Chapter IV

BIHAR PROVINCIAL KISAN SABHA AND FORMATION OF ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA

Introduction

One of the factors responsible for the rise of the All India Kisan Sabha was the existence of kisan sabhas in the provinces prior to its formation. Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh had kisan sabhas at the provincial level. This chapter includes a study of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha for the following reasons: First, the Kisan Sabha in Bihar was a struggling body at the time of the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha. By the time the All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936, the Kisan Sabha in Bihar had certain victories to its credit. Apart from other achievements it had put an end to the bogus kisan sabhas, which had sprung up in Bihar during the twenties. Second, leaders of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Rahul Sankritayan, Jadunandan Sharma and Karyanand Sharma participated in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha. They were among the founders. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati became the first President of All India Kisan Sabha and the leader of the All India Kisan movement. Third, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was a strong and struggling unit of the All India Kisan Sabha after its formation and conducted struggles which drew all India attention during the period of our study.

1 Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, Kisan Sabha Aur Kashtkari Kangon Sanshochan (in Hindi), [in p.], 1936, p. 45.

2 Indradeep Sinha, "40 Glorious Years of All India Kisan Sabha", New Age (Delhi), vol. XXIV, no. 35, August 29, 1976.
Factors for the Rise of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha

Following factors were responsible for the rise of the Provincial Kisan Sabha: (1) Agrarian crisis in Bihar which created the immediate problem of protection of tenants from high rents, rent arrears, land eviction and rural indebtedness of Bihar. (2) The attitude of the British towards tenancy legislation during the twenties. (3) The role of the Zamindars in Bihar. (4) Role of Bihari intelligentsia. (5) Rising peasant consciousness.

British Attitude Towards Tenancy Legislation During Twenties

As indicated in the earlier chapter the British did not legislate for tenants owing to the disagreement among the different agrarian classes in Bihar. In 1922 Macpherson on behalf of the Government introduced a Bill in the legislative council. In the face of opposition from the Zamindars and tenants the bill was withdrawn in 1923. The Government decided that any tenancy legislation would take place only under two circumstances i.e. either when the relations between the landlords and tenants were acute or when the landlords and tenants agreed. The attitude of the Government was indicated from the preface to the bill introduced in 1922. It said "Government then decided not to undertake legislation until either the differences between the two parties became so acute as to demand intervention, or there was a reasonable expectation of attaining an amicable settlement". There were bills in 1925, 1927 and 1928 but could not become acts owing to disagreement between the two parties.

3 See Chapter II.
This attitude of the Government gave enough scope for the Zamindars and tenants to intervene in their respective interests.

**Role of the Zamindars**

The Zamindars of Bihar, conscious of their rights, were politically organized and active as we have indicated in Chapter II. The Bihari Zamindars participated in the 1857 movement. A number of Zamindars in South Bihar took a prominent part in organizing and leading the rebellion. They were against the British because most of the 'capital' was located in Bengal. Bihar Zamindar suffered and remained backward owing to this.

Bihar and Orissa became a separate province in April 1912.

Bihar was neglected by the British after the Mutiny and in comparison to Bengal, Bihar lagged behind in all fields. The Bihari always found himself at a disadvantage in comparison to the Bengali. A movement for separating Bihar from Bengal started. In 1876 the demand "Bihar for Biharis" was made for the first time. This movement received financial support from a number of big Bihari Zamindars.

**Opposition to the Act of 1885**

The Maharaja of Darbhanga, Lakshmeshwar Singh, opposed the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. An extraordinary meeting of the Bihar Landlords' Association held on May 28, 1882, described the law as 'unnecessary'. In a petition to the House of Commons,

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the Zamindars of Bihar opposed the Bill. They said, "...there may be bad landlords in Bihar as well as in other countries but they maintain that the existing laws, if properly administered are amply sufficient to give protection to the meanest raiyats without resorting to enactments which are subversive to the rights of property, and shake the confidence of the people in the justice of the Government".

The "Bhumihar Brahmin Sabha" in a meeting on December 11, 1922 opposed moves for tenancy reform.

**Formation of United Party by the Zamindars**

The Zamindars of Bihar organized themselves into a political party in a meeting held at Ranchi on September 4, 1932 at the initiative of Maharaja of Darbhanga. It had "almost all the leading and important landholders of Bihar..." According to the report the meeting was representative. It was attended also by "several leaders of public opinion and representatives of professional classes and the tenantry.... The Members of the Provincial Legislative Council had attended in large numbers.

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5 Majority of landlords of Bihar were Bhumihars. The social composition of the landlord class was Bhumihar Brahmin, with smaller numbers of Kayasthas, Muslims, Rajputs and Brahmans in that order; Walter Hauser, "Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), p. 13.


7 *The Report of the Proceedings of the Conference held at Ranchi on September 4, 1932*, p. 3.
There were also present the representatives of Bihar and Orissa in the Council of State and in the Legislative Assembly. There were more than 300 gentlemen present including the two Ministers, and the Indian executive Councillor who attended the conference in his personal capacity. The Banking, Trading and Commercial interests were also fully represented and it may safely be said that for several years past such a representative assemblage of the various sections of the people of Bihar, had not been held. It is noteworthy that there were also present in the meeting members representing the European and the Planting community in Bihar. The tenants were also represented by several of their chief spokesmen - the most prominent amongst whom was Pandit Sheo Shankar Jha". It was claimed that this party was the most representative since it included landlords and tenants, Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, capitalists and workers, etc. Indirectly, through Maharaja of Larbhanga, All India Hindu Sabha was also represented.

8 Ibid., pp. 3-4. The following is the list of the prominent persons present in this gathering.

1. Maharaja Dhiraja Kameshwar Singh, Larbhanga.
2. The hon'ble Rai Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan, Member Council of State, Patna.
3. The Hon'ble Raja Raghunandan Prasad Singh, Member Council of State, Monghyr.
4. The Hon'ble Abu Abdullah Saiyid Hussain Imam, Member Council of State, Gaya.
5. Babu Kamleshwari Sahai, Chairman, District Board, Bhagalpur.

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This conference was called for establishing a political party. According to the circular issued by Maharaja of Darbhanga the aim of the conference, was "to discuss the prospects and the ways and means of bringing a political party into existence..." This party was to be a constitutional party. Maharaja of Darbhanga as the Chairman of the conference talked of not "criticising the present Government". He laid down the immediate political goal as "attainment of complete dominion Status within the British Empire" and he sought to attain it by "all legitimate and constitutional means". These words assume importance when read in the context of the Civil Disobedience Movement of the Congress and its attitude towards the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress was opposing the British Government. Zamindars were not interested in criticising the authorities. They were interested in fighting the elections


Sachidanand Sinha, Ex-Finance Member, Bihar and Orissa Government, in his address to the conference said that the meeting had been called to explore "all possible avenues for calling a great constitutional party". The Report of the Proceedings of the Conference held at Ranchi on September 4, 1932, p. 5.

10 Ibid., p. 6.
11 Ibid., p. 7.
under the new reforms, and did not agree with the Civil Disobedience movement. The Maharaja of Darbhanga in the same address said "...we cannot agree with the method of Civil Disobedience as a political weapon. It seems to us to be a method which is essentially negative and an evil presage for future national Government". The zamindars wanted to organize public opinion against the Congress. The idea was to form the United Party as a parallel party to the Congress. This Party had the blessings of the British Government. The officials were asked to discreetly work for the new party's success. This attitude was discussed in a confidential meeting where the Chief Secretary, Member of the Board of Revenue, and the Commissioners of all Divisions, among others were present. The meeting directed the officers of the State to exercise "personal influence...in favour of the party, because it is the only party whose policy is to work the new constitution".

**Hindu Sabha and United Party**

The leaders of the United Party had links with the Hindu Mahasabha. The Chairman of the Reception Committee of the United Party Schidanand Sinha was also the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Conference held during December 26-28, 1931. In his address Schidanand Sinha wanted

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12 Ibid., p. 9.

the Hindu Sabha to be a political body.  Ganganand Singh, who was Personal Assistant to the Maharaja of Darbhanga was an important leader of the All India Hindu Mahasabha. In 1941 Ganganand Singh was arrested in Bihar for fear of creating trouble at the time of Bakr-Id. Maharaja of Darbhanga himself was a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha and its big financier.

The All India Hindu Mahasabha was politically with the British. Two examples are relevant for our purposes. It supported the Constitutional scheme under the Act of 1935, and, during the war it supported the British Government. One of its eminent leaders B.S. Moonje, met the Viceroy and told him that the Hindu Mahasabha was fully prepared to co-operate in the Government's war efforts and in organizing defence on a wide scale on modern and upto date lines, as they were not believers in non-violence and non-cooperation, if due regard was given to the Hindu community.

The position of the Hindu Mahasabha was identical with that taken by Maharaja of Darbhanga in the United Party on the question of working of the constitution under the Act of 1935 and co-operating with the British during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Secondly, the attitude of co-operation of Hindu Mahasabha towards the British in 1940 was against the attitude of struggle adopted by the All Indian Kisan Sabha against the British.

15 Ibid., vol. II, 1941.
16 Ibid., vol. II, 1940.
Opposition of Hindu Mahasabha to Class War

More fundamentally, the Hindu Mahasabha was opposed to abolition of landlordism and class struggle against the zamindars. At its fifteenth session held at Ajmer on October 14, 1933, it wanted the continuation of the landlords and capitalists and not their extinction. In a resolution on class war it said, "while sympathising with the need for the amelioration of the condition of labour and tenantry, strongly disapproved of any movement advocating extinction of capitalists and landlords as a class, as such a movement would further accentuate the existing divisions and sub-divisions, bring about class war, and ultimately retard all progress and make the redemption of Hindustan impossible".

Thus the United Party was being presided by Maharaja of Darbhanga who was at the same time a leader of All India Hindu Mahasabha, which was opposed to class struggle of the kisans, and, was with the British on national issues like the working of 1935 act and co-operation in the war. Apart from this, it was a communal body. The attitude of Hindu Mahasabha on class demands was reflected by Maharaja of Darbhanga, as is indicated by the stand of the United Party on tenancy reform.

Sheo Shankar Jha, representative of the tenants in the meeting, while supporting the resolution for founding the United Party, told the assembly that the "tenants were always prepared to throw in their lot with the landholders provided the latter would look after their interests and concede to them their just

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United Party and Tenancy Reform

The Maharaja of Darbhanga wanted the United Party to reflect "the happy combination of capital and labour..." and adopted a "solicitous" attitude on the question of peasants as was later described by Sheo Shankar Jha. The new party was hardly different from the landholders' association. An onlooker of Amrit Bazar Patrika, welcoming "as happy augury" that Maharaja of Darbhanga was taking up the leadership of the party said, "But I am afraid the new organization does not seem to have begun well. Judging from the names that have been given out as sponsors of the new movement there is nothing to choose between this and Bihar Landholders' Association.

