Chapter V

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA

We have stated in Chapter IV that the formation of All India Kisan Sabha was the result of united efforts on the part of left minded elements in the Congress, the Socialists and the Communists. The unanimity among them on the need to form this body did not mean identity of approach towards it. These various trends of political thinking of the national movement evolved their respective programmes on the question of agrarian transformation in the country. On the basis of their understanding they viewed the role of the peasants in that transformation and accordingly evolved tactics in the All India Kisan Sabha. Naturally, the All India Kisan Sabha was the united front in which these tendencies co-operated and competed on issues as and when they emerged. The All India Kisan Sabha underwent ideological changes in the course of partisan activity. Ideologically the All India Kisan Sabha progressively moved towards left thinking. The Communists came to dominate it by 1942. The present chapter supports this proposition by examining the attitudes of the Indian National Congress, Congress Socialist Party and Communist Party of India towards All India Kisan Sabha and Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha during the period of study.

Indian National Congress and All India Kisan Sabha

Under the leadership of Gandhi, the Indian National Congress mobilised the peasants against imperialism during the Non-
Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement on the country-wide scale. Under the initiative and guidance of Gandhi, Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel shot into prominence by participating and leading the peasants in their partial struggles in the United Provinces, Bihar and Gujarat, respectively. The participation of peasant masses (apart from other things - an examination of which is beyond the scope of this study) in Congress anti-imperialist politics created a schism between the political "right" and political "left" in the Congress as it came to be described. As far as the question of peasants was concerned the schism expressed itself thus: The political left in the Congress wanted the Congress to organize and mobilise the peasantry on the class lines, in order to make the national liberation struggle a mass force. The political right did not want the organization and the mobilisation of the peasantry on class lines because it was feared that this would bring forth class issues like fighting the Zamindars and this might detract the Congress from its aim of fighting the British for independence. Within the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru represented the left whereas Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel represented the right. These trends clashed with each other. At the Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931, Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy was adopted, which was actively opposed among others, by some of the delegates from Bihar. The Bihar unit of

the Congress, under the leadership of Rajendra Prasad, represented the political right because its leadership came from the petty and big landlord class.

Till the Karachi Session "the Congress had thought along purely nationalist lines and had avoided facing economic issues, except in so far as it encouraged cottage industries and swadeshi generally. In the Karachi resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy, the Congress "took a step, a very short step, in a socialist direction by advocating nationalisation of key industries and services, and various other measures to lessen the burden on the poor and increase it on the rich". Nehru himself considered that the resolution could be accepted by the capitalist state. The remarks of Nehru represent the quintessence of the understanding of the Indian National Congress regarding its ideological goal i.e. capitalism. This aim came in conflict with the feudal structure being preserved by the British in the agrarian sector.

The agrarian problem drew the attention of the Congress at the Lucknow Session in 1936. At this session "The Congress called upon different Provincial Committees to make recommendations to the Working Committee by the August 31, 1936" regarding

2 Ibid.; Shashi Shekhar Jha points out the pro-Zamindar thrust of the Bihar Congress thus "The presence of a large number of Zamindars inside the Congress organization in Bihar made it difficult for the Congress ministry in 1937 to introduce any major reform which would have altered the existing system of landholdings". Shashi Shekhar Jha, Political Elite in Bihar (Bombay, 1972), p. 239.


4 Ibid.
agrarian problems. Before the next session of the Congress at Faizpur, it had to decide on its Election manifesto to fight the elections to the Provincial Assemblies under the Government of India Act, 1935. The Manifesto was approved at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee held in Bombay on August 22 and 23, 1936. This Manifesto included the demand of "Land reform, reduction of burdens on lands, war taxation or rent, the removal of intermediaries, the scaling down of debts, and cheap credit facilities...."

Faizpur Agrarian Programme

At the Faizpur Session (December 1936), the Congress adopted an agrarian programme and talked of having mass contacts. The resolution on Agrarian Programme adopted at this session was as follows:

"The Congress at its last session, being fully conscious of the fact that the most important and urgent problem of the country is appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry called upon the Provincial Congress Committees to make recommendations to enable the All India Congress Committee to draw up an All Indian Agrarian Programme. Many Pradesh Congress Committees have not yet submitted their recommendations for such a programme. The Congress regrets this delay but realises that the subject is a vast and

5 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 12.
6 Ibid., p. 24."
intricate one, requiring close study and investigation. It trusts that such P.C.Cs as have not reported so far will take early steps to send their recommendations.

"The Congress is convinced that the final solution of this problem involves the removal of British Imperialistic exploitation and a radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system. It feels, however, that the deepening crisis has made the burden on the peasantry an intolerable one and immediate relief is urgently called for pending the forming of an All India Agrarian Programme, therefore, the following steps are necessary:

"1. Rent and revenue should be readjusted giving regard to present conditions and there should be substantial reduction in both.

"2. Uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent or land tax.

"3. Agricultural incomes should be assessed to income tax like all other incomes on a progressive scale, subject to a prescribed minimum.

"4. Canal and other irrigation rates should be substantially lowered.

"5. All feudal dues and levies and forced labour should be abolished, and demands other than rent should be made illegal.

"6. Fixity of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees should be provided for all tenants."
"7. An effort should be made to introduce cooperative farming.

"8. The crushing burden of rural debt should be removed. Special Tribunals should be appointed to inquire into this and all debts which are unconscionable or beyond the capacity of peasants to pay, should be liquidated. Meanwhile a moratorium should be declared and steps should be taken to provide cheap credit facilities.

"9. Arrears of rent for previous years should generally be wiped out.

"10. Common pasture lands should be provided and the rights of the people in tanks, wells, ponds, forests and the like recognised and no encroachment on these rights should be permitted.

"11. Arrears of rent should be recoverable in the same manner as civil debts and not by ejectment.

"12. There should be statutory provision for securing a living wage and suitable working conditions for agricultural labourers.

"13. Peasant Unions should be recognised.

This Agrarian Programme was to operate within the general aim of Congress politics at that juncture. According to Jawaharlal Nehru (the President) "The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-Imperialistic forces in the country. The Congress has been indeed in the past and is today such a united popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and pivot of limited action. The active participation of the organized workers and peasants in such a front
would add to its strength and must be welcome...." 7

Controversy

The working out of the Agrarian Programme was conditioned by Gandhian concept of class peace, mutual understanding and compromise as tactics for agrarian change, within the framework of capitalism. In actual reality it meant continuation of landlordism, protection of 'rightful' privileges of landlords and amelioration to the tenantry in a manner least injurious to the Zamindars.

Rajendra Prasad, as President of the Congress said in 1935, in answer to the demands of the South Indian Federation of Peasants for a Kisan body "as Gandhiji said at the Round Table Conference, the Congress is par excellence and in a sense a peasants organization...whether they agree in all the details or not I am not sure and I wish you to accept that from me, that it is the duty of the Congressmen to do what they can to secure justice and fair treatment for you. But more than that, you are in a position to influence and indeed determine the views and actions of Congressmen and as days go on your power will go on increasing". A few days earlier Jawaharlal Nehru had admitted that the "land problem was the biggest problem facing India.

7 Ibid., p. 34.
9 N.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 283.
Peasants have to organize themselves into their independent class conscious organizations and that they have to do all they can to obtain not only proper recognition from the Congress but also a fighting place for peasants within the Congress through functional representation". The two leaders represented opinions which later on developed into conflicting trends affecting the relations of the Congress with the All India Kisan Sabha. Rajendra Prasad viewed the peasants as part of the Congress, which was according to him, itself a peasant body, whereas Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the peasants to organize themselves on a class basis and ask for functional representation in the Congress, a view which he later gave up owing to pressure from those who held the other view.

The National convention of the Congress held on March 19 and 20, 1937 asked the Congress legislators to press for the carrying out of the Congress Policy in the terms of its election manifesto and the Agrarian Programme.

The Faizpur Agrarian Programme did not go far enough in the eyes of even those peasant leaders who belonged to the Congress like N.G. Ranga. The Congress programme did not include the demand of the abolition of landlordism and the election Manifesto fell far short of the minimum demands of the All India Kisan Sabha.

