THE EMERGENCE OF PEASANT MOVEMENT IN INDIA: AN AREA STUDY

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This paper seeks to analyse the emergence and functioning of the Indian peasant movement at the local level which has so far remained unexplored. The author has divided the history of the movement into five phases each of which discusses the nature of the peasants' problems, the methods adopted to solve them, and the outcome of their agitations. He concludes that the peasant movement in India bears important resemblances to the urban labour movement in regard to its origin, growth, and character. The movement has experienced internal divisions over radical versus moderate ideologies and strategies. Like the urban labour movement, the peasant movement, too, has grown first from isolated and geographically limited protests by the peasants to a general movement, and later to two separate organisations—one for the landowning peasants and the other for the landless agricultural workers—due to incompatibility of their interests.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on a study of the emergence and functioning of the peasant movement in India at the local level. The purpose of the study was to develop some insights into the nature of the problems faced by the peasants and the methods adopted by them to resolve their problems over time. The study was, therefore, essentially of an exploratory nature.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is devoted to the discussion of the conceptual framework, scope, and method.
of the study. The second section briefly describes the rural setting of the area of study in terms of its socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Section three provides an account of the evolution and working of the movement in different phases since 1920, which is essentially descriptive for want of adequate empirical data. The main conclusions of the study are stated in the last section.

THE CONCEPTS, SCOPE, AND METHOD

The Concept of Peasant Movement

Like the urban labour movement, the peasant movement is also a generally inclusive concept formulated by the social scientists to bring within its scope a variety of organised actions of the peasants. These actions are primarily of socio-economic nature but often include political activities. In a wider sense, thus, the term peasant movement has been defined as any collective reaction of the peasants to their low status. The ostensible purpose of such reactions is to bring about a change in the existing institutions to mitigate or minimise the problems associated with low economic and political statuses which are commonly found to be present simultaneously. Historically speaking, the agitations aimed at changing the land tenure system have constituted the core of peasant movements in many countries of the world, particularly in the early stages of their development.

There are, however, some important deviations from the "core" of the phenomenon of the peasant movement. One set of such deviations is the peasant-based nationalist movements directed against foreign rulers such as those witnessed in India and many other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The second set of deviations may be caused due to the differences in the concept of "peasants". Generally, a peasant is defined as one who is a "owner cultivator", i.e., who owns the land, shares in the actual work on his land, and is, therefore, close to it. This is, however, a very narrow definition. In the context of developing agricultural economies like India, one has to recognise the fact that "cultivator", "tenant", "share-cropper", and "agricultural labourer" are the statuses which many people occupy simultaneously. Therefore, the task of exclusively classifying them in one or other category for studying their movements in a historical per-
spective is rendered very difficult. We, therefore, adopted the broader definition of the term.

Labour Movement vs. Peasant Movement

The differences between the working and living conditions of urban industrial workers and peasants are likely to find their reflections in the type of their movements. However, the fact that these two groups have had generalised low economic and political status in common may produce certain similarities as well. In the Indian context, particularly, the similarities may perhaps be more pronounced than the differences. This is because of similar sources of leadership and the wider goal of overthrowing the foreign rule over India in which industrial workers and peasants were equally involved. The available literature on labour movement in India, both at macro and micro levels, leads to some important general conclusions. It may be interesting to find out their relevance to the peasant movement. Some of these are:

1. While the economic hardships of workers have been present as a latent force, the impetus for the growth of labour movement is provided by the major political currents, particularly the movement for national independence. Is the same applicable to the peasant movement?

2. The failure of workers' initial attempts to organise led them to seek the help of philanthropists and social workers who generally came from classes higher in economic and social status. The movement was, thus, led in the initial stages of its growth by people from higher classes. Is the same true of the peasant movement?

3. Over time, the labour movement has grown from isolated, geographically limited associations of workers to a general movement and later to separate organisations for different interest groups which are loosely working together for limited purposes that require coordinated activities. Does the peasant movement also go through these stages in the course of its evolution?