The real intentions of the Zamindars were to the contrary. By the end of 1932 a tenancy bill was presented on their behalf by Rai Bahadur Shyam Kardan Sahai (who was present in the founding conference of the United Party) in order to strengthen the roots of the Zamindars. This tenancy bill conceded minor demands of the tenants but enhanced the powers of the Zamindars in matters

19 Ibid., p. 10.
20 Ibid., p. 15.
22 Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit., p. 3.
of rent collection and granting of certificate right. In order to get these provisions passed the Zamindars thought of hoodwinking the tenants and roping them into such an agreement. This would have met with the official requirement that the two classes agree to tenancy reform proposals. It is against such attempts on the part of the Zamindars that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had to fight during its formative years. In fact it was "thus landed aristocracy in Bihar that exercised overwhelming and uninhibited power in agrarian Society and that became the focal point of peasant agitation in the twentieth century".

Rise of Bihar Intelligentsia

The movement for separate Bihar during the last three decades of the previous century was led by the Kayastha community, who composed a large part of the Bihari intelligentsia. This section of the society had switched over to English education owing to decline in Muslim Courts, where they were traditionally scribes. They led the movement for separate province of Bihar because they could not compete with the Bengalis and faced the problem of educated unemployed. Most of the Kayasthas joined the professions. In the first major peasant upheaval of the present century of Champaran in Bihar a number of Kayasthas participated. Lawyers like Braj Kishore Prasad and Rajendra Prasad

23 Ibid., pp. 3-4; and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., pp. 414-16.
joined the Champaran struggle at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1929, when Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was organized Rajendra Prasad was in its executive committee.

**Peasant Upheaval in Bihar**

Champaran was the scene of first major peasant uprising in Bihar during 1916-17 against the Indigo Plantation, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, on the initiation of a local kisan leader Raj Kumar Shukla. Raj Kumar Shukla brought Gandhi to Champaran. The leadership of the movement was in the hands of former employees of planters, money-lenders, businessmen, landholders and some teachers and local lawyers. Braj Kishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Ram Naumi Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Singh, Shambhu Sharan and Gorakh Prasad were lawyers connected with raiyats. Later on persons like Rajendra Prasad participated in the foundation of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1929. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati suggested then the name of Rajendra Prasad as the President of the new organization.

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The success of the agitation in Champaran provided Gandhian consciousness to those participating in the movement. It provided a new enthusiasm to the peasantry and taught them the lessons of non-violence. Gandhi's mission to Champaran created an impression on the minds of raiyats and taught them fearlessness and regard for honesty, which emboldened them later on to meet the ordeals in the course of their struggle for freedom. Gandhi tried his technique of satyagraha successfully. This became an important element in the non-cooperation movement. It was the alleged peasant violence at Chauri Chaura which provided an immediate cause to Gandhi to withdraw the non-cooperation movement. The theme of violence remained a bone of contention between the Congress in Bihar and the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, as also at the All India level between the Congress and All India Kisan Sabha during the period between 1936 and 1939. Details of the same are given in the next Chapter.

Apart from this, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati got disillusioned with Gandhian morals and politics. Firstly, he felt that politics should not be mixed with religious and moral issues, which was done by Gandhi. Secondly, he felt that philosophical concepts like Truth and Ahimsa were beyond the comprehension of a people participating in a mass movement. People were engaged more in grappling with material and economic problems. Thirdly,

30 Raj Kumar Shukla, op. cit.
33 Ibid., pp. 632-3.
he felt that leaders should be ahead of the people in these matters since they consciously joined politics. But in case of Congress workers, he found during his stay in Ghazipur and Hazaribagh Jails in 1922 and 1932, that they did not obey Gandhi's instructions to observe jail rules. They showed avarice in their behaviour behind bars. Finally, he felt withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement owing to peasant violence in Chauri Chaura on the ground that it was against ahimsa was a betrayal, on the part of the leaders, of an army all set to fight to a finish.

Bihar participated in the non-cooperation movement. During the non-cooperation movement Swami Sahajanand Saraswati came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideas, whom the former met in 1920 at Patna. He joined politics under the influence of Gandhi. At first he went and worked in Buxar against the Maharaja of Hatwa. Swami Sahajanand participated in a number of meetings to further the cause of non-cooperation movement in 1921. He addressed a number of meetings at Jora Mandhir at Arcat, on February 7, 1921, in Barahmpur police station, in Sahar Police Station, and at Koath on February 26, 1921. In 1922 he was arrested and jailed. His experience with the followers of Gandhi in Ghazipur jail disillusioned him with the Gandhian ideals in practice. This experience of

34 Ibid., pp. 216, 362.
35 Ibid., p. 255.
36 Ibid., pp. 182-8.
37 Ibid., p. 194.
Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was further strengthened in Hazaribagh jail during the Civil Disobedience Movement. At the time of the formation of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha the influence of Ganchi was dominant on him.

Peasant Organizations During the 1920s

The non-cooperation movement had activised the peasantry and trained a large number of people in active political movement. During the twenties some people made attempts at organizing the peasants. Some individuals got interested in the peasant affairs. They sometimes would raise questions about the peasant grievances in the legislative council. Some opportunists also took advantage in the name of the peasants. One such person was Swami Binyanand of Saran (Munshi Dharbharan Prasad was his original name). He had deceived the peasants. On their support he got elected to the legislative council. He robbed the kisans of their money. Later on he started a press in Muzaffarpur with the financial help of the Zamindars. At the time when Swami Sahajanand Saraswati went to Darbhanga to organize meetings of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha the amlas of the Zamindar exhorted the peasants not to be again deceived by another Swami as they had been deceived by one earlier (meaning Swami Bidyanand). It

40 "Kisan Sabha", Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 84/1921; and "Kisan Sabha", Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 417/1922.

41 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Kisan Sabha Ke Sansmaran, Sihta (Patna, 1946).

42 "Kisan Sabha", Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 61(a)/1936.
is clear from the above that during the twenties there was no peasant organization looking after the interests of the peasants. There were individuals with doubtful intentions.

**Phases of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

The movement can be divided into different phases: the first phase can be termed as organizational-agitational during 1929-36, second as the phase of struggle (1936-39), third as the Phase of World War II, when national issues assumed priority over immediate demands of the peasants and finally the post-war phase of peasant upsurge. Below, we deal with them separately.

**Phase I (1929-35) Organizational-Agitational**

**Genesis of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

The formation of the West Patna Kisan Sabha was a prelude to the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. It was formed on March 4, 1928, though the actual movement of kisana and preparation for the same had started there by the end of 1927, primarily owing to the initiative of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

The intention of the organizers was to guide the peasant movement in such a manner so that it would prevent landlord tenant struggle and help the Congress in elections to the legislative council. At this stage the Kisan Sabha was cast in the Gandhite mould of class compromise, with a reformist understanding

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of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. This understanding of the leaders prevailed when the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was formed, though members of the Swaraj Party like Ram Dayalu Singh were also there.

**Formation of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was formed at Sonepur in Saran during the Sonepur Mela in November 1929. Ram Dayalu Singh, Sri Krishna Sinha, Baldev Sahay, Jamuna Karjee and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati held initial dialogue to organize the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. Apart from Ram Dayalu Singh and Jamuna Karjee other were members of the Congress. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati had already begun to be critical of the Congress. He was, however, a member of the Congress and was a "pure Gandhite". Sri Krishna Sinha was elected the General Secretary and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was made the President. Generally there was enthusiasm among the Congressmen to join the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. Some Congressmen were opposed to the idea of forming a Kisan Sabha because they thought it would foment class struggles. These were persons like Braj Kishore Prasad and Ram Brisk Benipuri (the latter joined the Kisan Sabha in the 1930s).

At the time of the formation of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, Braj Kishore Prasad had issued a circular to Congressmen asking

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44 Ibid., pp. 320-3.
45 Sonepur Mela Kisan Sabha Meeting, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Political Department (Special Section), File No. 281/1929; and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., pp. 339-49.
them not to associate themselves with the new organization, which was considered "dangerous" by him. Later in 1946 Swami Sahajanand took the stand that only three persons viz., Jamuna Karjee, Ram Dayalu Singh and himself were responsible for the formation of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and that the majority of the Congressmen were hostile. This is disputable. Only some among the Congressmen opposed its formation while most of them eagerly joined in. The voice of dissent, however small then, was meaningful. The dissent was on the grounds that it will promote struggle between Zamindars and Kisans. It must be remembered that Braj Kishore Prasad was trained during the Satyagraha in Champaran. Later in the thirties this dissent assumed major proportions, and, the Congress and Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha engaged in raging controversy over the issue of class collaboration versus class struggle and non-violence versus violence. During its formative month the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha benefited from the tour of Vallabhbhai Patel in Bihar. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati toured Bihar with Vallabhbhai Patel for the cause of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. Fresh from Bardoli experiences, in his speeches Patel supported the cause of Kisan Sabha in Bihar. In Monghyr he had participated in a Kisan conference and suggested that the demands of the Kisan conference should be presented to the Political conference taking


48 Ibid.

place there alongside the Kisan conference. Another piece of
information which indicated that the Kisan Sabha in Bihar was
under the Congress influence is that in a subsequent meeting
after Sonepur Mela meeting, it was decided that the Kisan Sabha
would not go against the Congress in political matters.

**Constitution of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

Sonepur meeting adopted a constitution giving the ideals and laying down organizational details of the new body. The Constitution was adopted at the meeting of Provincial Kisan Council on December 15, 1929. According to Article Two, Part I of this Constitution the defects and grievances of the Kisans were to be removed by organized strength through non-violent methods. The subsidiary branches were to be as follows: (1) District Kisan Sabha, (2) Sub-division Kisan Sabha, (3) Thana Kisan Sabha and (4) Village Kisan Sabha. It gave to the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha right to change the Constitution. This Constitution lacked any programmatic understanding. It remained silent on the question of landlordism, on the problem of rent, on rural indebtedness and on the issue of land eviction. A comprehensive approach of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was apparent only by 1934, when this Constitution was changed. In the changed constitution a programme and charter of immediate demands was accepted by the


51 Constitution, Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, Published by Jamuna Karjee, Joint Secretary, Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, Muzaffarpur (n.d.), p. 1.

52 Ibid., pt. III, Article 4, p. 2.
Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. The period between December 1929 and 1934 presaged the said changes. It is therefore necessary to know the incidents during this period. In this period the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was suspended and attempts to re-organize it were made in the wake of the intervention on behalf of the landlords to get tenancy reforms in their own interest.