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 284.
12 N.G. Ranga, "Presidential Address, Second Session All India Kisan Sabha", ibid., p. 282.
Immediately after the formation of All India Kisan Sabha the elections to Provincial Assemblies took place. The attitude of the All India Kisan Sabha to the Congress was that of generally supporting the Congress and particularly supporting those candidates who would voice the interests of the peasants. The All India Kisan Sabha, as already pointed out in the earlier chapter, in the operative part viewed itself as part of the anti-imperialist united front. At its second session the All India Kisan Sabha at Faizpur had decided to support the Congress in the elections and to extend their special organizational support to those Congress candidates who had pledged themselves to implement the kisan demands through their activities within and without the Congress parliamentary parties. The Faizpur Session of the All India Kisan Sabha decided upon insisting on a special pledge from those Congress candidates as were anxious to derive their special organizational support of the kisan movement. Such a pledge which was issued by the Andhra Peasant body attracted the wrath of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was the President of the All India Congress Parliamentary Committee. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, along with others in the All India Kisan Sabha, expressed "unpleasantness" at the outburst of Patel. Finally at the request of the President of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ranga dropped the controversy regarding the kisan pledge.

14 Ibid., p. 286.
Other controversies soon came up between the Congress and the All India Kisan Sabha on organizational matters. One of the questions was regarding the Red Flag. Some in the Congress did not want that the All India Kisan Sabha should adopt the Red flag because for them it was an insult to the national flag. The All India Kisan Sabha in its meeting at Calcutta on October 27-28, 1937 decided on the issue of the flag. It adopted the Red flag and explained the position thus, "while asking kisans to respect and maintain the national flag as a symbol of our anti-imperialist struggle for national freedom calls upon kisans and the Kisan Sabha and committees to adopt the Red Flag as their own and hoist and march under the Red Flag".  

In his Presidential Address to the third session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Comilla (1938) Swami Sahajanand dealt at length with the objections the followers of the Congress had on the use of Red Flag by the All India Kisan Sabha. He explained that the Kisan body had always "stressed" the importance of the tri-colour "on the occasion of national ceremonies" and had "never insisted upon, or even hinted at, the removal of the tri-colour". He said "whereas the tri-colour is a symbol of nationalism the Red Flag is that of the international solidarity and aspirations of the exploited and the oppressed". Yadumandan Sharma, in his Address as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Fourth Session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Gaya in 1939 again

15 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 16.
16 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 17.
touched on the Red flag controversy. He said "...we are to explain the respective importance of both these flags and bring home to the people the fact that while the one is the symbol of national solidarity and national revolution, the other reminds us and stands for the international solidarity of peasants and workers, and social revolution".

Narendra Deva did not agree with the view that the tricolour should be there only "at all Congress or united front demonstrations", as was instructed by N.G. Ranga earlier in his capacity as President of All India Kisan Sabha. Narendra Deva felt that the attitude to national flag was "negative" only whereas it should be "positive" and he urged the adoption of the national flag, because the "...Congress has more and more come to represent the economic urge of the masses...."

All India Kisan Sabha members referred him to the resolution of All India Kisan Committee meeting held at Calcutta in October and finally ended the controversy of the Red flag in 1939 at the Gaya Session. It adopted the Red flag.

** Creed of Non-Violence **

Creed of non-violence was another issue which created

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17 Yadunandan Sharma, Address of the Chairman, Reception Committee, All India Kisan Sabha, Fourth Session (Gaya), pp. 18-19.

18 Narendra Deva, Presidential Address, Fourth All India Kisan Conference (Gaya), pp. 23-24.

friction between the Congress and All India Kisan Sabha. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati had advised the kisans to carry their 'danda' (bamboo stick) with them wherever they went. The Congress alleged that the kisan movement by preaching the 'danda cult' would lead to mass violence, blocking the way of the fight to freedom by the Congress. The "Harijan", the English Weekly of Gandhi, published two attacks on Swami Sahajanand's "danda" cult. This charge was repeated more vehemently in Bihar during the period of bakasht struggles by local Congressmen. Even Rajendra Prasad spoke against the Kisan Sabha in the name of the Congress creed of non-violence.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha defended himself against the charge. He held that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was giving practical training to the kisans in Non-violence. He said the "Danda" is the symbol of kisans' self-defence in face of attacks from Zamindars. In defence of the kisans of Bihar engaged in bakasht struggle, he gave a number of examples of how the agents of Zamindars attacked the kisans, who did not retaliate despite their broken heads. The following extract is illustrative of

20 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 18.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
the point. "...a real fighter in our freedom struggle will feel proud at the scene of Upendranath Thakor of Raghopur (Darbhanga), a seasoned kisan worker, being beaten mercilessly by lathis, spears and even shovels by the Zamindars' men while defending along with his companions the bakaasht land in the actual possession of a kisan of Nehra-Hamnagar and expressing no sign of anger and weakness...." The All India Kisan Sabha General Secretary told the Congressmen that "...the Kisan Sabha simply wants to democratise and radicalise the Congress. There is no question of rivalry. There is no ground for it".

In a resolution at the Gaya Session the All India Kisan Sabha congratulated "the kisans on the wonderful restraint and discipline demonstrated by kisans in spite of...grave provocation". Rebutting the charge of violence in another resolution the All India Kisan Sabha at Gaya said "This Sabha notes with deep regret that in spite of its strict adherence in all its activities to all peaceful methods, charges of implicit and overt violence have been levelled against the workers, emphasises again the need for strict adherence to peaceful methods... cases are not unknown such as a recent case in Darbhanga in Bihar in which responsible peasant workers falsely charged with violence have been acquitted honourably by competent courts. The Sabha feels strongly that this propaganda is...motivated by the vested interests whose foundations have been shaken up by

25 Ibid.
26 All India Kisan Conference at Gaya, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 259/1939.
the present movement". After showing that such propaganda was motivated and baseless the resolution appealed "to all who are working towards the common goal of freedom to desist from such propaganda...."

The All India Kisan Committee in its meeting at Bombay in June 1939 after the Gaya conference, in a resolution on kisan struggles, said "The Committee further enjoins upon all kisan sabhas and kisan workers to conduct their struggles in a peaceful manner even in the face of greatest provocation...." 28

While welcoming the delegates to the Gaya Congress of the All India Kisan Sabha Jadunandan Sharma had maintained that the kisans adopted non-violence in specific circumstances and that they would not make an irrational application of it and harm mass movement. He said "...circumstanced as we are, we have adopted peace and non-violence as a matter of policy, and not of creed, purposely taking into considerations the existing conditions of the kisans and the country. And we shall never miss its proper and opportune application. But we shall, in no case, allow it to be advocated and used as a mere cloak to conceal the weakness and impotence of the kisans, and as an instrument to suppress their power of resistance to oppression and tyranny". 29 Therefore Kisan Sabha workers viewed the question of form of struggle as merely tactical and had an open mind regarding the role of violence and non-violence in a mass movement.

27 Ibid.
28 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 64.
29 Jadunandan Sharma, op. cit., p. 13.
Explaining the position of the *Kisan Sabha* on violence, Swami Sahajanand said "...we must give up our fetish of non-violence and face life squarely". He said *Kisan Sabha* wanted to do away with the institutions of landlordism and capitalism and did not want to attack individuals because "...so long as the institutions remain intact the disappearance of an individual upholding them will be quickly followed by the appearance of another individual at the same post".

On organizational matters the Congress and All India *Kisan Sabha* were drifting apart. The All India *Kisan Sabha* was moving away from the Congress on the role of the *Kisan Sabha* in the freedom movement, and, on the methods of action employed by the All India *Kisan Sabha*. All India *Kisan Sabha* was more and more adopting the category of class as its tool of cognition and action which went against the Gandhian ideals of class peace and compromise.

**Controversy After the Formation of Congress Ministries**

Apart from the organizational matters the approach to solutions of problems of tenantry drove serious wedges between the two organizations. The contradictory processes of the situation came in sharp focus after the Congress formed ministries in the provinces under the Government of India Act of 1935. Bihar was the scene of the working of this process, particularly during the days of *bakasht* struggle (1936-39, 1946-47).