4. The labour movement has experienced internal divisions over
radical versus moderate ideologies and strategies. This has had considerable effect on the structure and character of the movement, often resulting in splits. Is there a parallel in the case of the peasant movement?

**Area of Study**

The study was conducted in the Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh. The choice of Unnao was governed by four main considerations. First, the level of agricultural development in the district is higher than many other districts in eastern and central Uttar Pradesh, although it is much lower in Unnao as compared to western Uttar Pradesh. The district was, therefore, found suitable for the study of peasant movement from the point of view of identifying the pattern of its evolution and development which might perhaps be similar to that found in other areas with moderate level of agricultural growth. Second, while the peasant movement in other districts has shown a tendency to fizzle out in the course of time, historically speaking it has had a strong base in Unnao. Third, the leaders of the peasant movement in Unnao have played an important role in the movement at the State and the national levels. Lastly, the location of Unnao between two major cities, namely, Lucknow and Kanpur, offered better physical facilities for collecting data.

**Sources of Data**

The approach of the study was historical, and, therefore, the collection of historical data in respect of the peasant movement in Unnao was the most important aspect of the study. The non-availability of adequate and authentic information from official records posed a serious problem. The records of the Kisan Sabha in Unnao, as probably in other places, have not been properly maintained. This is on account of two main reasons. First, a good deal of useful records pertaining to the working of the movement in the past had been either lost or destroyed in the course of frequent police raids on the Kisan Sabha office. Second, the leadership of the Kisan Sabha had frequently changed along with its ideological affiliations. This had resulted in complete dislocation of records.
In view of these limitations, we had to depend largely on the following sources: (a) discussions and interviews with important leaders and activists of the movement; (b) reportings on the subject in newspapers and periodicals; (c) District Gazetteers, Settlement Reports, and Reports of the various Enquiry Committees appointed by the State government from time to time to enquire into agrarian problems; and (d) records available in the Kisan Sabha offices at Unnao and Lucknow.

THE RURAL SETTING OF UNNAO

General Background

Unnao, a district in the Lucknow division in central Uttar Pradesh, consists of four tehsils, viz., Safipur, Hasanganj, Unnao, and Purwa. Topographically, the whole district may be divided into two main divisions—the low-land or tarai, lying along the banks of the river Ganga and the uplands which extend eastwards from the high banks. The tarai is sparsely populated, having large areas unfit for cultivation. This tract is subject to disastrous floods causing extensive damage to kharif crops. The upland tract extends eastwards as far as the valley of Sai river. Its surface is undulating with high ridges, giving place to high depressions which are often of little use except for rice cultivation.

The district occupies the thirty-first position in terms of area and thirty-seventh position in terms of population in the State. It witnessed steady increase in the population since 1931, the increase being the highest (15%) during the decade 1951-1961, which is lower than the State average (16.7%) and which suggests some out-migration of the people. The district is predominantly rural as only 24 out of every 1,000 persons were found to be living in urban areas in the 1961 census. The total urban population is concentrated only in Unnao town. The average population per inhabited village is 706. The villages are mostly of small (less than 500 persons) and medium (500-1,999 persons) size, their respective figures being 907 (53.5%) and 704 (41.5%). The largest concentration of small size villages is to be found in tehsils Safipur and Hasanganj. Of the entire rural population, 38.65 per cent people are workers.
as compared to only 27.9 per cent in urban area. Among rural workers 87.30 per cent are cultivators and agricultural labourers. The scheduled castes constitute 28.0 per cent of total population.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector of Unnao, which is the only major source of income and employment to the people, is neither well developed nor very backward. According to a recent study made by Rural Economics Division of the Reserve Bank of India, it occupies the twenty-fourth position in the State in terms of level of agricultural development. The study did not cover a few hill districts. The pattern of land utilisation in the district has witnessed a definite change during the period 1950-51 to 1966-67. Thus, with a steady decline in the areas marked as "barren and unculturable land", "land put to non-agricultural uses", "culturable waste", and "land under miscellaneous trees and groves", an increasing acreage of area has been brought under cultivation. Besides, the proportion of "area sown more than once" to net sown area has gone up from 19.85 per cent in 1950-51 to 29.25 per cent in 1966-67. The total cropped area has gone up by about 18 per cent, the areas under various food crops and non-food crops having registered an increase of 19.0 and 7.0 per cent respectively. However, the proportion of non-food crop area to total cropped area has declined from 8.4 per cent in 1950-51 to 7.6 per cent in 1966-67.