Suspension of Activities of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha

As is already stated Swami Sahajanand Saraswati got busy in touring the province along with Vallabhbhai Patel to project the image of the new organization, which he did. One of the purposes of doing this was to oppose the proposed tenancy bill which was before the legislative council in 1929. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had done this vigorously and the Government withdrew the Bill on the ground that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha opposed it. This was the first major victory of the Kisan Sabha in the very year of its birth.

The activities of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha were suspended because of the Civil Disobedience Movement. This was in line with the understanding of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha that in matters of political importance it would go with the Congress. The mass of the peasantry participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congress had aroused the consciousness of the peasants in its own interest, i.e. Civil Disobedience Movement and council or local elections. The Congress took up the particular grievances of the peasants to rouse them. For instance in 1931 itself the Congress had called a meeting of

53 Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit., p. 45.
the Kisan Sabha at Paliganj in Dinapur on November 19, 1931. It was convened in order that Ramanugrah Singh, Ex-M.L.A. of Gaya and Sri Krishna Sinha, Ex-M.L.C. of Monghyr could hear the grievances of the raiyats in the 'elakas of' (areas of) the big Zamindars. It was reported to Hallet, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar that the Congress was making inquiries regarding the canal rates with the "ostensible object to try to raise some grievances against the incidence of canal rates".

In the Dinapore subdivision the Congress workers organized the tenants against the wealthy and influential Zamindars because these landlords at the time of Civil Disobedience Movement started "either from real loyalty or from perception of where their own interest lay, put their entire weight into the scales against the movement, and instructed their raiyats to have nothing to do with it". After the visit of Rajendra Prasad to Champaran a Congress agitation against payment of rent in the Bettiah estate started on rather a large-scale though the official view was that the two were not connected. The authorities, however, viewed this agitation, as designed "to cause trouble to

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54 Extract from the Weekly Confidential Diary of the A.S.P., Dinapore, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 34/1931.

55 Letter from District Office Shahabad, Arrah dated 1st December 1931, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 34/1931.

56 A Note by Collector of Patna, dated Bankipore, 3rd December 1931 to Mr Hallet, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 34/1931.
the authorities". Speeches in Gaya exhorted the peasants to be prepared for the fight and were mainly directed against the British Government. The Congress attempted here to bring the tenantry in its fold. The report from Patna corroborated this situation in Gaya when it said "the object of the Congress is two-fold; to impress upon the mass that the Congress is taking up their cause and hence to be ready at their beck and call, and secondly to terrorise the Zamindars who are considered to be the henchmen of Government". The Provincial Congress Committee had also set up an Agrarian Enquiry Committee with the following members: Srikrishna Sinha of Monghyr, Prof. Abdul Bari of Koilwar, Shahabad, Bepin Bihari Verma, Bar-at-Law, Champaran, Krishan Ballabh Sahay of Hazaribagh, Babu Baldev Sahay, Vakil, Patna, Babu Ambica Kant Sinha, Manager, "Searchlight", Radha Govind Prasad, Secretary and Prajapati Misra to enquire into the agrarian situation. This Committee of enquiry also instituted a four member enquiry committee for the benefit of the Kisans and Zamindars of the Gaya District consisting of Rajendra Prasad, Sidheshwar Prasad Singh (Gaya), Ramadas Das and Mathura Prasad (Secretary).

57 Kisan Sabha in Bihar and Orissa, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 34/1931.

58 Extract from Mr. E.L. Cousins Fortnightly D.O. No. 443/C, dated 13th December 1931, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 34/1931.

59 Extract from the Confidential Diary of the Superintendent of Police, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 34/1931.

60 Congress Activities, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 34/1931.
In 1932 the Congress continued to take up the kisan causes like payment of revenue, canal rates and chaukidar in Shahabad, Patna, Gaya and Champaran. It furthered picketing before banks so that no revenue was paid to the Government in Gaya. The Congress workers "found the discontented tenants ready material to work upon". Later, when the Congress came to power in the provinces under the Government of India Act, of 1935 it had to face a stiff organized voice of the peasants for tenancy reform. Its coming to power had raised the expectations of the peasants that the Congress would fulfill their demands it made on their behalf during Civil Disobedience Movement.

Immediately however during the period of struggle certain kisan leaders like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati became further disillusioned with the 'morals' of followers of Gandhi, when the former was put in Gazipur and Hazaribagh jails. He found to his chagrin that Truth and Ahimsa (Non-violence) - the creeds of Gandhi - were nowhere near his followers.

**Fight Against United Party and Bogus Kisan Sabhas**

Much before the Civil Disobedience Movement was suspended in May 1934 in the meeting of the All India Congress Committee the Kisan Sabha had to fight the manoeuvres of the Zamindars. As is already mentioned the Zamindars had launched the United Party to fight the coming elections and intervene to carry out certain changes in the tenancy Act. It may be remembered at this stage that one of the requirements put down by the

61 Kisan Sabha and Agrarian Agitation, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Political Department, File No. 65/1932.

British Government for tenancy reforms was that the agreement between the Zamindars and the raiyats was necessary for effecting any change. In order to meet this requirement the Zamindars attempted to create some bogus peasant organizations. On the basis of a bogus compromise with some corrupt leaders of the peasants (present at the time of the formation of the United Party like Sheo Shankar Jha), a bill was placed before the council. The tenants never came to know the contents of the compromise. In order to gain support for the said compromise, a meeting of a bogus peasant body was called at Patna on January 15, 1933. In this meeting Maharaja of Surajpura was also present. The meeting was called with the financial help of the Zamindars.

The meeting failed to achieve its singular purpose of getting the compromise through. On the initiative of genuine peasant workers like Dr Jugal Kishore and Yadunandan Sharma, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati attended the meeting, exposed the game and thus the compromise could not be carried through. By March 1933 the Kisan Sabha was reorganized under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand, and in a meeting on March 22, 1933, it passed a resolution demanding the publication of the bill before any discussion could be held on it. This was demanded by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha so that it could give its considered view on it. The Kisan Sabha directed some members of the council

63 Ibid., p. 384.
64 Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit., p. 5.
65 Ibid.
like Gursahay to oppose the Bill in the council, who failed to do so because he was aligned with the Zamindars. The bill was passed by September 1934. The net result of the efforts of Swami Sahajanand and his friends was that the bogus Kisan leaders like Sheo Shankar Jha and Gursahay were exposed and the work of reorganizing the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha started with renewed enthusiasm.

Kisan Sabha Activities Between 1933 and 1935

The activities of the Kisan Sabha were conducted at the provincial level under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. In the ten districts of the Province there were more than 500 meetings between April 1933 and November 1935. Apart from these ten districts, there were meetings in the districts of North Bihar. Major issue of these meetings was the above mentioned tenancy reform. There were three provincial conferences in 1933, 1934 and 1935, at Bihta (Patna), Gaya and Hazipur, respectively. Apart from these 117, 109 and 120 meetings and conferences were held in 1933, 1934 and 1935 respectively. These meetings were addressed by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. Swami Sahajanand went to 88 meetings in Patna, 38 in Gaya, 57 in Monghyr, 39 in Shahabad, 22 in Bhagalpur, 38 in Darbhanga, 43 in Muzaffarpur, 19 in Saran, 13 in Purnea and 2 in Champaran.

Activities in 1934

Apart from the question of tenancy reform, other questions

68  Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit., p. 6.
were also dealt with. In the meetings addressed by Swami Sahajanand in 1934, he appealed for giving 'real genuine relief' to tenants by 'means of remission of rent' for at least a year. Swami Sahajanand spoke against amlas, abwabs and landlordism. In Darbhanga, Swami Sahajanand was heard advising tenants not to pay rent, whilst a Congress worker and district board member of Saran, named Ramdeni Singh, had been instigating people to apply to Government for a "remission of taxes". In Tirhut Swami Sahajanand was "encouraging the people to apply for a remission of taxes".

Activities in 1935

In 1935 the Government feared that Swami Sahajanand would devote his attention to Kisan Sabha organization in Chapra, Champaran, Purnea and Santhal Parganas, apart from other places. In his meeting at Police Station Nasirganj, District Shahabad on January 18, 1935 he referred to the economic grievances of the peasants, spoke against the Zamindars particularly against the Maharaja of Darbhanga, attacked sugar mill owners, canal water  

69 "Relief to Agriculturists", The Searchlight (Patna), March 18, 1934.

70 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, "Terrible Plight of the Kisans", ibid.


73 Letter of the Officiating Chief Secretary to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, C.I.D., Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 16/1935, pt. I.
rates, punctuated his speeches with references to the fate of the Czar and capitalists in Russia, and exhorted the kisans to rise against a suffocation which was best described in the following lines of an anonymous poet (he often quoted) 'you are not permitted to struggle or complain. It is the wish of the bird-catcher that you die of suffocation'. He wanted the peasants to speak and said "I came to hold the Kisan Sabha so that your dead tongue may find a voice and say to the Zamindar only this much that you take the rent, we do not mind, only let the producer have something to eat...." 74 In another speech at Dukhan Saraya, Police Station Paru, District Muzaffarpur on January 28, 1935, he repeated almost his Nasirganj speech and stressed the necessity of a separate kisan sabha as a class organization. Since by this time fundamental rights of kisans along with the new Constitution had been adopted by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha a resolution was passed in this meeting stating among other things that "...no Tenancy Act would be acceptable to Kisans which was not based on the fundamental rights of the kisans". 75 In the district of Monghyr, Swami Sahajanand was not allowed to go to a meeting at Bakhtiarpur u/s. 144 Cr. P.C. In a meeting at another place in Monghyr, when Swami Sahajanand was present, a resolution was passed against the new tenancy act because it contained clauses relating to 'certificate' and Salami. The resolution said "This Kisan Sabha protests against the new Bihar Tenancy Act which is against the interests of the kisans and especially the clauses relating to certificate

74 Speech of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati at Nasirganj, ibid.
75 Police Report of the Meeting, ibid.
and salami". In Bhagalpur also the themes of kisan sabha meetings were "attack on the Zamindars, a demand for reduction of rents and the condemnation of certain parts of the amended Tenancy Law", according to J.R. Dain, Commissioner of Bhagalpur Division. In the Tirhut Division, J.E. Scott, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, reported the same themes and warned that Swami Sahajanand's speeches were 'mischievous'.