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we have already seen in the last chapter that the Congress and the Kisan Sabha in Bihar were actively cooperating in mobilising the kisans during the Civil Disobedience Movement and that the Congress was raising the problem of rent faced by the kisans. The intentions of the two bodies appeared to be different. In case of Congress the kisans were being mobilised more to fight imperialism in general and in case of Bihar to fight elections under the Act of 1935. This was amply clear from the attitude of the Kisan Enquiry Committee of Bihar Provincial Congress Committee in 1936. On the basis of reports from the provinces an Intelligence note on Congress Agrarian Programme said "Congressmen have made little organized effort to tackle the problem scientifically or to implement the Lucknow and Faizpur resolutions". This caused friction between the Congress and the All India Kisan Sabha. The Kisan Sabha adopted a class approach gradually and sought socio-economic reforms in the interest of the tenantry. The tenancy legislations of the Congress ministries were disappointing from the point of view of the kisans, whose expectations from the Government which they had voted to power had increased. During the period 1937-39 the relations between Kisan Sabha and Congress worsened due to the clash between Congress ministries and Kisan Sabhas of different provinces. When the Congress formed ministries in provinces, All India Kisan Sabha, at its committee meeting at Niyamatpur in July 1937, placed certain demands of the kisans.

31 "Note on the Congress Agrarian Programme" compiled in Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, Home Department, File No. II/1/1937.
like liquidation of indebtedness, the reduction of rent and revenue, the abolition of grazing fees, the abolition of the Criminal Tribes Act and the protection of agrarian labour.

On the day of the inauguration of new ministries some provincial kisan sabhas held rallies like in Bihar. The Congress ministries proposed and took some actions. In Madras cancellation of the most of the arrears of interest, proposal of Bihar ministry to save a minimum holding from the clutches of the Sabukars, the declaration of partial moratorium for agricultural indebtedness, the appointment of a committee to formulate proposals for the improvement of status of tenants, the Bombay Government's abolition of grazing fees and some other measures made the Congress proud of the record of its ministries. The All India Kisan Sabha considered the performance as not fulfilling the promises of the Election manifesto and the Faizpur Agrarian Programme. The All India Kisan Sabha meeting at Calcutta on October 27 and 28, 1937 criticised the Congress ministries. Its resolution, while recognising that the ministries have "...taken some concrete measures and foreshadowed some more", which have given "temporary and inadequate relief" to peasants, "deeply deplores and expresses its strong dissatisfaction with the superficial and perfunctory manner in which the Congress ministries have dealt with only some of the problems

affecting the kisans”, and asked the provincial kisan sabhas to carry on "day-to-day struggles", to make the Congress M.L.As "to see that the Congress pledges are observed". Further the All India Kisan Sabha pledged support to the Congress in any struggle the latter proposed to launch for annulling the Government of India Act 1935.

In accordance with the above resolution kisan units at the provincial level became active. For example, in Gujarat Kamala Shankar and Indulal Yagnik organized the Kisan Sabha unit. The kisans responded in their thousands to the tour of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. Vallabhbhai Patel banned the kisan rally and the kisan conference at Vithal Nagar. In spite of the ban two thousand peasants bravely marched past the national flag with their own National and Red flags. During this period peasant marches became the normal form of kisan sabha demonstrations in front of offices. There were marches in Nagpur, Amraoti (Central Provinces), Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The march at Nagpur had both Congress and Red flags. A Congress leader of Central Provinces warned peasants that their marches were unnecessary. These marches were dreaded by the Congress. The peasant marches came to symbolise the dual relationship between the All India Kisan Sabha and the

35 All India Kisan Committee Resolutions, Bihta (Patna, n.d.), pp. 2-3; and K.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 14.


Congress. If on the one hand provincial kisan sabhas organized peasant marches to District Magistrates and Congress ministries in support of their demands, they had also been organized at the time of the sessions of the Congress to express solidarity with it.

The Congress ministries found the activities of the Kisan Sabha as "incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress" and therefore adopted repressive measures, as in Bihar during the bakasht struggle, or opposed peasant rallies in Gujarat just mentioned.

At the Haripura session the Congress came out against the Kisan Sabha. It passed a resolution reiterating the earlier position that it (Congress) "itself is in the main a kisan organization", yet recognizing the separate existence of the kisan sabha but disassociating itself from the activities of the kisan sabha which "are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress" and warned that it "...will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the kisan sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy". The resolution called upon Provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take

40 Pattabhi Siteramayya, op. cit.; p. 74.
41 Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), file No. 303/1937; and Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), file No. 29(11)/1937.
42 N.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 390.
suitable action wherever called for. This resolution of the Congress recognised the right of the kisans to have their own organization and at the same time it directed its provincial units to take action against Congressmen who participated in the Kisan Sabha activities which went against the Congress policies.

The All India Kisan Committee met at Haripura in February 1938 and passed a resolution "condemning wanton, undignified and mischievous attacks levelled persistently at the kisan sabhas, kisan workers and kisan activities by some responsible Congress leaders who are being reinforced in their campaign by Zamindars, Sahukars, and other allies of the British. The Committee has, however, reiterated its resolve to support all genuine anti-imperialist activities that might be carried on by the Congress against the forces of imperialism with a view to build up a mighty united front of all militant forces by developing a struggle for the national democratic action". Swami Sahajanand Saraswati commented on Congress ministries in his Presidential Address at Comilla Session of the All India Kisan Sabha thus: "the Congress ministries have a reformist mentality and it seems they have begun to be afraid of the revolutionary forces and have a distinct tendency in them to discourage the manifestation of radical forces in the forms of strikes and demonstrations by peasants". The General Secretary's report for 1937-38,

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43 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 82.
44 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 19.
45 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 18.
pointed out that the Congress ministries had failed to implement the election manifesto and the Faizpur agrarian programme.

By the time the Gaya conference of the All India Kisan Sabha was held there was definite cleavage between the Congress and All India Kisan Sabha. In the secret meeting of the Subjects Committee of All India Kisan Sabha session at Gaya, held on April 10, 1939, two rival groups were formed. One headed by Swami Sahajanand who was backed by Indulal, Bukhari, Bankim Mukherjee and all the delegates from Bengal. The second was led by Jay Prakash Narain who enjoyed the support of Acharya Narendra Deva and other Socialists mostly of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The members of the first group were very fiery and wanted to declare open revolt against the Congress and Congress ministries and to compel the latter to withdraw from office as the masses had no confidence in them. They were particularly furious with the Bihar ministry. They attempted to pass a resolution of non-confidence against it.

The situation was however diffused by Jay Prakash Narain, which "created the general impression in the town...that Acharya Narendra Deva and Babu Jai Prakash karayan have succeeded anyhow in keeping the relations of Congress Kisan Sabha cordial outwardly, but inward friction will continue".

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46 M.A. Rasul, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
47 Extract from a Special Branch Sub-Inspector's Report dated Gaya 11th April 1939, in All India Kisan Sabha Conference at Gaya, *Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special)*, File No. 259/1939.
The relations between All India Kisan Sabha and Congress soon after rapidly deteriorated. The All India Kisan Committee meeting in June 1939 took strong objection to the "decision of the Congress Working Committee endorsed by the All India Congress Committee prohibiting Congressmen from offering or organizing any form of satyagraha in the (Congress) administered provinces without the previous sanction of the Pradesh Congress Committee concerned". It felt that this resolution was against the right of the kisan members of the Congress to "resort to peaceful satyagraha for the protection of their just and legitimate rights...."

During the war years the All India Kisan Sabha took absolutely different position in comparison to the Congress, as has been already pointed out in the previous chapter. At the Palasa session the All India Kisan Sabha adopted the line of struggle against the "alien government", whereas the Congress was talking in terms of "contingent action". As a result of this approach of the Congress Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, was alienated from the Congress and attended, in his individual capacity, the All India Anti-Compromise Conference called by Subhash Chandra Bose and his Forward Bloc at Hazaribagh. In his Address as Chairman of the Reception Committee of this conference Sahajanand criticised the Congress. He characterised the Congress policy at this juncture as one of non-committal on the question of waging a struggle against

48 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 62.
49 quoted in ibid., p. 63.
the British imperialism. He went on to say that unlike
Gandhian school of thought he was not ready to accept Khadi and Charkha as the basis of the future Indian society, nor he was prepared to accept the Congress plea of unpreparedness of the people for struggle and proposed "immediate plunge for direct action". He was expelled from the Congress.