One important factor directly responsible for the relative underdeveloped state of agriculture in Unnao is its neglect by the government in the matter of grants and loans for minor sources of irrigation. More than three-fourths of the irrigated area in the district is mainly dependent on canal water, the supply of which is uncertain; the canals generally go dry in summer. In sharp contrast to the whole of Lucknow division, where nearly 10.0 per cent area is irrigated by tube-wells and 18.0 per cent by other wells, the respective figures for Unnao are 0.29 per cent and 8.25 per cent only.

Size of Land Holdings

Another major obstacle in the way of agricultural development in the district is the preponderance of small-sized and uneconomic
land holdings which render it extremely difficult to motivate the cultivators in favour of adopting improved technologies. As many as 75-0 per cent of the cultivators in the district have land holdings of less than five acres in size which are uneconomic holdings. If we take into account the persons holding less than 10 acres, the proportion comes to more than 95·0 per cent. During the decade 1951-1961, the proportion of persons cultivating land of less than one acre and one to five acres has gone up from 8·63 to 12·32 and from 60·34 to 62·48 per cent. There are no data available for the latest years, but our discussions with district authorities suggest that the proportion of persons cultivating land of less than five acres has substantially gone up during the period 1961-1970.

THE EMERGENCE OF PEASANT MOVEMENT IN UNNAO

First Phase: No-Rent Campaign 1920-1922

BACKGROUND

The history of the peasant movement in the district may be traced back to 1920-21 when the first expressions of peasants' discontent with the existing legal framework and the oppressions from the taluq-dars and zamindars were witnessed. It was a part of the non-cooperation movement launched by the Indian National Congress (Congress). However, since there was no organised forum of peasants, this part of the movement's history is considered more as a political event than as a movement for the economic betterment of the peasantry.

This view, to our mind, overlooks the basic fact that the Congress was by and large an organisation of peasants who formed an overwhelming majority of the Indian masses. Therefore, it is not surprising that the land policy during the period was greatly influenced by the programmes and actions of the Congress; almost every important act turned out as a conflict between the policies pursued by the government of the day, which again was constituted of the elements directly or indirectly under the influence of taluq-dars and zamindars, and the Congress, which was determined to free India from the British rule as well as to secure justice for and betterment of the peasants. Besides, the leadership of the Congress at the local level consisted almost entirely of those belonging to or sympathetic towards the peasants.
Thus, it was difficult, if not impossible, to separate the agrarian issues from the question of civil disobedience. The adoption of political methods to achieve economic results was perhaps the only course available to the peasants.

It would be worthwhile to understand the background in which the peasants had to protest in an organised form. According to the report of a committee instituted by the local government to enquire into the conditions of tenantry in Oudh, only 7.5 per cent land was cultivated by proprietors, 4.25 per cent by sub-proprietors or tenants having tenancy rights, and as much as 88.0 per cent by tenants-at-will, who had no security of tenure and could be evicted at any time by the landlords. In his communication dated 27 February 1882, submitted to the enquiry committee, the Commissioner of Lucknow division observed: “The conclusions to be derived from the reports [received from the districts] are that in Unnao and Lucknow there are strong reasons for holding that rents are being unfairly raised, and the condition of the tenants-at-will is consequently little removed from destitution.”