Organizational Consolidation

It can be safely concluded from the above that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha's activities during 1934 and 1935 (as is clear from the speeches of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati) were of organizational and agitational nature. In fact both aspects of the propaganda aimed at rousing further the consciousness of the peasants, who had already been astir during 1931 and 1932 during the Civil Disobedience Movement. In order to strengthen the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, meetings and conferences were held. On its own the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had conducted inquiries into the condition of the peasants in districts like Gaya, Darbhanga, Purnea, etc. The work of enquiry was the most attractive in Gaya. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had published a report called Gaya Ke Kisano Ki Karun Kahani written by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. It was the result of an inquiry conducted by a Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Committee appointed

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76 Extract from the Confidential Diary of the Superintendent of Police, Monghyr, dated the 2nd February 1935, ibid.

on June 18, 1933. The report suggested the formation of a District Kisan Sabha "with a body of workers, who would teach the tenants to resist the illegal exactions and put up a fight against them; to consult lawyers and bring cases to compel Zamindars to repair the water channels, to teach the tenants their rights and to get rents reduced under the Bihar Tenancy Act".

The District level bodies of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha were reorganized during 1935 and 1936 under its new Constitution. The Kisan Sabha was reorganized in Monghyr in December 1935 with Shree Mahant Siyaram Das and Karyanand Sharma as President and Secretary. From October 1935 to November 1936 the district Kisan council of Monghyr sat for seven times, extraordinary meetings were held thrice. Fourth district kisan sammelan was held under the presidentship of Swami Sahajanand at Lakbisarai. There were five thana kisan sammelans viz. Khagaria Chautham, Binda-diara, Surajgarh and Laklu Sara in Ranganj Sansarpur, Mapsi, Bariyapur and Kaira villages. Apart from these there were seventy big meetings and 124 small meetings, and, six demonstrations were conducted. The following table gives a thana-wise break up of meetings (big and small) and demonstrations.

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79 A pamphlet entitled "Gaya Zila Ke Kisano Ki Karun Kahani", published by Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 163/1934.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Thana</th>
<th>Big</th>
<th>Small</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lakhisarai</td>
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<td>Sheikhpura</td>
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<td>Barbigha</td>
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<td>Suryagarh</td>
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<td>Kharagpur</td>
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<td>Tarapur</td>
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<td>Bakhtiarpur</td>
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<td>Khagaria</td>
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<td>Sikandra</td>
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<td>Barahiya</td>
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Source: Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Report from November 1935 to October 1936, 1936.

From the above table it can be said that during this period emphasis was more on organizational work and agitations were few. During 1935 the membership of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was 33,000. This increased to 70,000 in 1936. During
1936, in many districts the Kisan Sabha units became very active. The Kisan Sabha units were organized at the thana level also. There were agitations against high incidence of rent and propaganda against landlordism. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Committee in its meeting in December 1935 decided to concentrate during next three months on "Reduce the Rent Campaign". With this decision it entered the year 1936. Whatever actions took place were an indication of what was coming in the next phase of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, i.e. the phase of acute struggle between 1936 and 1939. Before we go over to the next phase let us examine the Manifesto and the Agrarian programme adopted by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha during this period. This will help us to understand the cognitive contours of the struggles during the second phase of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha.

Manifesto of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha

The manifesto indicates the politico-economic consciousness of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. At this time the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha stood "not only for the raiyats, but also for petty zamindars and agricultural labourers, in other words for all who live by cultivation", and suggested a combined action on their part against the "forces that are ruthlessly driving them deeper and deeper into misery and poverty" which is the "one single outstanding fact of political and economic

82 Ibid.
significance in our country".

Land to the Tiller

According to the Manifesto the poverty and misery of the tenants was due "fundamentally to the nature of the land tenure and revenue and credit system and the merciless exploitation of Imperialism". Therefore the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha felt that the misery can be rooted out only when "drastic changes are made in the land tenure and revenue system, till the crushing burden of the debt is lifted off; and finally till Imperialism is replaced by a National State which is of the masses and which guarantees enough land to every tiller of the soil to enable him to support himself on a reasonable and ascending standard of living and provides gainful employment to the landless". (Italics ours). The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha visualised a National State which would guarantee land to the tiller. This position demarcated the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha from that of the Congress. The Congress agrarian programme adopted at the Faizpur Session of the Indian National Congress in 1937 did not include this demand.

Speaking concretely about Bihar the Manifesto said it was necessary that (1) the Zamindari system be abolished, (2) the agrarian debt wiped off, (3) a system of land tenure established which would make the peasants owners of their holdings and took only from those who had income above a minimum, necessary to keep
them and their families at a reasonable standard of living and
(4) employment be provided for the landless.

**Immediate Demands**

Since these demands could not be fulfilled under the then existing system, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha made a list of immediate demands of the province. They were as follows:

1. Conferment on tenants of fixity of tenure and right of free transfer of holdings and unrestricted use of their land and its products.

2. Provision by legislation of free common pastures in every village and for free utilisation by peasants of forest products, such as timber, fuel, grass, bamboo etc. for their domestic and agricultural needs.

3. Abolition of all system of rent in kind (Bhaoli System).

4. Exemption of all uneconomic holdings from rent and taxes.

5. Immunity from arrest and imprisonment, as well as attachment or sale of all minimum holdings (necessary for the maintenance of the tenants and his family), homesteads, dairy or other cattle, household necessities, stables in execution of civil decrees and rent demands.

6. No certificate power to the Zamindars.

7. Stiffening of the provisions of the Tenancy Act regarding rent receipts and of the private irrigation act to prevent evasion by landlords as also of sections concerning illegal exactions, begari etc.
(8) Enactment of legislation cancelling all such previous debts as peasants are unable to pay without hardship, fixing rate of interest at not more than 6 per cent per annum, making compound interest illegal, preventing the realisation in any case of more than double the amount loaned, empowering courts to allow payment of debts in easy instalments without further interest, providing for compulsory licensing of village money-lenders and provisions of cheap state credit for kisans.

(9) Minimum living wage for agricultural workers.

(10) Minimum price for sugar-cane on a sliding scale from 6 to 9 annas per maund.

(11) Abolition of chauthari tax.

Political Demands

(12) Abolition of indirect taxes, particularly duties on salt, kerosene and matches.

(13) Provision for cheap and comfortable third class railway travelling and one pice post cards and two pice postal envelops.

(14) Provision of free and compulsory primary education for girls and boys, cheap secondary and high education, medical and sanitary aid and drinking water.

(15) The right of vote to every adult.

(16) Repeal of all anti-peasant, anti-labour and anti-national laws, ordinances and regulations in British and Indian India and the release of all kisans, labour and political prisoners whether sentenced or detained without trial.

(17) Re-instatement of all peasants deprived of their lands etc. owing to their participation in the movement for their
economic and political freedom and also owing to their failure to pay revenue or rent during the economic depression.

(18) Adoption by Government of the following amongst other measures for development and improvement of agriculture:

(a) Provision for adequate and extensive system of irrigation and drainage;
(b) Provision for cheap manures, improved seeds, improved livestock and facilities for development of fruit culture, diary and poultry farm etc;
(c) Reorganization of agricultural department with a view to make it serve the peasant;
(d) Control of prices of grains so as to prevent exploitation by profiteers; and
(e) Reclamation of jungle, waste and other lands for agricultural purposes.

By 1936 the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had reorganized itself. It had a manifesto detailing long-term and immediate demands. Its perspective included abolition of landlordism and giving of land to the tiller. Its immediate demands were meant to protect the peasant from the loot and rapacity of the landlords, and to that effect making the law more stringent. It considered a petty Zamindar as an ally. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had certain victories to its credit during this period. These were the following:

(1) the end of the machinations of the United Party;
(2) the end to an environment conducive to the growth of bogus kisan organizations in Bihar;

(3) the success in toning down the evil provisions of
the tenancy bill;
(4) giving consciousness to the peasants to such an
extent that they could give leadership to and engage in local
agitations on their own initiatives;
(5) highlighted the problem of peasant debt; and
(6) successfully fought the inhuman exactions of the
Raja of Gidhaur.

Therefore, during 1935-36 the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha
became a living unit on the basis of a programmatic perspective.
During this period it had accepted the demands of Abolition of
landlordism and land to the tiller. It had begun to take deci-
sions on launching of agitation on local issues.

**Phase II: 1936-39 - Active Struggle**

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha entered the next phase
of acute struggle with successes to its credit. The phase bet-
ween 1936 and 1939 was marked by active struggle over the ques-
tion of *bakasht* lands. The struggle was first launched in Mon-
ghyr in 1936 to be followed by Gaya, Shahabad and Patna. It was
a struggle of the peasants, who for generations had enjoyed
occupancy rights over lands from which they were now being evic-
ted by the Zamindars. The struggle at Monghyr continued till
1939 when it was suspended by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. At
Monghyr the struggle went on throughout this phase. Hence the
suspension of the struggle at Monghyr marked the end of this
phase. The coming of the Second World War, the assumption of
priority of other national issues and the role of the Bihar
Provincial Kisan Sabha leaders therein marked the next stage in the history of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha.

**Phase III - Second World War:**

**Priority of National Issues**

On September 1, 1939 with the attack of Hitler on Poland, Britain and France declared immediately war against Germany. This marked the beginning of the Second World War. On September 3, India was drawn into the war, when the Viceroy declared India to be a belligerent. On the same day the Defence of India ordinance was issued empowering the Central Government to rule through decrees. On September 11, the preparations for establishing a federation were suspended.

**Congress Attitude Towards War**

Individuals, political parties and political groups in India reacted to the event differently. Mahatma Gandhi had his "sympathies with England and France from a purely humanitarian stand point". According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya this was "Gandhi's promise of his own personal moral co-operation". The Viceroy interpreted Gandhi's promise of personal co-operation, to be the voice of three hundred and fifty millions of India's population.

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86 Ibid., p. 128.

87 Gandhiji told the Viceroy in a statement "Britain is fighting a just war. A Satyagrahi must support a just cause even when it is espoused by an enemy".
The Congress Working Committee met on September 14 and decided against the "unconditional cooperation" offered by Gandhi. The Congress Working Committee called upon the British Government "not merely to elucidate their position vis-a-vis the future of India but address themselves to an immediate application of the principles so elucidated". Till then the Committee refused co-operation, but also warned against Satyagrah immediately. The Congress Working Committee reiterated India's right of self determination to be exercised through a sovereign constituent assembly. This could be implemented after the war. For the interim period it asked for a war time Indian Government responsible to the Central Legislative Assembly. This was rejected by the Government of India. The Congress Working Committee regarded this statement of the Viceroy as "reiteration of the old imperialist policy...." and in a resolution called upon the "Congress Provincial Governments to send their resignations by October 31, 1939". The Provincial ministers resigned in


89 On September 18 the Viceroy said "His Majesty's Government have not themselves defined with any ultimate precision their detailed objectives in the prosecution of the War and failed to promise complete independence".

90 Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 141. Before resigning, the Premiers of the Provincial ministries were asked to move the following resolution in their respective Assemblies. "This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Government.