After the war the Congress made an attempt at setting up a body of the kisans, which could be a wing of the Congress. By this time even Swami Sahajanand Saraswati had left the All India Kisan Sabha on the plea that the Communists dominated the organization. Therefore, in its efforts to form a rival body to All India Kisan Sabha, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati participated. After the All India Congress Committee meeting in September 1945 some kisan workers of the Congress met at Bombay on September 24, 1945 to discuss the formation of an all India body of the kisans. This meeting laid down that the kisan organization must be an independent organization, and that its membership will consist of Congressmen even though this may not be the only condition for its membership. The meeting further resolved that this body will act in accordance with the policies of the Congress in regard to achieving the independence of the country.

50 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Address of the Chairman, Reception Committee, All India Anti-Compromise Conference (Bankipore, 1940), p. 5; and ibid., Mera Jeewan Sangharsh, Bihta (Patna, 1952), p. 546.

51 Ibid., p. 12.

52 Ibid., p. 15.

53 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 74.

54 People's War, vol. IV, no. 15, October 7, 1945.
This attempt of the Congress was to have a kisan organization of its own.

This meeting was attended among others, also by such persons who were against All India Kisan Sabha but were not politically in agreement with the Congress. Acharya Narendra Deva was one such eminent leader. He wanted the new kisan body as part of the Congress Socialist Party. Swami Sahajanand said he was not sure of his politics yet. Other prominent persons who attended this meeting were Purshottam Das Tandon, Sampurnanand, H.D. Malaviya and Indulal Yagnik.

Owing to political differences among the participants no agreement could be reached on the setting up of an All India kisan organization immediately. The meeting could not reach an agreement on its programme and policy either. The meeting concluded with the appointment of a Committee of Fourteen entrusted with the task of supervising and directing the formation of a new Kisan Sabha in the districts and the provinces.

The Committee, soon after, met at Benaras. By this time the Communists had been expelled from the Congress. Most of the members seemed to be agreed on anti-communism as this meeting of this Committee revealed. The Committee decided at Benaras that "Membership of the proposed Kisan Sabha shall not be open to the members of the Communist Party and Radical Party of India because of their anti-national policies".

This Committee held its third meeting at Bombay on July 8, 1946. It was attended, among others, by Mohan Lal Gautam and

Malkhan Singh of Uttar Pradesh, Munshi Ahmad Din (Punjab), forward blocists like Sheel Bhadrayajee and Dhanraj Sharma (Bihar), Joglekar (Bombay), Ansar Hervani (United Provinces), Revolutionary Socialist Party leaders like Yogesh Chatterjee, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Master Kota Singh of Punjab. This meeting could not decide on the name and flag of the proposed kisan body, and thus ended the efforts of the Congress and other disgruntled kisan leaders at forming a Congress Peasant organization parallel to the All India Kisan Sabha in which Communists were in majority.

It can be concluded that the relations between the Congress and All India Kisan Sabha were in terms of unity on national questions and struggle on questions of class interests of the peasants. On the question of class interests of kisans the Congress leadership was divided between "right" and "left" since the formation of the Kisan Sabha.

Bihar Provincial Congress Committee and Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha

The attitude of the leadership in the "right" wing of the Congress was most explicit in Bihar during the period of our study. These leaders in Bihar were represented by Rajendra Prasad and preceding him was his colleague and relative Braj Kishore Prasad. Both of them were called into the Champaran movement by Gandhi. In Champaran the class issues of peasants against landlords did not conflict with national issue of fighting imperialism owing to the fact that this struggle was against

56 Ibid., p. 2.
the Indigo planters at Champaran, who were the English. The christening of these two leaders in peasant movement was of a peculiar kind where they defended the interests of peasants in as much as it helped mobilisation against imperialism. On the question of clash of interests between the peasants and landlords the Gandhian approach of class peace, and, national front of all classes was applied by these two leaders in Bihar.

In 1929 when the Kisan Sabha was organized at Patna, Swami Sahajanand was also under Gandhi's influence. Ideologically there was no difference of opinion between the Congress leaders and Swami Sahajanand, who viewed himself as a "reformist". Therefore, the leaders of the Congress had no difficulty in associating themselves with the formation of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha as is indicated in Chapter III.

National politics was at a critical juncture. The Congress had adopted the slogan of Complete Independence and had asked the nation to prepare itself for struggle. This also explained the tour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who exerted the kisans of Bihar to "cast off all fears, - fear of the Zamindar, of the sarkar, of imprisonment or death". This had provided an opportunity to Swami Sahajanand to educate and organize the kisans.


59 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 344.
Thus at the time of the formation of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha the leaders of the Congress in Bihar, who had Gandhian understanding of peasant struggle participated in its formation. During the period between 1930-32 the Congress mobilised the peasants in national interests of fighting British imperialism. The Congress leadership in Bihar organized the peasants actively in meetings along with the Kisan Sabha on the question of rent. Congress actively caused concern to the British, though in one meeting Rajendra Prasad mentioned the failure of Round Table Conference and "asked the people to get themselves in readiness for the next fight, but had advised against no rent campaign" according to an official report.

**Bihar Provincial Congress Committee and Kisan Enquiry Committees**

In 1931 the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee had appointed a committee to enquire into the plight of the peasants in the districts of Gaya and Patna. The enquiry committee could not submit the report owing to Civil Disobedience Movement. Kisan Sabha leaders like Swami Sahajanand alleged that this attitude was reminiscent of the Provincial leadership's attitude of promising redress to the kisans, but in reality keeping quiet about it.

**Pro-Zamindar Bias**

As is already mentioned that the Congress at its session

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60 Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 34/1931.

61 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 403.
in Lucknow called upon its Provincial Congress Committees to make recommendations to the Working Committee of the Congress regarding agrarian problems. The Bihar Provincial Congress Committee appointed a committee for the purpose under the chairmanship of Rajendra Prasad. The Committee did not include kisan leaders (who were members of Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Working Committee) like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati on two grounds: (1) the report of the Committee may not be unanimous and (2) Zamindars may say that it is a kisan sabha and not Congress report. According to Swami Sahajanand this was done because of the influence of Zamindars in the Congress. The proceedings of this committee prove the authenticity of the charge. In a letter to Swanzy, Commissioner of Patna Division, the Collector of Arrah (Shahabad) said, "Several Zamindars have told me that the object of the Congress was to water down the oratory of Swami Sahajanand and to show Zamindars that although the Congress were out to improve the condition of the tenants they were not a party to an attack on Zamindars". The Collector corroborated this view by saying "the object of the committee was...to show that the Congress is still a respectable body of men who are not committed to communism". Therefore, he said the speeches of the Committee contained lip service to certain well-known grievances of the agricultural population but they were expressed with astonishing moderation". He further said that he was informed "that there were no attempts to make a properly

63 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, op. cit., p. 474.
organized inquiry into the facts or verify the information in such a short time". Mainwaring reporting on Gaya to Swanzy, Commissioner of Patna, expressed a similar view, when he said that the two leaders Rajendra Prasad and Shrikrishna Sinha "...appear to have been interested in electioneering than in investigating grievances of tenants".

The report of the Committee was never published in an attempt to win over the Zamindars. This was done on the basis of (1) differentiating the Congress from the Kisan Sabha and (2) telling the Zamindars that the Congress had nothing to do with communism, as is indicated by the official report from Shahabad. An official intelligence report of the Government of India indicated that the Committee was not serious about making scientific investigation of the peasant problems in Bihar and that the proposals of the Committee were not very popular. Therefore Rajendra Prasad, who solely controlled the Committee was averse to its publication lest it would cause embarrassment to the Congress ministry in Bihar.

