reform after the state of People's Democracy is established, but in the very process of fighting for the establishment of such a State.

Speaking on the prospects of the Chinese Revolution in a session of the Chinese Commission of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1926, Comrade Stalin made the following observations on the role of the Chinese peasantry in the revolution:

> "At the moment, we must not raise the question of Soviets, but of the formation of peasant committees; I have in mind peasant committees, elected by the peasants which are capable of formulating the fundamental demands of the peasantry and of taking all the necessary measures for realising those demands in a revolutionary manner. These peasant committees should serve as the axis around which the revolution in the countryside will unfold."

What are these peasant committees? Are they just another name for kisan sabha? No. Answering a voice from the audience: "And what about the peasant unions?" Com. Stalin said: "I think the peasant unions will group themselves around the peasant committees or the peasant unions will be transformed into *peasant committees possessing some kind of authority necessary for the implementation of the demands of the peasants*". (Emphasis mine—E.M.S.N.) The portion emphasised above shows unmistakably that it is when the organisation and struggle of the peasants against their class enemies have reached such a stage that they are in a position to enforce their demands in a revolutionary way, that peasant committees arise as distinct from kisan sabhas or kisan

sabhas are themselves transformed into peasant committees.

As a matter of fact, the post-war kisan struggles in India like Tebhaga and Telengana led to the formation of such peasant committees. Councils of Action arose in the course of the Tebhaga Struggle in Bengal; so also did the *Sangham* in Telengana play the role of peasant committees *"possessing some kind of authority necessary for the implementation of the demands of the peasants."* It was the first that helped the sharecroppers of Bengal to implement their demands for a 2/3 share; it was the second that distributed the lands of landlords among peasants. The development and activities of these and other organisations like the Tripura *Mukti Parishad*, if carefully studied, will give a wealth of material to guide the kisan movement in our country for the formation of peasant committees which help the peasants to realise their demands in a revolutionary way.

Peasant Committees, however, cannot by themselves realise all the demands of the peasants. Com. Stalin says: *"this path* ('the path of formation of peasant committees and the penetration of Chinese revolutionaries in them in order to influence the peasantry') *is inadequate. It would be ridiculous to think that in China there are enough revolutionaries for this work. The population of China is nearly 400 million. Of these 350 million are Chinese and more than 9/10 of them are peasants. To assume that a few tens of thousands of Chinese revolutionaries can fully permeate this ocean of peasantry is a mistake. Therefore, we must still have other paths."*

What are these other paths?

1. "The path of influencing the peasantry through the apparatus of a new people's revolutionary power. It cannot be doubted that in the newly liberated provinces, a new power will be formed on the pattern of the Canton power. There is no doubt that this

power and the apparatus of this power must engage in satisfying the most urgent demands of the peasantry if it really wishes to advance the revolution."

2. "The path of influencing the peasantry through the revolutionary army. I have already spoken of the greatest importance of the revolutionary army in the Chinese revolution...The attitude of the peasantry towards the new power, towards the Kuomintang, and towards the revolution in China in general, depends above all on the behaviour of the army, on its attitude towards the peasantry and towards the landowners, on its readiness to help the peasants."

It is clear that in India too, the problem of the formation of peasant committees is linked up with the problem of replacing the present Government of princes, landlords and their allies by a Government of People's Democracy as is defined by the Communist Party of India in its *Election Manifesto*. For, it is precisely to the task of preventing the peasants and their allies from forming their own organisations "possessing the authority necessary to implement their demands" that the present Government has dedicated itself.

The last 7 years have seen the slow but steady development of the Indian people towards this. The glorious anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggles of 1946-47; the betrayal of these struggles by the Congress which came to an agreement with the very classes against which the people were fighting; the regime of starvation, corruption and repression under which the people are groaning from day to day since the so-called "transfer of power"—all these have produced a situation in which the replacement of the present Government by a Government of People's Democracy has been placed on the agenda. The spectacular victories of the People's Democratic Front in the recent general elections in Hyderabad,

Tripura, Andhra, Kerala, parts of Tamilnad, *etc.* confirm this.

It is only when the revolutionary upsurge of the peasant millions is, on the one hand, consolidated into "peasant committees possessing the authority necessary for the implementation of the demands of the peastantry" and, on the other hand, linked up with the struggle for replacing the present Government with a People's Democratic Government that basic changes can be brought about in the land system.

COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE POST-WAR KISAN UPSURGE

THE absence of such a perspective on the part of the Communist Party, the inability of the Party to organise the tremendous revolutionary upsurge among the peasantry into a properly planned mass movement of agrarian revolution, has been the main weakness of the post-war political situation in India. It was because of this weakness that the imperialist plan of suppressing, disrupting and dividing the mass upsurge with the help of the reactionary classes in India could not be successfully challenged.

We are not here going in detail into all the various mistakes committed by the Party in analysing the agrarian question and in leading the agrarian struggles in the last five years. It is enough to give in broad outline what happened inside the Kisan Sabha and the Party in the main stages of the post-war history of the Communist Party of India.

1. *In the first stage of the post-war history* (from the end of the war in August, 1945 to the August, 1946 resolution of the Central Committee), the Party was oblivious of the fact that a new upsurge was coming and hence it was unable to organise kisan actions to keep pace with the INA demonstrations, the RIN Revolt, the preparation

for the All-India Railway Strike, *etc.* It is remarkable that the "charter of kisan demands" resolution adopted by the Central Kisan Council in September, 1945, contained no call to kisans and Kisan Sabha units to fight for the realisation of these demands; it merely *"called upon Kisan Sabha units to popularise these measures among the people, to rally as wide a support to them as possible and to get all candidates in the ensuing elections to pledge themselves to them."* Together with the gratification" expressed by the Council at the fact that the *"Congress-sponsored National Planning Committee is shortly holding its meeting, etc."*, the assurance which the Council gave *"all these planners* of *the active cooperation of all Kisan Sabha units in implementing these plans of building modern India"*, and the advice which the Council gave them that, *"if any plan is to succeed in feeding, clothing, housing, educating and otherwise serving our people, it should go to the root of our economic system"*, this failure to give the call for kisan actions shows the clear tendency of the legalist-constitutionalist path of bringing about agrarian reforms.

This right-opportunist outlook towards kisan actions is, however, coupled with a sectarian approach in the case of one of the demands: *"In ryotwari areas the maximum limit of land which a non-cultivating owner can either lease to the tenant or get cultivated by hired labour must be fixed."* In this demand is seen the seed of all the subsequent sectarian mistakes in formulating the slogans of agrarian revolution—the failure to distinguish strictly between the feudal (rent-and-interest collecting) landlord and the capitalist (surplus-value-appropriating) landlord, the tendency to include even rich peasants in the landlord class.

2. *In the second stage* (from the August, 1946 resolution of the Central Committee, to March-April, 1947), the Party adopted the policy of leading kisan struggles. It was in this period that the struggles referred to in the

early parts of this document were fought. The Party however had no plan of developing these struggles in such a way as to lead towards the formation of revolutionary peasant committees. Even such epoch-making struggles as the Tebhaga in Bengal, Telengana in Hyderabad, Punnapra-Vayalar in Travancore and North Malabar had no consciously-prepared plan or organisation behind them; what achievements these struggles have to their credit were solely due to the initiative and organising capacity of the leadership locally.

Comrade Bhowani Sen, in his report on Tebhaga to the Sikandra Rao Session of the All India Kisan Sabha, said: *"There were not enough wholetime workers nor effective speakers to rouse the kisans everywhere. Still, kisans of villages which had no contact with the Sabha came forward spontaneously....kisans, on their own, set up their own organisations for the struggle: the Councils of Action, which however their middle class leaders even failed to report to the higher units".* It is in fact not only the "middle class leaders of the Councils of Action" in Bengal but the entire leadership of the Party that failed to realise their significance and encourage the growth of the kisans' own fighting organisations. Whatever organisations that sprang up spontaneously in several provinces were not developed into the initial form of revolutionary peasant committees.

This reliance on the spontaneously growing kisan struggles also led to a 'left'-sectarian disregard for the necessity of forging a united front in support of kisans' struggles. Once again to quote Comrade Bhowani Sen: *"We underestimated the need of middle class support and failed to campaign for it. The reason was that we overestimated the strength of the kisans in isolation and depended only on the justness of the demands. There was no propaganda even among the working class people in support of the Tebhaga demand until repression had started."*

Failure to unleash the tremendous initiative of the kisans and help them to set up their own fighting organisations, failure to link up kisan struggles with the middle-class and working-class struggles—these two were thus the main weaknesses in this period.