(Contd. on next page)
eight provinces. The Congress Working Committee in recommending this resolution had reiterated its demand for Complete Independence for India. At its meeting on December 18, 1939 the Congress Working Committee recommended the "observing properly and with due solemnity Independence Day on January 26, 1940.... This declaration must...be...a preparation for...a pledge to disciplined action". It recommended a pledge for the day. At its 53rd session at Ramgarh the Indian National Congress decided on the line of "individual Satyagraha" in March 1940. Finally by October the Satyagraha was started. As a result leaders of the Congress were arrested. With the attack on Soviet Union by Hitler (June 1941) and entry of Japan in the War (December 1941), the situation for India was described by Jawaharlal Nehru as one of "peril". The Bombay All India

"This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the cooperation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy with effective safeguards for the Muslim and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by the people; and that India should be regarded as an Independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to present governance of India.

"This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by his Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that had been made on their behalf in regard to India, and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India's demand this Assembly is of opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with British Policy". Quoted in Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 142.

91 On his release from jail, Jawaharlal Nehru held a Press (Contd. on next page)
Congress Committee meeting (August 7-8, 1942) adopted the "Quit India" resolution and Mahatma Gandhi issued the slogan of "do or die". The very next day the leadership of the Congress was arrested. The Congress Socialist Party had taken over the leadership of the movement.

**Attitude of Congress Socialist Party**

The Congress Socialist Party disagreed with the Congress on the issue of war. The Congress was willing to co-operate with the British in case the latter declared their war aims, failing which they warned of action. The Congress Socialist Party from its inception wanted the "Congress to declare its opposition to participation by India in any war, which the British Government may be involved and to undertake forthwith the preparation of the entire Indian Nation to resist actively the

Conference on December 8, 1941 at Lucknow where he said: "In the grouping of powers struggling for the mastery of the world, on either side, there seems to be dreams entertained by Governments for world domination. Undoubtedly this is so on the part of Hitler. It is not proclaimed as such on the other part.... Still, I think that in the grouping that exists, there is also no doubt that progressive forces of the world are aligned with the group represented by Russia, China, America and England". Quoted in P.C. Joshi, *Communist Reply to Congress Working Committee's Charges* (Bombay, December 1945), p. 43.

The All India Congress Committee said "the peril of to-day, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination". The All India Congress Committee resolution further said "The All India Congress Committee, therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India". The operative part of its resolution said "The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and

(Contd. on next page)
utilisation of men, money and resources for the purposes of such a war and to utilise such crisis for securing Swaraj. In its Plan of Action the Party included "active opposition to all imperialist wars and the utilisation of such and other crisis for the intensification of the national struggle", and not to enter into any negotiations with the British Government. At this stage the party considered that the slogans of Peace fronts were correct and regarded the Soviet Union to be the "only major world power working for world freedom and peace". The Communists supported this position.

In 1939 Congress had passed "National Demands" resolution sponsored by the Congress Socialist Party. This resolution had asked India to keep aloof from imperialism and fascism and regarded imperialism as the immediate foe. Ram Manohar Lohia wanted every Indian to be a "war resister". The Lohia Plan of War resistance included "issuance of a bulletin, anti-recruitment propaganda, stoppage of supplies of raw materials, and the enrolment of volunteer resisters, disciplined to resist war preparations and activities, if need be with their lives". The

independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale". Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 344-5.

96 quoted in Thomas A. Rusch, op. cit., p. 441.
question of co-operation with the British was "the single greatest cause of discord" between the Congress and the Congress Socialist Party.

The efforts of Forward Bloc to organize an Anti-Compromise Conference received support of the Socialists during September 1939 and March 1940, though in 1940 they fought the Forward Blockists at the Ramgarh Session of the Congress. The Congress Socialists followed the "path of united front" and wanted the Congress to start the struggle. On this question the Socialists and Communists were one. They believed that struggle could be launched only by the Congress.

When Gandhi started "individual Satyagraha", the Socialists went along with it. The Socialists wanted the individual satyagraha to be intensified into a mass struggle. In 1942 when the All India Congress Committee adopted the Quit India resolution, the Congress Socialist Party supported it.

After the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, Congress Socialist Party adopted the slogans of opposition to war and imperialism, whereas the Communists foresaw in this event a qualitative change and adopted anti-fascist positions. The Socialists and Communists parted company.

During the period 1939 to 1941 a number of groups, "passing under the denomination of Communists, Socialists, National Democrats, Kisans and Forward Bloc" expressed "dissentient note" on the policy of the Congress.

97 Ibid., p. 417.
99 Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 181.
Attitude of Subhas Chandra Bose

At Haripura when Subhas Chandra Bose was the President of the Indian National Congress at its 51st Session a resolution on war was adopted which described the war as "an imperialist war", and, did not want India to be a party to such a war. It further said "in the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war this will be resisted". When the war started in 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose wanted to exploit fully the troubles of the British Government and give unconditional opposition to the war. Bose, alongwith the Socialists and Communists wanted to give the British an unconditional fight. This went against the Congress which was haltingly moving on the question of struggle against the British. When the war broke out the Congress adopted the policy of "contingent cooperation" towards the British whereas Subhas Chandra Bose wanted "immediate fight".

In pursuit of his line, Subhas Chandra Bose started organizing the Forward Bloc, which was considered as splitting the Congress by the Communist Party of India. The first conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay in June 1939. At the time when the war broke out, Subhas Chandra Bose thought that any compromise with imperialism would lead to a civil war.

100 Ibid., p. 138.

101 With the formation of Forward Bloc, the "right" wing in the Congress under the presidencieship of Rajendra Prasad disqualified Bose from holding Congress office for three years. Bose went ahead with his plans, which kept the Congress Socialists at arms length and kept away the Communists from his Anti-Compromise Conference.

102 Subhas Chandra Bose said "in the event of compromise being effected with imperialism in this country, Indian (Contd. on next page)
Thus, Bose made preparations for an All India Anti-Compromise conference to force the hands of the Congress at the Ramgarh Session. It was organized at Hazaribagh on March 19 and 20, 1940. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya the conference "was intended to govern all the anti-imperialist forces in the country that were determined to resist compromise with imperialism".

According to official reports, the gathering was attended by 10,000 strong audience. The slogans shouted at this meeting were "stop all talks of compromise, and launch the fight for freedom". In this meeting Bose hoped that they would soon launch a struggle for freedom. He held that war was a good time to start the fight for Swaraj. Bose appealed to the audience to be "ready for the call of action". Subhash Bose was arrested on July 2, 1940 and escaped on January 17, 1941 from the hands of the British and reached Berlin on March 28, 1941. Many of the leftists were not with Bose on this question. Congress Socialist Party initially helped in sponsoring the conference up to March

Leftists in the future will have to fight not only imperialism but its new tangled allies as well. This will necessarily mean that the national struggle against imperialism will be converted into a civil war amongst Indians themselves". Quoted in Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 181.

103 Ibid.
104 All India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department, File No. 12/1/1940.
105 Ibid.
106 Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 182.
107 For the interesting manner of his escape see Hiren Mukherjee, Bow of Burning Gold: A Study of Subhash Chandra Bose (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 63-73.
1940 but went against the Forward Bloc at the Ramgarh Session of the Congress. The Communist Party of India also did not participate in this conference because it followed the policy of united front and believed that only the Congress could lead a struggle against the British. Hence Bose failed to take these two important leftist parties with him.

**Attitude of the Communist Party of India**

The Communist Party of India viewed the war as neatly divisible into two phases: *imperialist war* phase (September 1939 to June 1941) and *people's war* phase (June 1941 to 1945).

**Imperialist War**

This party considered the period between September 1939 to June 1941 as imperialist phase of the war because of two basic factors i.e. (1) the two contestants in the war "two imperialist rivals, the Anglo-French imperialists on one side and the Hitler-Fascists on the other" were responsible for it and (2) the "actual living war aims of the two sides...were selfish imperialist aims". In this phase the task before the people according to the Communist Party was "Revolutionary utilisation of the war crisis for the achievement of National freedom and therefore the people should be brought out into "active struggle". On the question of immediate struggle the Communist Party was with Bose in wanting mass struggles.

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109 Ibid., p. 36.
110 Ibid., p. 37.
The Communist Party felt that neither Forward Bloc nor the Congress Socialists nor the party itself could launch a country-wide struggle against the war. It was only the Congress which could lead such a movement. Thus the Communist Party conducted partial struggles, to force the hands of the Congress and launch the anti-war movement. It opposed Bose's "efforts to start a rival Congress as disruptive of national unity and stood up to him when he was exploiting national sentiment and his own just grievances against the Congress. The Communists did not join Bose's Anti-Compromise Conference.

111 The Communists said "It must be clearly realized...that the movement against war and for freedom can acquire national dimensions and be really effective only when it is led by the Congress.... All our anti-war activities today, viz., protest strikes, literature, anti-war propaganda must have as their main objective the creation of such powerful anti-war sentiment among the people in general and the masses of Congressmen in particular as would move the Congress itself towards struggles". Ibid., p. 38.

112 The Communist Party of India led the anti-war strikes of the workers in Bombay for 40 days in 1940; 20,000 textile workers in Kanpur, 20,000 municipal workers in Calcutta, jute workers in Bengal, oil workers of Digboi, coal mines of Dhanbad and Jharia, and iron and steel workers of Jamshedpur; during this period students wing of the party was very active; the peasant struggles against landlord repression, as in Kayyur, took place. Guidelines of the History of the Communist Party of India, Issued by Central Party Education Department, CPI Publication, New Delhi, August 1974, p. 59.

113 P.C. Joshi, op. cit., p. 40.

People's War

According to the Communists the attack on Soviet Union and Japanese entry into the war had transformed the situation, and, the war "now became a people's war because of the changed regrouping of forces, changed prospects before the world". It did not mean subjugation to the British, in view of the party, as alleged by the Congress. It worked out a strategy of national unity to win a national government for national defence. It was in agreement with the All India Congress Committee resolution of August 1942 as far as its aims of National Government was concerned, and suggested a united front.

Attitude of All India Kisan Sabha

The All India Kisan Sabha expressed its attitude in the political resolutions passed at the fifth session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Palasa in Andhra in March 1940. It adopted the attitude of unconditional opposition to the British Government and the line of partial struggles. It said: "The Sabha further believes that the kisans possessing as they do the highest stake in the peace, will themselves, along with the Mazdoors (workers), be in the vanguard of the struggle for freedom in challenging the authority of the alien government and resisting the draining out of all the resources of the country. To that end the kisans should forthwith initiate and intensify their day-to-day struggle under the leadership of their own Sabhas against the British..."