The pro-Zamindar bias of the Bihar Provincial Congress


65 Kisan Sabha, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 6A/1936.


67 "Note on Congress Agrarian Programme", compiled in Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, Home Department, File No. II/1/1937.
Committee was further revealed by the nature of intervention of Bihar Congress ministry in the matter of tenancy legislations. All of the legislations related to tenants were conducted in agreement with the Zamindars. The compromise struck between the Congress and Zamindars on tenancy reforms formed the basis of the tenancy legislation in Bihar. This compromise meant among other things that tenants’ land auctioned for inability to pay rents was not to revert back to the tenants in any case, and, regarding lands which were being declared bakasht by the landlords, the compromise meant that land that "has become bakasht after 1929, for failure of the tenant to pay rent, whether it be in the tenants' possession or in the Zamindars, the kisans will have to pay fifty per cent of the decretal amount. Bakasht land in possession of the Zamindars who would not be liable to pay agricultural tax...will not revert to the possession of the tenants even on payment of the decretal sum. Again the bakasht land will not be given to the original tenant in case it has already passed over to tenant". The Congress undertook to help Zamindars in collecting rent. It further agreed with the Zamindars that "The Congress cabinet would not bring forward any other agrarian legislation outside the scope of this agreement".

Minimal Implementation of the Faizpur Programme

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha campaigned against these
compromises and viewed the performance of the Congress ministry as going back on the agrarian programme of the Congress. The right of distraint enjoyed by the landlords continued. This provision went against item 11 of Faizpur agrarian programme which said arrears of rent were to be recoverable in the same manner as civil debts and not by ejectment. On the question of "living wage and suitable living conditions for agricultural labourers" (item 12) only a Committee to enquire into "the conditions of industrial labour in Bihar" was appointed.

On item two and ten dealing with exemption from rent or land tax on uneconomic holdings and rights of the people on common pasture lands and wells, tanks, ponds, forests be recognised, it was admitted "Nothing has been done" in connection with item two and item ten was left untackled though a lot of land was lying fallow and being appropriated by the landlords. It was laid down in item five that all feudal dues and levies and forced labour should be abolished. This was not done by the ministry. In the Chapter on Baksar struggle in Monghyr, we find that the struggle started in 1936 on the question of "begari". The ministry did not create any machinery which could effect the abolition of feudal dues, levies and forced labour.

69 Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, The Otherside of the Shield (Bombay, 1938).
70 Ibid., p. 3.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
73 Ibid., p. 7.
Item on substantial reduction of rent and revenue according to "present conditions" i.e. fall in prices by about fifty-nine to sixty per cent, the reduction claimed by the ministry was only twenty-five per cent in cash rents. The ninth item of the programme said "Arrears of rent for previous years should generally be wiped out". Rajendra Prasad claimed on behalf of the ministry that only "twenty-five per cent of these arrears too may be remitted". This did not amount to wiping out of previous years' arrears of rent. Item 8 regarding removal of debt was not achieved. The ministry had not declared any moratorium and had not taken any other steps like appointing special tribunals, or liquidating unconscionable and unpayable debts. Lastly another important item of the agrarian programme was "Peasant unions should be recognised". Rajendra Prasad claimed on this item "no question has arisen". Congressmen were, however, expelled from the party for participating in kisan struggles. Districts of Rajendra Babu himself (Saran), Mahatma Gandhi (Champaran) and the Premier (Monghyr) "vied with each other in this nefarious game". Out of thirteen items of Faizpur programme, "the 13th regarding Peasant Unions has definitely been flouted and acted against and so has been the 11th. The second, sixth, seventh, eight, tenth and twelfth have not been

74 Quoted in ibid., p. 9.
75 Ibid., p. 11.
76 Quoted in ibid., p. 11.
77 Ibid.
touched even and nothing has been done so far to act upon the fifth. The ministry has only partly touched the first, third, fourth and ninth. But here too the real spirit has been left out and the natural and logical expectations have been belied". In a Kisan Sabha meeting at Nawada, Gaya, in the presence of some Congress leaders, one Ram Chandra Sharma "condemned the Congress ministry and criticised them strongly for failing to ameliorate the condition of the kisans". According to an official report the speaker "clearly had the support of the majority". A number of meetings passed resolutions to this effect.

Swami Sahajanand viewed that the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee "does not show any sympathy to the kisans cause". During 1936 to 1939 owing to the baksht struggle there was "an acute struggle between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress". As was indicated by the speech of Karyanand Sharma, as president of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, "the prospects for continued peace between provincial governments and kisans are becoming rarer and rarer".

In the wake of growing agrarian unrest the Provincial

78 Ibid.


81 N.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 387.

Congress Committee passed a resolution in December 1937 and enjoined "...on all Congress workers and those sympathising with it to keep themselves aloof from..." activities which attack the principle of "Ahimsa", and further said "...the Kisan Sabha is engaged in such activities..." which is hampering the work of the Congress. This resolution was endorsed by the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bombay during January 2 to 14, 1938.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha considered the resolution of the Congress as unjust.

Relations During War Years

The war years finally separated the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee from the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha completely. The political resolution of the Executive Committee of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held at Patna on July 20 and 21, 1942 criticised the Wardha resolution of Congress, which had asked for mass struggle and the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha appealed to the All India Congress Committee to review its decision, otherwise the struggle would lead to sabotage.

After the War

After the war in 1946 Bihar witnessed the bakasht

84 N.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 288.
86 People's War, August 2, 1942.
struggle again. In this struggle the attitude of the Congress leaders like Yadunandan Sharma and independents like Swami Sahajanand (who had left the All India Kisan Sabha to form his own kisan body in Bihar and had participated in the Congress efforts to form a rival peasant body) was that of compromise and had agreed to arbitration by bureaucrats over bakasht disputes in Gaya. At Gaya, Bihar Provincial Congress Committee accused Yadunandan Sharma of starting the whole trouble but the latter denied it. And thus when the struggle was at a high pitch, Swami Sahajanand sent a petition to Deputy Commissioner to intervene, who was accepted as the arbitrator by the former, and the struggle was called off. At the time when Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was split by Swami Sahajanand, Yadunandan Sharma remained with him.

Hence in Bihar the relations between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress were that of unity and struggle and as the kisan struggles became "acute" relations between the two broke down.

Congress Socialist Party and All India Kisan Sabha

Since the Congress, under pressure of the political "right", had adopted a vacillating attitude towards the question of peasant organization and politics, political left in it became more articulate. Apart from radical nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru who welcomed the formation of the kisan body, and reformists like N.G. Ranga, Congress Socialist Party and

Communist Party of India took initiative in organizing the All India Kisan body. The origin of the Congress Socialist Party is viewed by the Party itself as the result of the Congressmen coming under the influence of Marxian Socialism and the realisation on the part of these very men, after the two non-cooperation movements that "a redefinition of its (national movements - RG) objectives and a revision of its methods" had become necessary. The task of the party was the developing of "the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement, a movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation, and, therefore, wanted to have a "Marxist programme".

In pursuance of this line it decided to take up "only... anti-imperialist stand in Congress platforms", and not to "commit the mistake of placing a full socialist programme before the Congress."

Pursuing the objective it turned its face towards the kisan movement. In 1936 it felt the need "for All India coordination and direction" of the peasant movement and pointed out that the kisan movement could develop on the right lines only if it was securely anchored to the solid fact of class war in our society, and that a conscious socialist leadership could do much to organize the peasants and to achieve their ultimate emancipation".

89 Ibid.
The Congress Socialist Party described the Congress attitude to peasant movement in the following words "...the Congress has picked out, emphasized and agitated for only such items of the discontent and demands of the peasant as would help it to organize a struggle against the foreign government". It pointed out emphatically that the Congress did not raise the demand for abolition of landlordism.

**Programme**

The programme of the Party accepted at its Meerut conference included:

1. Abolition of land revenue system and its replacement by a graduated income tax on agricultural incomes above Rs 500 per annum.
2. Abolition of landlordism and other forms of intermediaries between the State and the cultivators; the provisions of necessary facilities for grazing of cattle, marketing, etc.
3. A substantial portion of revenues from rural areas to be spent on rural areas.
4. Liquidation of debts of workers and peasants, and provision by the State of cheap credit facilities for productive purposes.
5. Abolition of feudal levies and freedom of labour from conditions bordering on serfdom.