Together with these weaknesses in the matter of leading struggles was also the wrong approach to the question of how to abolish landlordism. For example, the 1946 (November) resolution of the Central Kisan Council on how to abolish landlordism fixed up the 25-acre limit for landholding by cultivators while it allowed *"the existing landholders, both in the zemindari and ryotwari areas, to possess land for self-cultivation upto the maximum limit of 25-acres per landholder"*. This, on the one hand, allowed evictions on a large-scale (each landholder can evict as many tenants as will be enough for his own landholding to become 25 acres), while, on the other hand, it put the same restriction on the landholdings of the feudal landlord, capitalist landlord and rich peasant.

3. *In the third stage* (March-April, 1947 to December, 1947), there was a retreat from the policy of leading struggles. The tendency in all the reports made and the resolutions adopted at the Sikandra Rao Session of the All India Kisan Sabha (May, 1947), was one of discouraging struggle unless and until full and complete unity of the kisans among themselves as well as with other sections of the democratic movement was assured. Comrade Bhowani Sen, for instance, in his report on Tebhaga correctly catalogued three mistakes: *"failure to discriminate between different categories of landholders, failure to forge united front with the middle class and working class and complacence regarding the legislative side of the movement"*. He however does not mention a fourth mistake: failure to organise, and coordinate the activities of, the peasants' own fighting organisations in such a way as to lead to the formation of revolutionary

peasant committees. Out of this partial appraisal of the mistakes flows his conclusion: *"Thus the principal character of the mistakes can be put in one word—'left' sectarianism"*. Similarly, the General Secretary's Report correctly draws three lessons from the countrywide kisan struggles—the intensity of repression, the consequent need for relief and legal defence, and the importance of rousing public sympathy for struggles—but does not mention a fourth lesson that no kisan struggle can be victorious unless the revolutionary initiative of the kisans is unleashed and kisans helped to set up their own fighting organisations. The campaign for the support of the general democratic movement was thus made almost a substitute for the organisation of the kisans themselves.

As for the basic slogans of agrarian reform, the Sikandra Rao Session continued the same old wrong approach—maximum limit of holdings—with some modifications.

4. *In the fourth stage* (From December, 1947 to March, 1950), There was a swing to the other end from the policy of discouraging struggles adopted in the previous stage. What was undoubtedly correct in the criticisms made at Sikandra Rao was all rejected in this period while the principal mistake of the Sikandra Rao appraisal was continued in another form: need for forging unity with the general democratic movement, the importance of utilising legislatures to advance the revolutionary movement, the possibility and necessity of discriminating between landholders of different categories, *etc.*, were all ridiculed as a "reformist approach"; while, far from helping the kisans to set up their own fighting organisations, the very existing organisations of the kisans—Kisan Sabha units—were disrupted and dissolved. Not imperialism and feudalism but the rich peasant was declared the enemy against whom fire was to be concentrated. Though this policy led to the organisation and militant struggles of agricultural labour and

poor peasants in several places, though these struggles of the poorest sections of the rural people brought tens of thousands of people into action for the first time in history, they resulted in setting these poorest of the rural poor not against their real enemy—feudalism—but against some of the enemies of feudalism. It was this extremely sectarian approach to the peasantry in general that led to the virtual dissolution of the All-India Kisan Sabha making it defunct in practice.

5. *In the fifth and final stage* (From March-April, 1950 to April-May, 1951). There were two trends in the Party: (i) That of the June Central Committee—of continuing the sectarianism of 1948-50 in new forms—"excluding rich peasants with feudal tails" from the anti-feudal front, ignoring the task of building open Kisan Sabha units on the theory that illegal organisations alone can lead struggles, virtually ignoring the need of any sustained mass work on the plea that partisan units are the crucial units which will lead struggle, *etc.* (ii) That of Com. Joshi and others who advocated a policy of going back to the positions taken up at Sikandra Rao—denouncing all militant struggles (inculding Telengana) as adventurist, interpreting the unity of all the peasantry in such a way as to deny the special revolutionary role of agricultural labour and poor peasants, denying the fact that, on some issues and on some occasions, the rich peasants will go over to the enemy, the denial of the necessity for any illegal mass organisations and partisan units, *etc.*