115 Ibid., p. 49.
116 Ibid., pp. 50-59.
Government as well as the Indian rulers, the Zamindars and sahukars (money lenders) who form the pillars of its power in the country. These struggles growing in intensity and extending over wide areas, should very soon be integrated into a country-wide no-tax and no-rent movement which would end the economic power of these parasites of imperialism and shake the political might of the British Government in the land.  

In 1942 at Nagpur the Central Kisan Council adopted a resolution urging upon the kisans to align themselves on the side of the Soviet Union, China and other progressive forces "in waging a relentless war for the final extermination of fascism". The Nagpur resolution of the Central Kisan Council said "this war can be effectively converted into the Indian people's war only when it is fought under the leadership of a national government and with the willing and hearty cooperation of the people of India".

The Sixth Session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Bhat (Bihar) in May 1942 reiterated the Nagpur resolution. The All India Kisan Sabha did not subscribe to the "August struggle" programme of the Congress. In its political campaign it demanded, like the Communist Party, the release of Congress leaders

118 Quoted in ibid., p. 80.
119 All India Kisan Sabha, Organizational Reportage No. 1, 1942-43, p. 5.
120 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 85.
121 The All India Kisan Sabha maintained this position in Bezwada session held in 1944; in the ninth session at
arrested immediately after the announcement of the August Struggle, and, campaigned for unity of the Congress and Muslim League for the independence of India. It agreed with the basic demand of the Congress for transfer of power to the people. This session made comprehensive demands for grow more food campaign.

At the seventh session in Bhakna in 1943 the demand for a National Government for National Defence was reiterated by the Kisan body. In this session the All India Kisan Sabha passed a resolution on food crisis again and "warned the government that if it finds itself helpless to control the hoarders of foodgrains and therefore takes measures to requisition them from cultivating kisans in order to tide over the food crisis, the situation will worsen and result in grave consequences...." In this session the kisans were asked "not merely to agitate for what they should get so as to enable them to grow more food; they are also asked to utilise whatever resources they have today to increase food".

The Central Kisan Council meeting held at Bombay in

Netrakona, it demanded the release of all political prisoners. K.A. Rasul, ibid., pp. 111, 119.

122 These were waste and fallow lands for cultivation, moratorium on collection of rents and taxes, food for peasants, grain supply through cooperative societies, guaranteed minimum prices of their produce for growers, minimum living wage for agricultural labourers, reduced irrigation tax, extension of irrigation facilities, cheap supply of manure, etc.

123 K.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 100.

124 Quoted in ibid., p. 103.

125 E.M.S. Namboodripad, With Plough Share and the Sickle Kisan Sabha in the Campaign for More Food (Bombay, 1943), p. 27.
September 1945 greeted the victors over Hitler in its resolution on war and demanded of the British Government (in its political resolution) to recognise the independence of India and enable the Indian people to frame their constitution through one or more constituent assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage. The All India Kisan Sabha decisions were carried out by its units in the provinces, under the given war conditions.

**Attitude of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

Before the actual start of the hostilities, the Government of India was making preparations for the war. It had introduced the Army Recruitment Bill.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha opposed the bill in a large number of meetings. The meetings were mostly held in Monghyr and Gaya, apart from other places. In a meeting held in Monghyr Town on September 1, 1938 the kisan sabha in a resolution protested against the Army Recruitment Bill and said...

"none of the kisans would participate if Britain entangles herself in the war". In another meeting at Khagaria in the same district on October 1, 1938 it again reiterated its position in a resolution. Apart from this, the chairman of the meeting Karyanand Sharma spoke against the Bill. In another meeting held at Begusarai in the same district a resolution was passed

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127 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Sabha Meeting, *Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 33(c)/1938*.

128 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Sabha Meeting held on October 1, 1938, *ibid.*
opposing the bill. In a meeting held at Sartha, Police Station Kurtha, district Gaya, the Kisan Sabha protested against the Bill and said in the event of war the kisans will stop the people's enlistment for the army". The same stand was reiterated again in Gaya at Deo Police Station, Aurangabad.

On the basis of conservative estimates of Intelligence Reports, it can be said that these meetings were of a mass character. The range of attendance varied from 300 to 3000 strong audience in Monghyr. In Gaya the audience ranged from 300 to 1200.

Phase One

The attitude of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha towards the war was the same as that of the All India Kisan Sabha. In its political resolution at the fifth session at Palasa the All India Kisan Sabha challenged the British rule.

The Kisan conference at Patna district held on June 22, 1940 supported the above resolution. It said "This conference supports the All India Kisan Sabha's resolution of Palasa and direct the Kisan Sabha and kisan workers to translate the same

129 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Sabha Meeting held on October 18, 1938, ibid.
130 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Sabha Meeting held on September 15, 1938, ibid.
131 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Sabha Meeting held on September 28, 1939, ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 See p. 154.
into action without delay".

A little earlier the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in its conference at Motihari, Champaran held on February 24 and 25, 1940 took an "anti-imperialist" position. The resolution No. 22 of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha at Motihari "reiterated the determination of the kisans to avail of the present political situation and join the anti-imperialist organizations to free the country" (Italics ours).

Going a step further to defend and express their solidarity towards Soviet Union, the conference in resolution No. 9 said, "the imperialist powers are making false, dirty and groundless propaganda against Soviet Russia.... This conference assures Soviet Russia that in spite of all sorts of false propaganda, expresses its full sympathy with the present Government of Russia.

"The conference also condemns the motive of the imperialist nations of the world who want to invade Russia. The kisans of Bihar determine to give all possible help in case it is invaded by such powers". This resolution forecast the events leading to the second phase of the war. We will deal with this later in this chapter.

To sum up the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha adopted anti-imperialist, anti-fascist position in general and anti-British

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134 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Conference in Patna District, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 307/1940.

135 Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Conference at Motihari, Champaran, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 107/1940.
and pro-Soviet Russia position in particular during this phase of the war.

The British Government had armed itself with the Defence of India Rules and prosecuted the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha leaders under them during this phase.

Jadunandan Sharma, Rahul Sankritayan, Karyanand Sharma and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati were arrested during this period. Jadunandan Sharma was prosecuted under Defence of India Rules in 1940 because of a speech he delivered in Patna in the meeting held on June 26, 1940. Rahul Sankritayan was arrested between February 24, 1940 and March 26, 1940. He was present at the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha conference at Champaran held on February 24, 1940 but could not preside over the fifth session of the All India Kisan Sabha held at Palasa on March 26, 1940 because he was arrested on the eve of the session. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was arrested on March 29, 1940, for his speech at the Anti-Compromise conference held at Hazaribagh on April 19 and 20, 1940. Earlier, Chief Secretary of the Government of Bihar was advised by the police to prosecute Swami Sahajanand under Defence of India Rules and Indian Penal Code for his speeches at different places in the district of Hazaribagh.

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136 C.I.D. Report on Kisan Conference at Patna District, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 107/1940.

137 M.N. Rasul, op. cit., p. 68.


139 Political Meetings in the District of Hazaribagh, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 121/1940.
He was arrested for 3 years. In the Kisan conference held in Patna District on June 22, 1940 Dutta Majumdar gave the slogan "we will liberate Swamiji and our country". A resolution was passed condemning the arrest. Karyanand Sharma was arrested thrice during 1940 and finally was lodged in the Hazaribagh jail on September 20, 1940.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was deprived of its leadership. Despite the Palasa emphasis on "day to day struggles", the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha could not conduct any struggles with much success.

Phase Two

During the second phase of the war the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha adopted the policies of the All India Kisan Sabha in general during this period. It had organized a number of meetings at Monghyr, Saran and Muzaffarpur in support of the resolution adopted by All India Kisan Sabha at Bihta (Patna) in 1946, which had endorsed the resolution characterising the war as

140 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 576.
141 C.I.D. Report on the Kisan Conference held in Patna District, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 307/1940.
142 Ibid.
143 Triveni Sharma Sudhakar, Comrade Karyanand Sharma (Hindi), (Gaya, n.d.).
144 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., pp. 545-6; All India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department, File No. 121/1940; Triveni Sharma Sudhakar, Lok Nayak Sahajanand Saraswati (Gaya, n.d.); and N.G. Ranga, "Swami Sahajanand Saraswati", (Contd. on next page)
peoples' war adopted by the Central Kisan Committee at its Nagpur meeting on February 13, 1942.

Phase Four: 1945-47

Peasant Upsurge

In this phase, the peasants in Bihar again became active and launched struggles on the issue of bakasht lands. At the province-wide level the struggles came increasingly under the influence of Communist leader Karyanand Sharma.

Ideological Cleavage of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Leadership

At the beginning of the war the leadership of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was united on the question of characterisation of war as found in the Palasa resolution of All India Kisan Sabha. It is already mentioned that various parties disagreed on the question. Swami Sahajanand joined hands with Subhash Chandra Bose in this conference.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was the Chairman of the Reception Committee formed for Anti-Compromise conference. In his address as Chairman, Reception Committee, Swami Sahajanand opposed the Congress policy of "compromise" and called it, "shameful move of our national leadership", and proposed that "we... should take the risk of an immediate plunge for direct action. Then and then alone we shall be able to save the nation from an
ignoble surrender and capitulation". As pointed out earlier, soon after this he was arrested and sentenced for three years.

We have already seen that Swami Sahajanand entered politics under the influence of Gandhi. He was disillusioned with Gandhian politics.

In his Address to the conference references are found which indicate that he was moving towards Marxism after having given up his Gandhite predilections on questions of class struggle, non-violence and change of heart. He never became a Marxist. At the moment he was with Subhash Chandra Bose who did not have much to do with Marxism in his overriding zeal of nationalism. Soon Swami Sahajanand changed company and moved nearer the Communists, after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union.

Swami Sahajanand was in the jail when Hitler mounted the attack on the Soviet Union. Independently of the Communists he came to the conclusion that he would have to give up the old line of 'war against war'. He agreed with the Nagpur resolution of the Central Kisan Committee (February 1942), which said that the opposition to war policy should be given up, and, asked the

145 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Address of the Chairman, Reception Committee of All India Anti-Compromise Conference, pp. 3, 15.

146 While contradicting Gandhi on change of heart/the transformation of society, he said in this Address "Then comes the problem of change of heart and transformation of the society by love and Ahimsa". Frankly speaking, I never believe in these and it is only on the Marxian line, I maintain that the society can be rebuilt in order to be free from Himsa, and exploitation of all descriptions" (Italics our), ibid., p. 13.

kisans of India "to render all possible help to Russia and China...." Swami Sahajanand came nearer the Communists. He did not go along with the followers of Congress Socialist Party, who left the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in its session at Dumraon in February 1941.