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Members of the Congress Socialist Party started joining existing peasant organizations in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Finally the Congress Socialist Party took "initiative in bringing about an all India conference of Kisan workers on the occasion of our party conference at Meerut and out of that nucleus has blossomed out the All India Kisan Sabha". The Meerut Conference of the All India Kisan Sabha was called in consultation and co-operation with Jaya Prakash Narayan and Mohal Lal Gautam. This claim of the party is modified by the fact that N.G. Ranga, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and the Communists were also part of the initiative to organize an all India kisan body.

The Congress Socialist Party did not want that the Kisan Sabha should go in the hands of "richer peasants" and believed that "only an organization that has evoked and enlisted the allegiance of the struggling peasants can achieve the objective our Kisan leaders have in mind".

**Difficulties in organizing Kisans**

The Congress Socialist Party felt that there were following difficulties in the work of organizing the kisan body:


(1) since *kisans* were not homogeneous, various conflicts were found; (2) the unsympathetic attitude of the Congress leaders towards the Kisan Sabha being organized independently of the Congress; (3) want of literature in booklet form on agrarian problems; (4) some of the provincial parties kept themselves limited to the activities of the Congress and fought shy of taking up work among the peasantry.

**Tasks**

The tasks of the party were to tell all sections of the peasantry that there were no fundamental mutual conflicts and that their position was nearer to the labourers. This was necessary because the enemies of the *kisans* were busy fomenting mutual conflict with a view to sabotage. It directed its members to set up *kisan* bodies in villages and *thanias*.

**Activities**

At its Faizpur session the Congress Socialist Party welcomed the election manifesto of the Congress and added that the manifesto "should voice more completely the immediate economic needs and demands of the peasants...." Further the conference deplored the action of the Congress Parliamentary Board in several provinces in "refusing the candidates of some Socialists, Radicals and Trade Union and peasant workers and in adopting

96 Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, *op. cit.*

others not noted for active work or sacrifice in the National Movement".

In 1939 during the deliberations of the Subjects Committee of All India Kisan Sabha session at Gaya the leader of Congress Socialist Party Jay Prakash Narayan placated the anti-Congress feelings of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. According to an official report Jay Prakash Narayan tried to soften the anti-Congress tone of Swami Sahajanand's speech and helped to avoid a split at Gaya. However, the report says "none of the Police Officers or the Magistrates who heard B. Jai Prakash Narayan's speech had any doubt that he aligns himself with Swami Sahajanand, though professing allegiance to the Congress ministry".

During the period 1936-1940 Congress Socialist had actively worked in the Kisan Sabha particularly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

However in 1940, "they generally became lukewarm and gradually made themselves scarce from the Kisan Sabha". This was done on the ground that the kisan body was being dominated by the Communists. Thus the Congress Socialists broke on their side, the united front, which was responsible for the creation of All India Kisan Sabha. During the People's War phase of the

98 Ibid.

99 Letter of Magistrate of Gaya to Mr. Russells, Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 259/1939.

100 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 335.

101 Ibid.
All India Kisan Sabha, Congress Socialist Party was engaged in the Quit India movement and ceased to work in the All India Kisan Sabha. The Congress Socialist Party became more and more anti-communist and during 1945 it campaigned against the Communists with little success in the Provincial Congress Committees. In 1946 along with the Congress and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati some leaders of the Congress Socialist Party participated in forming rival organizations to All India Kisan Sabha, particularly in Maharashtra and Bihar.

**Bihar Socialist Party and Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha**

We have already stated that the Socialist Party was active in Bihar apart from other provinces. According to an official report it is clear that the Bihar Socialist Party was doing some work in 1931 which was not considered 'dangerous' at that time. At that time it was "not functioning to a marked extent" but the activities of "socialist agitators" in Paligani area of Patna district were viewed with concern. The Intelligence official view was that its activities needed to be watched.

**Aim of Bihar Socialist Party**

The object of the Bihar Socialist Party was "...the achievement of complete independence, in the sense of separation

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102 Ibid., p. 341.
103 Supplementary Weekly Confidential Diary of the Superintendent of Police, Patna for week ending 17 November 1931, *Government of Bihar and Orissa, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 34/1931.*
104 Ibid.
from the British Empire and the establishment of the Socialist state". In the programme of the Party following demands connected with the peasants were included:

(1) Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
(2) Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the State.
(3) Progressive socialisation of all instruments of production and exchange.
(4) Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.
(5) Redistribution of land to the peasants.
(6) Encouragement and promotion of cooperative and collective farming by the State.
(7) Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers.

In its plan of action it laid down that it would work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure its (Congress) acceptance of the objects and programme of the party; organization of peasants and labour unions, and entry into such unions where they exist, for the purpose of developing and participating in the day-to-day economic and political struggle of the peasants and workers and intensifying the class struggle of the masses and of creating a powerful mass movement for the achievement of independence and socialism.


106 Ibid.
Immediate Demands

The immediate demands of the party included reinstatement of all farmers and tenants deprived of their lands owing to their participation in the movement for national independence, control of usury, direct or indirect liquidation of debts, a steeply graduated tax on all incomes. As regards agrarian affairs it demanded reduction of rent at least by fifty per cent, abolition and penalisation of all feudal and semi-feudal levies on the peasantry, penalisation of all illegal exaction and forced labour, freedom from attachment in execution of rent or money decrees.

Activities

In accordance with its decision to join existing peasant bodies the Bihar Socialist Party joined the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1934 when Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was moving away to the left from the Congress ideology. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and the Bihar Socialist Party came together for "mutual benefit". One needed a popular organization while the other a left oriented ideology. In 1934 in the Executive Committee meeting of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha held at the house of Baldev Sahay on April 21, 1934 following Socialists were present: Jay Prakash Narayan, Ambica Kant Sinha, Jamuna Karjee, Amanraj Sharma, Rambrish Benipuri, Samdin Sharma, Awadeshwar Frasad Sinha and many others. The new Executive

107 Ibid.
108 Walter Hauser, op. cit., p. 66.
109 Ibid.
Committee which was formed in this meeting including Socialists like Jay Prakash Narayan, Ambica Kant Sinha, Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha, Kambrishk Benipuri, Kishori Prasanna Sinha, the last being Secretary of the Bihar Socialist Party. Thus in 1934 the Socialists were in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. It is held that owing to the presence of the Socialists the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha conducted struggles more and more on class lines. We have already said in Chapter III that Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha accepted the resolution on abolition of landlordism with the efforts of K.P. Sinha. He was a Socialist and one of the founders of Bihar Socialist Party. He was the right handman of Jay Prakash Narayan in Bihar. However, according to Swami Sahajanand Saraswati those districts in which Socialists were in majority like Muzaffarpur, the bakasht struggle was not properly conducted. Till 1940 the Socialists were active in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. During the war years they first went with the line of immediate struggle and were against holding any negotiations with the British and cooperated with the Forward Bloc in calling the Anti-Compromise conference between September 1939 and March 1940. After the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, the Socialists participated in Quit India movement.

During the days of Quit India movement the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had adopted the line of All India Kisan Sabha,

110 Ibid., p. 67.

and adopted its main political approach: National Unity for National Government to have National Defence. We have already pointed out in this chapter that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha had rejected the Congress approach after 1941 with the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. The Socialists and Communists had parted company. The Socialists carried forward the Quit India line in the absence of Congress leaders who were arrested the very next day after the passage of the Quit India resolution. It was believed that the large-scale sabotage in the country was being indulged in by the Socialists, during the Quit India movement. A joint statement was issued by Swami Sahajanand, as General Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, and Jadunandan Sharma, as President Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha against the sabotage.

Some leaders of the Bihar Socialist Party like Karyanand Sharma and Kishori Prasanna Sinha became Communists and remained with the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, which was affiliated to the All India Kisan Sabha.

Communist Party of India and All India Kisan Sabha

Workers and Peasants Party

The Communist Party of India, having been organized in 1925 was a pioneer in organizing the workers and peasants on class lines. The Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases had

112 People's War, September 6, 1942.

indicated to the Communists the need of an "open party, say a workers' and peasants' party", so as to organize militant trade unions and peasant masses for their urgent demands. Thus between 1926 and 1928 Communists organized workers' and peasants' parties in Bengal, Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab. In the peasant conferences the demands of abolition of landlordism and land to the tiller were formulated. At the national level All India Workers' and Peasants' Party was formed towards the end of 1928 and marked the continuation of the process of its formation beginning with the formation of Labour Swaraj Party, which was joined by Muzaffar Ahmed. The ultimate demand on the peasant front of this party was: Ultimate ownership of the land to be vested in the autonomous and self contained village communities consisting of intellectuals and physical labourers. Among the immediate demands it wanted reduction in land tax, fixity of tenure, no ejection, cessation of illegal and extra taxation and right of transference.