The government had to ultimately introduce a Bill, later enacted into the Oudh Rent Act XXII of 1886, to remove some of the defects in the earlier Act. The new Act remained in operation from 1886 to 1921. Though the Act checked the power of the landlord to enhance the rent, it did not, in effect, provide any better tenurial security to the tenant. As a result, the practice of nazrana (gratification) was started to defeat the main provisions of the Act, i.e., not to enhance the rent by more than 6.25 per cent after the expiry of the statutory period. Thus, after the expiry of seven years, before a fresh lease could be granted by the landlord, the tenant was required to pay heavy nazrana for his fresh entry. If the sitting tenant failed to do so, the land was leased out to a new one who was willing to meet the landlord’s demands. Viewed from this angle, nazrana was nothing but concealed rent charged illegally by the landlords.

Besides this unlawful exaction of nazrana, which amounted to many times more than the annual rent, the landlords went on with the enhancement of rent over and above the legally prescribed limit—6.25 per cent over a period of seven years or 0.9 per cent per annum. However, the rent rate increased in Unnao by 1.7 per cent per annum during the seven-year period of 1904-05 to 1910-11, which was much
higher than the average for the whole of Oudh (1.0 per cent) and nearly double the legally prescribed limit.

THE EARLIER MOVEMENTS AND THEIR RESULTS

The practice of rack-renting and exaction of nazrana continued unabated, and the government did not take cognisance of the serious situation. Consequently, the peasants' discontentment continued to grow, and the relatively harmonious relations between the landlords and tenants gradually disappeared. The agrarian situation became intolerable and the crisis was reached in early 1921 when serious agrarian riots broke out in several districts of Oudh, and Unnao was no exception. For the first time in the history of agrarian relationships in Oudh, the system of nazrana, illegal ejectment, concealment of rentals, and many other abuses of peasant problems were highlighted and the peasants demanded greater tenurial security and fair rents. Our discussions with the old functionaries in the district revealed that by January 1921, when serious violence broke out in the neighbouring district of Rae Bareilly, many parts of Unnao had witnessed a number of demonstrations and clashes, which seem to have gone without being recorded. It is worth mentioning that there was no powerful leadership available to the peasants of Unnao at that time, and, therefore, they drew their inspiration from the leadership in Rae Bareilly and Hardoi districts. However, the movement gradually withered away in the face of strong oppression from the police and the landlords.

The movement was revived after a gap of a few months in the form of Eka Movement which was launched with the main objectives of: (a) refusal to pay more than recorded rent; (b) demanding receipts for the rents paid; and (c) refusal to pay nazrana or to do begar (forced labour). The Eka Movement, which started in Lucknow, soon spread to Hardoi, Unnao, and Sitapur districts and became a strong force. However, it failed due to lack of proper organisation and leadership. Yet, it served the purpose of making the government realise the graveness of the agrarian situation. The government promptly came forth with the Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act of 1921, which came into force in November 1921 and was designed to contain the agrarian unrest and redress some immediate grievances of the peasants.

The main provisions of the Oudh Rent Act of 1921 were: (a) the
statutory period of tenancy was raised from seven to ten years; (b) instead of having a statutory base for seven years at the expiry of which the tenants were liable to arbitrary ejectment, every resident tenant was given a life tenure, subject to revision of rent after the expiry of 10 years' period, either by a written agreement between the landlord and the tenant or as sanctioned by the settlement officer; (c) a roster year system was evolved for the determination and sanction of fair and equitable rent rates for each district by a special officer every tenth year; (d) a statutory tenant as well as his heir was prohibited, except with the written consent of the landlord, from subletting any part of his holding for a period exceeding two years; (e) a check was put on the payment of nazrana by a provision that such payments paid on admission to a holding shall be regarded as illegal and the tenant shall be entitled to compensation; (f) the proprietor's rights in sir land were considerably increased; and (g) the landlord was given extensive powers for the acquisition of holdings from his tenant for the purpose of his own cultivation and for agricultural development.

It will appear from the above that the new amendments in the Act were in the nature of a compromise. Some of the provisions of the Act, particularly the last two mentioned above, however, gave considerable benefits and discretion to the landlords. None of the representatives of the peasantry was consulted in preparing the amendment Bill, since they had "no recognised body to represent them".17

SHIFT IN CONGRESS POLICY

The kisan front not only in Unnao but in the whole of United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) was almost inactive during the years following the enactment of the new legislation. To some extent this may be ascribed to certain provisions of the new legislation which gave greater security and legal protection to the tenants. But, to a great extent, it was due to the marked shift in the policy of Congress at its Bardoli session in 1922 which was reflected mainly in terms of the decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement, stopping of protest meetings, and disapproval of withholding of rent payments by the tenants to landlords.