At the ninth session of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held in June 1942 at Sherghati (Gaya) Swami Sahajanand in his Presidential Address defended the Nagpur resolution, and as instructed by the same resolution, he recommended propaganda of the view among the kisans. He reported that the All India Kisan Sabha had changed its line regarding war and considered it now as peoples' war. In this speech he criticised Indu Lal Yagnik for disagreeing with the Nagpur resolution. He went on to say that the Kisan Sabha should work for national and peoples' government at the central and provincial levels. In the light of this national task, Swami Sahajanand raised the question of bakasht struggle and recommended that the old way of the struggle should be given up and a new way has to be adopted. He highlighted that despite the victory of the struggle at Reora (Gaya) the problem continued owing to the continuation of landlordism. He wanted that the struggle should not be waged for the time being, which would weaken the powers that be, and also

148 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 80.
149 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 569.
150 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Presidential Address to the Ninth Session of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1942, pp. 30-31.
151 Ibid.
owing to the existence of the Defence Act. He advised, wherever the problem existed, a report should be prepared and sent to the office of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha.

Again in his Presidential Address to the 10th session of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held in June 1943, Swami Sahajanand pleaded for National Government in the context of the war. He pleaded for the campaign of "Grow More Food" as directed by the All India Kisan Sabha at its sixth session at Bihta in 1942. Once again he mentioned that the problem of Bakasht was raising its head owing to the Zamindar oppression.

By 1944 Swami Sahajanand parted company with the Communists. At the Bezwada session of the All Indian Kisan Sabha frustration gripped Swami Sahajanand. In this session differences arose between him and other leaders of the All India Kisan Sabha, who were Communists, over small organizational matters and the question of Pakistan. The question of Pakistan became a major point of dispute. To be more accurate Swami Sahajanand was opposed to the demands of Pakistan whereas the Communist Party was in support of it. The Kisan Sabha had taken a neutral position in respect of the ideas of Pakistan and Akhand Hindustan in a resolution adopted at Bihta session in 1942. However, in his Presidential Address at Bezwada session of the All India

153 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Presidential Address to the Tenth Session of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1943, p. 3.
154 Ibid., p. 9.
Kisan Sabha in 1944, Swami Sahajanand attacked the principle of self-determination, the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan. The Communists regarded this as a violation of the Bihta resolution. By 1945 trouble started and Swami Sahajanand left the Kisan Sabha. In the Subjects Committee meeting at Bezwada session Swami Sahajanand said "I have my own ideas, my own conceptions and own methods and these may have differences with those of others". He said he was "despondent now and then". According to Rasul, who was then one of the General Secretaries of All India Kisan Sabha, the cause of his depression was a sense of "anti-communism which he had developed of late in respect of Kisan Sabha work". Swami Sahajanand himself gave the reasons for leaving the All India Kisan Sabha in a statement: He said, as reported in the Press "I have decided to resign from the Presidentship...." The reason for doing so is "the defacto Communist domination over it". At the All India Kisan Sabha session at Nitrakona Swami Sahajanand wanted to be the General Secretary while the Communists thought he wanted to become a dictator.

155 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Presidential Address, Eighth Session of All India Kisan Sabha, March 14-15, 1944, Bezwada, pp. 13-16.

156 All India Kisan Sabha, Eight Session, Organizational Reportage No. 1 of 1944-45, p. 11.

157 Ibid., p. 12.

158 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 80.

159 The Searchlight, March 5, 1945.

160 Ibid., March 7, 1945.
As a result of his differences with the All India Kisan Sabha he delinked the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha from the all India body. The All India Kisan Sabha session was soon to take place at Nitrakona and the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha elected its delegates. In a meeting of the delegates chaired by Swamiji a resolution was adopted expressing Sabha's full confidence in Swami Sahajanand and endorsing his actions upto date, and further authorising him to do the needful in regard to the controversy with All India Kisan Sabha. Another resolution was passed in this meeting which said "the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha should have no connection with All India Kisan Sabha".

Swami Sahajanand turned this meeting into his own All India Kisan Sabha. The *Searchlight* editorially congratulated Swami Sahajanand for "reconstituting his own all India Kisan Sabha". Swami Sahajanand himself said "Undoubtedly I had decided...to break with them (Communists - RKG) and hand over the All India Kisan Sabha to them because...the Communists were in majority in it". Now Swami Sahajanand tried to move towards the Congress again as is indicated from his Address quoted above. He said here "The Indian National Congress symbolises that fight for independence, that collective revolt against slavery. It is why it is our foremost duty to strengthen it.... The Kisan

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161 Ibid., March 17, 1945.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid., March 20, 1945.

164 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, *Presidential Address to the 12th Bihar Provincial Kisan Conference at Warisaliganj (Gaya), May 1945*, p. 6.
Sabha believes in the consolidation of the Congress." However, he could not be one with them because the Congressmen in Bihar did not accept him. Politically, Swami Sahajanand was isolated by the time the war ended. On August 14, 1947 he wrote an article in favour of left unity. At the same time he did not want that the Kisan Sabha should have anything to do with political parties. In 1949 it appears that he had sympathies for the left movement. When the Communists were being hunted, he expressed his sympathies with them.

There is, however, another view which regards Swami Sahajanand as an anti-Marxist and anti-Communist. This view is held on the ground that Sahajanand raised the "bogey" of Communist dominance in the Kisan Sabha, hob nobbed with the Congress and finally started his own All India United Kisan Sabha. Some lay the charge that his politics was caste-based and that he supported landlords and pro-British landlords like Ganesh Dutt Singh.

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165 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
166 N. G. Ranga says that when Swami Sahajanand wanted to rejoin the Congress, "the local Congress leaders indulged in their revengeful and petulant attitude and so, I could not persuade Gandhiji or Rajendra Prasad..." to welcome Sahajanand in the Congress fold, op. cit.
167 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Presidential Address to the 14th Session of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held in June 1947, p. 28.
168 Triveni Sharma Sudhakar, Lok Nayak Sahajanand Saraswati (Hindi). This was confirmed in a personal interview with Indradeep Sinha, who was present at the Bihar Conference, of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1942.
169 Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey, op. cit., p. 172.
It is true that Sahajanand split the kisan movement on the charge of it being Communist dominated. Certain other facts have to be taken into consideration. First, he was never anti-Soviet, which demarcated him from the followers of Congress Socialist, like M.R. Masani, Ashok Mehta and Jay Prakash Narayan. Secondly, he tried for left unity. In 1948 efforts were made to forge a united left front. Communist Party of India and Socialist Party of India were among the eighteen organizations present in the meeting. Sahajanand was in the meeting. It was decided to form such a front and a statement was issued on behalf of the participants. By a resolution Sahajanand was appointed convenor for convening meetings for building a United Kisan Sabha. The front could not be formed because the Communist Party of India did not ratify it, owing to a fundamental change in its policy after its Second Congress. Thirdly, his caste association did not prevent him from accepting the demand of abolition of landlordism.

A balanced view could be that he was broadly a leftist with vacillations.

The ideological ambivalence of Swami Sahajanand delinked the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha from the All India Kisan Sabha. In fact it split the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1946. During the war period the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha could not conduct any struggle on the bakasht problem. In 1946 during the phase of mass upsurge in the country the bakasht struggle was again

successfully launched mainly under the leadership of the Communists. Karyanand Sharma led this movement.

Swami Sahajanand was accompanied by two other leaders in Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha throughout the period of study. They were Karyanand Sharma and Jadunandan Sharma. Both of them were influenced by Swami Sahajanand.

**Karyanand Sharma**

Though Karyanand Sharma had tremendous regards for Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, ideologically he went far ahead of Swami Sahajanand.

Karyanand Sharma like Swami Sahajanand came into politics during the first non-cooperation movement under the influence of Gandhi. In 1929 itself when the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was formed Karyanand Sharma joined it under the influence of Srikrishna Sinha and Rajendra Prasad, leaving his studies.

He got disillusioned with the Congress and joined the Congress Socialist Party in November 1934. At the second *kisan* conference of Monghyr district Srikrishna Sinha saw a copy of the Constitution of Congress Socialist Party in the hands of Karyanand Sharma, and, during his speech, taunted the latter for having joined the Congress Socialist Party. Karyanand Sharma had not joined the party till then. But soon he did, after

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171 *All India Kisan Sabha, Organizational Reportage No. 4 of 1945-47.*


173 Ibid., p. 3.

174 Ibid., p. 10.
this provocation.

During the first phase of the war, Karyanand Sharma got disillusioned with the politics of the Congress Socialist Party. He came nearer Subhash Chandra Bose. In 1939 during the Kisan District conference at Khazarla in Monghyr he met Bose, whom he met a number of times subsequently. In 1940 at the Ramgarh Congress, he remained in the camp of Subhash Chandra Bose.

He was arrested during the Jamui Kisa' struggle in June 1940. He was lodged in Hazaribagh jail. Here in jail Jai Prakash Narayan felt he was becoming a Communist.

Karyanand Sharma had come in touch with Communists like Anil Mitra during the Bakasht struggle in Barahiya Tal. In the jail Karyanand Sharma came into contact with other Communists like Sunil Mukherjee, Binod Mukherjee and Rahul Sankritayan. He joined the group in 1940 on the advice of Swami Sahajanand. In 1942 he came out of the jail and became a member of the Communist Party of India. Ever since he remained a Communist. Till his death he remained the President of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha which was affiliated to All India Kisan Sabha. His membership of the Communist Party differentiated him from Jadunandan Sharma, who always remained with Swami Sahajanand and politically with the Congress.

175 Ibid., p. 14.
176 Ibid., p. 19.
177 The party in Bihar views his membership as beginning from 1940. Interview with Ganga Dhar Das.
Jadunandan Sharma remained loyal to Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and therefore changed his positions along with his leader. During the days of Congress ministry in Bihar, he got disillusioned with the Congress. Along with Swami Sahajanand he worked in the Anti-Compromise conference, though he never joined the Forward Bloc. Over the years he had come to admire the work of the Communists in the Kisan Sabha. At the eighth session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Bezwada, Jadunandan Sharma paid tributes to the Communist workers in the Kisan Sabha and said that the Communists "were playing a leading role in the Sabha because we (in Bihar) were its best workers, and more the Communists worked the better would it be for the Sabha".

At the time when Swami Sahajanand split the All India Kisan Sabha and reconstituted the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, Jadunandan Sharma was in the reconstituted body. Here he parted company with Rahul Sankritayan and Karyanand Sharma, who had joined the Communist Party of India already.

178 Jadunandan Sharma, Address of the Chairman Reception Committee, Fourth Session of All India Kisan Sabha (Gaya, 1939), pp. 5-8.

179 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 113. This was the time when Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was frustrated and depressed and a sense of anti-Communism had possessed him.