However, the Communists could not carry on with their work because of their arrests in the Meerut conspiracy case. After their release in 1934, the Communists pursued the policy of united front despite the sectarian thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. This Conference had

114 Ibid., Introduction, p. vi.
115 Ibid., p. 671.
116 Ibid., p. 685.
117 Ibid., p. 686.
neglected the anti-imperialist role of the bourgeois opposition to British interests in India. It considered that the real threat to the British came from the "mass movement of the workers" and the "maturing of an agrarian revolution".

Stage of Indian Revolution

This document characterised the stage of Indian Revolution as "bourgeois democratic". It said "As in all colonies and semi-colonies, so in China and India the development of productive forces and the socialisation of labour stands at a comparatively low level. This circumstance together with the fact of foreign domination and also the presence of powerful relic of feudal and pre-capitalist relations, determines the character of the immediate stage of revolution in these countries. In these countries we have to deal with the bourgeois democratic revolution i.e. of the stage signifying the preparing of the prerequisites for the proletarian dictatorship and socialist revolution". In accordance with this view it laid down the following tasks to be achieved. "A shifting in the relationship of forces in favour of the proletariat: emancipation of the country from the yoke of imperialism..., and the establishment of the national unity of the country where this has yet not been attained; overthrow of the power of the exploiting classes at the back of which imperialism stands; the organization of Soviets of workers and peasants; establishment of dictatorship of the

118 Sixth Congress of the Communist International, Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies, 1928 (Bombay, 1929), pp. 1-10.

119 Ibid.
proletariat and peasantry; consolidation of the hegemony of the proletariat.

"Carrying through of the agrarian revolution, emancipation of peasants from all pre-capitalist and colonial conditions of exploitation and bondage: nationalisation of the land; radical measures for alleviating the position of the peasantry with the object of establishing the closest possible economic and political union between the town and the village". The 7th Congress of the Communist International laid down the general policy of the Indian Communists: "In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organizational independence, they take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallisation of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian people against British imperialism". This statement indicated to the Communist Party to follow united front tactics in different bodies waging anti-imperialist struggle, while at the same time maintaining independent class organization. Concretely, owing to conditions of illegality it worked within the Congress Socialist Party and helped organize class organizations like the All India Kisan Sabha. At this time the Communist Party was under a ban owing to its alleged involvement in Meerut conspiracy. Through

120 Ibid.

united front tactics it attempted to work in mass organizations and radicalize them. According to an official report "...the infiltration by Communists into right-wing bodies and other progressive organizations within the Congress has since 1935 become a marked feature of the Communist Party of India, and the crystallization of a revolutionary wing within the anti-imperialist front forms the keynote of the present Communist attitude towards the Congress left wing".

activities

It has already been pointed out in Chapter IV that the Communists along with others took initiative in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha. The official report quoted above, confirmed this thus: "the intensified activities of the All India Kisan Sabha followed by the Congress resolutions at Lucknow and Faizpur, form part of the anti-imperialist front. Although as yet little general success has been achieved in organizing a mass peasant movement in India, it is significant that leading Communists have turned their energies towards directing and organizing the unrest. There are increasing signs that these same Communists within the left wing of the Congress, are working towards an independent peasant movement with organization and political independence, under cover of collective affiliation with Congress" (Italics ours). We have already stated that the


123 Ibid., pp. 85-86.
Congress opposed collective affiliation though it was supported in the beginning by Jawaharlal Nehru. It was the left wing of the Congress which helped the All India Kisan Sabha to have its independence. Thus the decisions of the All India Kisan Sabha on the question of the Red flag, non-violence, its programme, policies and tactics were influenced by the Communists and Socialists. Circumstantial evidence indicated the same. All India Kisan Sabha observed March 20, 1938 as the All India Day for demanding the legalisation of the Communist Party of India and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, its General Secretary, issued the following statement for the legalisation of the Communist Party of India. "I hasten to endorse whole heartedly the appeals issued by comrades Jai Prakash Narayan (then General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party) and P.C. Joshi (General Secretary of the Communist Party of India) to observe March 20 as the All India Day, for the legalisation of the Communist Party of India..." in the name of Civil liberties. The All India Kisan Sabha from the very beginning adopted anti-imperialist positions and united front tactics seeking ultimately "political power for the peasants and workers". The Red flag issue further explained the international character of the Kisan Sabha. It adopted paternal attitude towards the working class and expressed its solidarity by observing May Day apart from Kisan Day. The resolution of All India Kisan Sabha at Faizpur on Agrarian conditions showed that it approached the problem of peasants from a class angle and made the demands of abolition of landlordism and

124 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 21.
land to the tiller. N.G. Ranga's following remark also indicated the increasing influence of the Communists. While talking about Swami Sahajanand he said in a recent article "...the Communists found in him excellent vehicle for their drive against Congress as well as landlordism. Jaya Prakash Narayan, Indulalji and myself who were impressed by the new force and energy that Swamiji introduced into our leftism, realised not long after the 1936-37 general elections how easily and successfully Communists were able to gain him to their side.... So, by the time Swamiji came to preside over the Comilla session, both the Congress Socialist Party leaders and myself found it a herculean task to persuade Swamiji to be a centralist and allow the Kisan platform to remain 100 per cent kisan minded and, kisan controlled and not to become another extension of the Communists...." It is clear from this long quote that other members of the "united front" which formed the All India Kisan Sabha were perturbed at the prospect of All India Kisan Sabha becoming "another extension of Communists". At the Comilla session the All India Kisan Committee in September 1938 at Delhi expressed its solidarity with the workers. The resolution stated that the Committee "extends its greetings to and express solidarity with the working class and its representatives in the All India Trade Union Congress in their great struggle against capitalism and imperialism".


126 Quoted in N.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 45.
At the Gaya session of All India Kisan Sabha in 1939, P.C. Joshi along with Jay Prakash Narayan had taken the "main part in drafting the political resolution" of the session. At this session many speeches were made by those leaders who belonged to left organizations. Speeches were made by Shibnath Bannerjee representing All India Mazdoor Sabha, Seth Damodar Shukul representing All India Socialist Party, Dutt Mazumdar representing Bengal Labour Party, Ali Ashraf representing All India Students Federation (a wing of the Communist Party of India) and P.C. Joshi representing the Communist Party of India. P.C. Joshi told the gathering "In all their fights they had to face the British Government and unless they were removed the kisans could not move forward". He criticised the Congress members for not fulfilling the demands of the kisans and then said "...there should be unity between the Congress and the kisan sabha..." and that "...unless the Kisan Sabha was strengthened side by side the Congress" the Congress could not fight the Federal Scheme. Similar views were expressed in the political resolution which said the kisans "...have realised that imperialism which lives for and thrives on their exploitation must go and that it must go principally by their action taken in alliance with other anti-imperialist forces in the country".

127 Ibid., p. 51. P.C. Joshi confirmed this view in the Personal Interview.
128 All India Kisan Conference, Gaya, Government of Bihar, Home Political Department (Special), File No. 259/1939.
129 Ibid.
130 Quoted in M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 53.
It further stated, on the relations with the Congress, "The Sabha feels that special efforts should be made to build up that united front between the Congress and the Kisan Sabha, which has been the aim of the Sabha...and that must be expressed in action through the Congress". In its programme of action the All India Kisan Sabha aimed at "Establishing a united front between the Congress and the All India Kisan Sabha, the All India Trade Union Congress, and other anti-imperialist organizations". It is thus evident that by 1939 the Communist Party of India had come to occupy an influential position in the All India Kisan Sabha in giving it a radical orientation. By the time of the Sifhta session of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1942, Communists played a leading role in determining its line of action.