There are two features that are common to all the five stages here enumerated: (i) on the issue of the objective of agrarian reform, they do not make the strict distinction that it is necessary to make between the parasitical feudal system of production and the capitalist system and hence, instead of the objective of ending the former and of restricting while promoting the latter, they advocate the policy of treating them alike; (ii) On the issue of leading kisan struggles, they do not advance

the basic task of so leading every struggle as to unleash the revolutionary initiative of the kisans to the maximum and help them to set up their own fighting organisations. It was within the framework of this incorrect understanding that the Party shifted its policy from time to time. Hence the "corrections" in policy that were made repeatedly by the Party turned out to be not real corrections but swings from one incorrect policy to another.

It would however be wrong to look upon the Party's activities on the peasant front in the post-war period as nothing but a series of mistakes. The Party has, on the contrary, very solid achievements to its credit. The very fact that Party members took a heroic and self-sacrificing part in all the struggles that took place in all the provinces and states of India; that, in spite of all the weaknesses in their understanding of the theory, strategy and tactics of agrarian revolution, Party members stood with the peasants and fought shoulder to shoulder with them; that the Party led the Kisans in innumerable partial struggles through which they secured their demands, as well as in such glorious struggles as those of Telengana, Mymensingh, Tripura; that, as a result of all this, tens of thousands of kisans have been roused and organised—this has made the Party the most effective leader of the organised peasant movement. It is an indisputable fact that, in spite of the right opportunist perspective of the Party leadership in some stages (the first and third stages referred to above), Party members stood with the peasants and gave expression to their sentiments and demands; similarly, in spite of the sectarianism of the Party leadership in certain other stages (second, fourth and fifth stages), Party members gave militant leadership in struggles; finally, in spite of the fact that the Kisan Sabha as an organisation stood disrupted because of the Party's sectarian policy in certain other stages (fourth and fifth) Party units all over the

country drew tens of thousands of new militants from among the kisans towards a programme of struggle and educated and organised them, though inadequately. To forget these achievements of the Party and to see only its mistakes and short-comings is to forget the very fact of the revolutionary upsurge among the kisans in the post-war period, to forget the very rapid disillusionment of the mass of peasantry regarding the Congress and its government, to forget the rapid growth of the feeling among the kisans that this government has to be replaced by one which will satisfy their demands.

IMMEDIATE TASKS

IT IS therefore the task of the Party to so reorientate its very outlook on the kisan front as to carry on a merciless struggle against the right-opportunist and 'left'-sectarian mistakes in its understanding and practice, as well as to consolidate the gains and achievements made in the course of the last five years, so that the Party will be in a position to lead millions of peasants in their revolutionary struggles in the months ahead.

To this end, the Party should take the following steps.

1. Reformulate the immediate demands of the peasantry in the light of (a) the working of the various land reform bills; (b) the working of the various acts and rules connected with procurement and prices of foodgrains, rationing and supply of essential consumers' goods as well as seeds, implements and other goods of agricultural production; (c) the plans and working of irrigation, *etc., etc.* These should be so formulated that the democratic legislators in the various State legislatures as well as in the Central Parliament can introduce Land Reform or Tenancy Bills, move resolutions, put questions, *etc.*

2. Organise systematic study of the rural economy, class structure, land laws, and other connected questions in every state, in every district and local area, with a view to apply the Marxist-Leninist theory of the agrarian question to the concrete conditions in our country.

3. Organise a similar systematic study of the history of the peasant movement in the various states, districts and local areas with a view to the proper evaluation of achievements and failures of the movement as a whole as well as of the leading role of the Party in it. This alone will enable the Party to carry on a systematic and effective struggle against right opportunism and 'left' sectarianism in building the Kisan Sabha as an organisation and leading kisan struggles.

4. Without waiting for the completion of the studies mentioned in (2) and (3) and on the basis of immediate demands envisaged in (1) start a vigorous campaign of agitation among the peasants, building Kisan Sabha units, forging unity in action with those kisan organisations that are oustide the Kisan Sabha, *etc.*

5. Organise systematic recruitment and education of kisan militants—particularly militants drawn from landless and poor peasants, as well as from among women, minority communities, *etc.*—as Kisan Sabha volunteers and as Party members.

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