180 The Searchlight, April 8, 1945.
Kishori Prasanna Sinha

Kishori Prasanna Sinha came into politics around 1930. The Congress was busy mobilising the peasants during the early thirties. In Bihar the Congress was organizing the peasants to start a no-tax campaign. This was started in three areas viz. Monghyr and Tarapur under the leadership of Srikrishna Sinha, Dhaka area in Champaran under the leadership of Prajapati Misra and Hajipur, Bidhupur in Muzaffarpur under the leadership of Kishori Prasanna Sinha. The movement was successful in Hajipur where K.P. Sinha and his wife played a significant role. After this K.P. Sinha was called the "Patel of Bihar". During the Civil Disobedience Movement he came into contact with Gandhi to be disillusioned soon.

At this stage he was influenced by Jawaharlal Nehru "who wanted to base the national movement on the working masses", said K.P. Sinha. He was influenced by Jawaharlal Nehru. At this stage of his thinking he came into contact with Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and along with him plunged into the work of organizing the kisans. He was active in the Bihar Socialist Party. In fact he was one of the Secretaries of the Bihar Socialist Party. He was active in the Bihar Provincial Kisan

The information on K.P. Sinha is primarily based on personal interview with him. Wherever possible it is substantiated by official documents. Also the information is cross checked by other activists of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha.

Sub-Inspector's Report dated Monghyr, 14th June 1935, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 3, Part I-A/1935.
According to this report he was considered by the police as "intrepid revolutionist".

In the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha K.P. Sinha pressed for the adoption of the resolution on abolition of Zamindari system. In a Kisan Sabha meeting, at Dukhan Saraya, Police Station Paru, District Muzaffarpur on January 28, 1935, K.P. Sinha had moved a resolution on abolition of zamindari system. The resolution said "Whereas the zamindari system is an obstacle in the way of financial and social advancement of the society, this conference of the Kisans resolves to put an end to it when a suitable opportunity comes". In this meeting, it is reported, that Swami Sahajanand informed the audience that so far the provincial kisan sabha had not taken that matter into their hands. However, later on such a resolution was adopted. It can be definitely said that K.P. Sinha was the first to introduce such a resolution. This was confirmed by an intelligence report which said that this was "a new resolution which was not moved so far in any Kisan Sabha".

K.P. Sinha, like Karyanand Sharma and Rahul Sankritayan

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183 The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was reorganized in 1934 on an elective basis. In the executive committee meeting held on April 21, 1934 it was decided to form the reorganized committee. K.P. Sinha was a member of this committee and also the Divisional Secretary for Tirhut. Report of the Special Branch Inspector dated Patna 22nd April 1934, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department, File No. 10/1934.

184 Activities of Kisan Sabha, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special Section), File No. 16/1935 I.

185 Ibid.
became a Communist in Deoli jail during war years and continues in the Communist Party of India. When Jay Prakash Narayan came to know of this he said in his Deoli letter (in Hindi) "Bihar Ke Sathiyon Ko Kishori Ki Gaddari Ki Suchna de do" (Inform the friends in Bihar about the betrayal of Kishori).

It can thus be safely concluded that the dominant leadership of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha showed ideological ambivalence leading to a cleavage. During the years of the World War II the leaders went into different ideological streams. The dominant trend was pointing towards an ascendancy of Communists in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha.

Conclusion

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha during the period of study, was a struggling body. On the basis of our study, 4 phases of the history of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha can be made out as follows: (1) organizational-agitational 1929-1935 culminating in the (2) phase of struggle 1936-1939, entering (3) the phase of the World War with the slogans of partial struggles leading to the slogan of National Unity for National Government for National Defence, during 1941 June to 1945 August and finally (4) the beginning of a period of mass struggles which continued after 1947. The rise of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and its history represented at the microscopic level the process of spontaneous awakening, growing class consciousness and emerging local, regional and provincial organizations of peasants. The ideological position of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha moved from the Congress to the Congress Socialist and finally to the
Communist understanding. This is examined in the next chapter.

Formation of All India Kisan Sabha

Whereas the movement of peasants developed from below at the provincial level as in Bihar, from above the initiative was taken by some left minded persons in the Congress, Socialists and Communists to establish an all India body of kisans. At the time of the national conference of the Congress Socialist Party at Meerut in January 1936 political workers interested in organizing an all India Kisan Body got together. They decided (in a meeting, held on January 16, 1936 presided by Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya) to form an organizing committee to call an All India Kisan Sabha Congress. There were three secretaries of


187 Indradeep Sinha said "...it is the left and socialist minded elements in the Congress headed by the Communists who assembled at the time of the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in 1936 to found the All India Kisan Sabha". Indradeep Sinha, op. cit. According to M.A. Rasul, "a number of left minded political workers including leading members of the C3P met...to convene an All India Kisan Congress". M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 3. N.G. Ranga said "He created the necessary atmosphere favourable to the idea of creating the All India Kisan Sabha, first by forming the Peasants' group of MLAs in 1935 August-September and then by issuing a number of appeals in September, popularising the idea of an all India Kisan organization and calling for cooperation for establishing it...." N.N. Mitra, op. cit., 1936, vol. II (July-December), p. 230.

188 N.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 81.

189 Following were the members of the Committee:

Kerala: Messrs. Sankaran and Namboodripad;
Tamil Nad: Narain Aiyar;
Andhra: N.G. Ranga and N.R. Naidu;

(Contd. on next page)
this committee and not two as said by M.A. Rasul.

This meeting at Meerut recognized the "urgent need of organizing an All India Kisan Congress.... The main task of the Kisan Sabha shall be the organization of peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands in order to prepare them for their emancipation from every form of political exploitation".

Delegates of Kisan organizations got together at Lucknow on April 11, 1936 at the time of the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress. The political complexion of the Conference was thus: Congressmen like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Indulal Yagnik and N.G. Ranga joined hands with Communists like Bankim Mukherjee, Z.A. Ahmed, E.M.S. Namboodripad and Karyanand Sharma, Congress Socialists like Acharya Karendra Deva and

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U.P.: Mohan Lal Gautam;
Gujarat: N. Desai.
Grissa: Malti Devi Diwakar.
Surma Valley (Assam): Suresh Chandra Deb.
Berar: Acharya Trimbaka Joshi.
Hindi) (C.P.): Behari Patel (Betal).
C.P.C. (Marhata): Mr. Mote.


Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha were also present. Commenting on the political combination engaged in the formation of All India Kisan Sabha E.M.S. Namboodiripad said "All these activities were carried on the basis of a United Front between the Communists, the Congress Socialists and other radicals including Congressmen. The United Front of left minded Congressmen, Socialists and Communists provided leadership to the All India Kisan Sabha.

Indradeep Sinha, op. cit. Membership of the All India Kisan Committee organized at Lucknow was as follows:


**Bihar**: Swami Sahajanand (Convenor), Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, J.P. Narain, Jamuna Karjee, Yadunandan Sharma and Karyanand Sharma.


**Bengal**: Dutta Majumdar, Kamal Sarcar, Md. Mazullah (Convenor), Abdul Sattar, Tushar Chatterjee, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chaudhri, S.J. Sashamy, Sudhir Pramanik, Nripen Chowdhary, Asutosh Das and Muzzafar Ahmed.


**Gujerat**: Indula1 Yagnik, Diwakar Mehta, Kamala Shankar Pandiya, N. Desai, Kalabhai Kothari.

**Kerala**: E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

**Maharashtra**: R.K. Khadilkar, Patwardhan and Atma Ram Patel. Apart from these there were representatives from Karnataka, Nagpur, Berar, Tamilnad, Orissa, Assam, Surma Valley and Delhi.

Congress Socialist, vol. I, no. 8, April 25, 1936. In the provinces a number of Communists were present like Z.A. Ahmed, Sohan Singh Josh, Muzzafar Ahmed, K.M. Ashraf and E.M.S. Namboodiripad.
Kisan Sabha for the next five years".

**Aim of the All India Kisan Sabha**

In a resolution adopted at its Lucknow session the All India Kisan Sabha stated the object of the *Kisan Sabha* as "to secure freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes". The resolution further stated that the "main task of the Kisan Movement shall be the organization of peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands in order to prepare them for their emancipation from every form of exploitation.

"The Kisan Movement stands for the achievement of ultimate economic and political power for the producing masses through its active participation in the national struggle for winning complete independence".

This resolution laid down both the ultimate ideal and the operative part of the *Kisan Sabha*. The idea was to have a state of labouring masses. At the same time it viewed itself as a part of the struggle against imperialism, and resolved to struggle for complete independence. The operative part was laid down. It was to fight for immediate political and economic demands. In its Manifesto it further elaborated on this saying "While the fight for... basic changes goes on, the peasants also must fight for all that can be gained within the framework of


194  *Congress Socialist*, vol. I, no. 18, April 25, 1936; and M.A. Rasul, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
the existing order. Only in this manner can they prepare for bigger struggle, the objective of which must be kept ever present in the minds of the kisans".

This objective of the All India Kisan Sabha was incorporated in its constitution adopted at the meeting of the All India Kisan Committee held at Niyamatpur, Bihar on July 14 and 15, 1937. Finally, the Constitution as adopted at the third session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Comilla in 1938 said "The object of the Sabha is to secure for the kisans complete freedom from economic and political exploitation and, in conjunction with other classes and democratic organizations, particularly with the movement for national freedom, establish in India a democratic state in which all economic and political power shall vest in the masses". So at the Comilla session, the ideal was further described as the establishment of the "Democratic state". The operative part adopted at this session was "day-to-day struggle" of the kisans and unity "with other forces for the furtherance of the freedom movement". At its fourth session at Gaya in 1939 the All India Kisan Sabha pledged its support to the Congress who had given a call for preparations for "launching a nation-wide struggle for the establishment of an independent democratic state". In the Gaya

195 Indradeep Sinha, op. cit., Manifesto of All India Kisan Sabha, Article 2.
196 All India Kisan Sabha, Constitution, Articles 2 and 3.
197 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 36.
198 Ibid., p. 54.
session the operative part became more clear in comparison to the one at Comilla. While at Comilla, All India Kisan Sabha suggested "Unity with other forces" for carrying forward freedom movement, at Gaya it suggested a "united front between the Congress and the Kisan Sabha" to achieve "the essential unity of the entire Indian People fighting against imperialism".

At this session the All India Kisan Sabha moved a step further in stating its objective. It considered that the 'democratic state of the Indian people' is a transitory stage. While talking of the kisan Mazdoor Raj it said "...the Sabha affirms that the time has come when the united forces of the country... should take a step forward and launch an attack...on the imperialist domination itself for the complete national independence and a democratic state of the Indian people leading ultimately to the realisation of Kisan Mazdoor Raj". During the transitory stage its aim was nationally independent democratic state.

199 Ibid.
200 Ibid., p. 55.