We have already stated in Chapter IV that the views of the Communist Party and All India Kisan Sabha were identical during the war years. The following message of the Communist Party of India to All India Kisan Sabha at its session in Bezwada in 1944 indicated the relationship of the two organizations. G. Adhikari read the message of the Communist Party of India which said "...the unity of our two great organizations, the Communist Party and the All India Kisan Sabha will not only last, but will grow till it embraces all those Congressmen and leaguers who want to rouse patriotism among the kisans masses to fight for their interests and to get them to discharge their

131 Ibid., p. 55.
duty...." A resolution of the All India Kisan Sabha on Communist Party and All India Kisan Sabha relations said "...if (All India Kisan Sabha) is attracting a growing number of patriots, Congressmen and leaguers and others, who want to serve the kisan and to do positive work for the solution of the national crisis, we assure them that though some of the most valued workers of the Sabha are Communists, the policy of the Sabha is not dictated by any group or party, but it is evolved through the collective thought and work of its members". Thus, the Communist Party kept the doors open for other parties to join the kisan body.

Splits in All India Kisan Sabha

The growing class militancy of the Kisan Sabha and anti-communism played an increasing role in making leaders of non-communist organizations leave the All India Kisan Sabha on the charge of it being dominated by the Communists. N.G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati left the All India Kisan Sabha on this charge.

The first to leave the organization was N.G. Ranga soon after the Quit India movement started in 1942, on the charge that the All India Kisan Sabha had become 'anti-national'. He left it to form a rival Kisan Sabha. According to him the kisan movement was organizationally united from 1935 to 1941 and when

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133 People's War, vol. 2, no. 39, March 26, 1944.
134 Ibid.
the All India Kisan Sabha adopted the slogan of People's war, "All Kisan Sabha patriots saw red and the kisan sabha split". This was a clear indication that Ranga viewed his leaving the All India Kisan Sabha as a split. He interviewed Gandhi on the need of an All India Kisan body. Gandhiji did not ask him to form another body. He advised him "you should work to make the Congress fully representative of the kisans". N.G. Ranga dropped the Red flag and accepted the national flag with the class emblem on the side of the Charkha. Ranga set aside the advice of Gandhi and started another organization which attracted a rebuttal from Pyarelal, then Gandhi's Secretary. The new body was called All India Kisan Congress.

Congress Socialist leaders and Forward Bloc wanted to start a rival organization in Bihar. The Congress Socialists also left the kisan body out of their anti-communist feelings during the people's war phase.

Another crisis came in the All India Kisan Sabha when Swami Sahajanand left it on questions relating to "organization" and Communist Party's policy on "Pakistan". Actually he left under a sentiment of anti-communism. In March 1945, Swami Sahajanand issued a statement in which he said "I have decided to resign from the Presidentship of All India Kisan Sabha.... The

136 The Searchlight, January 19, 1945.
138 M.A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 323.
reasons for doing so is the defacto communist domination over it. Since the resignation from it of Yagnik...on this very ground in 1943 middle, "he tried to implement the resolutions of the Kisan Sabha in the spirit of Kisan Sabha, and, purely not in the spirit of communist party...that domination has grown more pronounced". Swami Sahajanand split the All India Kisan Sabha. The Searchlight, Congress paper or the paper of the Birlas, congratulated Swami Sahajanand on this break. He decided to organize a "rival" kisan sabha. We have already indicated in this Chapter that he came closer to the Congress in their efforts to form a rival organization. On his own he formed a rival organization called All India United Kisan Sabha.

While the efforts of these people to split the All India Kisan Sabha were going on, the All India Kisan Sabha adopted an open approach to the question and invited Congressmen and leaguers to join in. On its side, it did not give up the policy of united front.

Plan for Freedom

In 1946, after the War, the Communist Party of India prepared a plan for freedom and appealed to the peasants to fight hoarders, profiteers and landlords. It demanded "land to the

139 The Searchlight, March 5, 1945.
140 Ibid., March 17, 1945.
141 Ibid., March 20, 1945.
142 M. A. Rasul, op. cit., p. 335.
143 Ibid., p. 342.
landless; drastic rent reduction to tenants; guaranteed credit to peasants at 6 per cent; fair prices for all agricultural goods; the banning of usury and the liquidation of wholesale monopolies. It asked every party unit to tirelessly work to make the kisan sabhas into mighty mass organizations and seek alliance from all freedom loving villagers, including small zamindars and good jottadars and raiyats (kulaks) who have nothing to lose if they labour and seek no unjust advantages, but everything to gain."

Election Manifesto: 1946

The election manifesto issued by the Communist Party of India at the time of elections in 1946 raised the following demands relevant to the peasants: Land Act abolishing landlordism, Redistribution of land, Anti-Usury Act and anti-Profiteering Act. Among immediate steps it demanded fallow land to landless, minimum wage to agricultural labourer, reduction of rent for all tenants with uneconomic holdings and graded agricultural tax.

All Power to the People for Constituent Assembly

In August 1946 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India "outlined the task of developing the struggles of the working class, peasants, and states Peoples" in achieving the slogan of all power to the People for a Constituent Assembly.

144 People's Age, no. 8, January 6, 1946.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid., vol. V, no. 6, August 11, 1946.
The All India Kisan Committee had also formulated similar demands.

Throughout the period of our study the Communist Party of India worked in close relation with the All India Kisan Sabha. The policy of the party was to form an anti-imperialist united front. As far as the peasants' body was concerned it emphasized on all sections of the peasantry and pursued the tactic of united front.

It conducted partial struggles of the peasants with the conviction that "the rallying of the toiling masses on the basis of their class demands is the only method of awakening them to political consciousness of drawing them into the national struggle". The Communists did not break up the united front of the All India Kisan Sabha, which kept its doors open for all parties. Thus they played an important role in "building a united - all India Kisan Sabha and in implementing its programme".

To sum up, the policy of united front against imperialism adopted by the Communist Party helped the peasants to conduct revolutionary struggles in Telangana, Bengal, Travancore (Kerala) and Bihar. It thus provided a revolutionary orientation to the All India Kisan Sabha, as is evident from the participation of Communists in formulation and implementation of the programme and policies of the All India Kisan Sabha.

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147 M.Z. Rasul, op. cit., p. 123.
Communist Party (Bihar) and Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha

As the national level during the period of its illegality the Communist Party was working in Congress Socialist Party. In Bihar the Communist Party was organized on October 20, 1939 in a meeting of twenty youngmen in Monghyr City. Prior to this a number of Communists present in Bihar were active in the Bihar Congress Socialist Party. In fact from 1935 to 1939, no effort was made to organise Communist Party in Bihar in accordance with the decision of the Central leadership of the Party. In the absence of a unit some Communists were engaged in Communist propaganda in Monghyr, Jamalpur, Girdih, Jamshedpur, and Bhagalpur. In Monghyr Anil Mitra, Binod Bihari Mukherjee and Gyan Vikas Waitra organized "Workers Peasants Students League". Anil Mitra and Binod Bihari participated in the Kisan demonstration at the Monghyr fort during the bakasht struggle in 1939. Rahul Sankritayan participated in the bakasht struggle in Chapra (Shahabad). The Communist Party in Bihar fraternised and cooperated with Swami Sahajanand. Rahul Sankritayan became the editor of his paper "Hunkar" (in Hindi). Karyanand Sharma was in close co-operation with Anil Mitra throughout the bakasht struggle. In 1940 he became a member of


151 Ibid., p. 3.

152 Ibid., p. 3. This view was confirmed by P.C. Joshi in the personal interview.

153 Ibid., p. 6.
the Communist Party. Kishori Prasanna Sinha had become a Communist in Deoli jail, which was characterised by Jay Prakash 154 Narayan as betrayal of the Congress Socialist Party. During the war years the Communists increased their influence in the Bihar Kisan Sabha, particularly after 1942, despite the repressive policy of the Government. As a result of the increase in its influence the Communists led the bakhast struggles consistently in the province, as is evident from Monghyr. In Gaya where influence of the Congress was predominant the kisans were disappointed by the leadership of Congressmen like Yadunandan Sharma who were accepting the policy of arbitration. By the time of the close of our study the kisans were preparing for another round of struggle.

Therefore, in Bihar the Communists provided a revolutionary orientation to the Bihar peasant movement in the formulation and implementation of its programmes and policies.

154 Ibid., p. 5.