It had been argued that the decision of the leadership of the Congress to call off the movement when peasants' enthusiasm was reaching to boiling point was because of mass awakening which was
“beginning to threaten these propertied class interests with which they themselves were still in fact closely linked”. Thus, the conflict between the ‘class interests’ and the ‘mass movement’ has been suggested to be the rock on which the initial peasant movement broke down. It seems that in the interest of the broader goal of achieving political independence of the country, and consequently a keen desire to carry the support of the local influence groups with it, the top Congress leadership did not want to antagonise the zamindars, who wielded great influence at the local level, at that stage. As shall be clear from the later discussions the change in Congress policy vis-a-vis peasantry came gradually, and under great pressure from the latter.

Second Phase: Revival of No-Rent Campaign 1930-1935

The second phase of the peasant movement was initiated again as a part of Congress programme of non-cooperation movement launched from 1 January 1930, in the wake of serious world-wide depression which had hit hard the peasants all over the country. As is revealed by Table 1, the index of wholesale prices of agricultural product in the United Provinces, which stood at 230 in 1923 with the average of 1901-1905 as base, declined to 114 in 1930. However, the real impact of depression was not much on the landlords, since the index of land revenue demand paid by them to the government registered only a slight increase of three points, i.e., from 109 to 112, while the index of rents paid by ordinary tenants went up from 146 in 1923 to 161 in 1930, by which time the conditions of the tenantry had deteriorated to a great extent. With a view, therefore, to securing the support of the rural community, the Congress programme had to incorporate within its scope the demand for substantial reduction in land rents and revenue. Later it was further extended to include “no-rent campaign”, which was vigorously launched by the Congress leaders at the local level in March 1930.

In sharp contrast to the earlier phase of the movement, the tenants of Unnao district had found an active and influential leader in one Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi, a zamindar, who had also participated in a limited way in the earlier movement and had by now established as a legal practitioner. Besides him, a number of others had actively
Table 1

Prices, rents and revenue in United Provinces

(Base: Average of 1901-1905 = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wholesale prices</th>
<th>Rents of ordinary tenants</th>
<th>Land revenue demand</th>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>217</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Board of Revenue, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.

taken up the cause of peasants in the district, notable among them being Jata Shankar Shukla, Ramadhar Misra, Liladhar Asthana, Balgangadhar Tripathi, etc., all of whom belonged to economically well-to-do families. The peasants were successfully persuaded to form united village and tehsil level committees to work under the control of the respective area Congress committees.

No sooner the civil disobedience movement was launched in January 1930, than the governmental machinery was fully mobilised to crush it. All the leaders and hundreds of active peasants, including a few petty landlords who participated in the movement, were arrested and prosecuted. It may be mentioned here that not all landlords had enhanced the rents and resorted to forcible realisation of rents and ejectments. They could not pay their revenue to the government, and consequently, coercive methods, including confiscation of their lands and properties and imprisonments, were used against such defaulting landlords. The movement, thus, was not directed solely against the landlords. It was also directed against the government. The major demand of the leaders throughout the course of the movement was a reduction of at least 50 per cent in the land rentals and revenues, which implied considerable relief to both the tenants and the landlords. It may be mentioned here that this also formed part of the 11-point programme submitted by M. K. Gandhi to the Viceroy before the start of the movement.19
GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

After about one year, the movement in the country as a whole, and particularly in the district of Unnao, had shrunk to a very low ebb. To save it from complete failure, desperate attempts were initiated, with some leading landlords and their sympathisers working as intermediaries to arrive at a compromise. Incidents of violence were fast replacing the peaceful means of achieving the objectives of the movement. The fate of this movement did not prove to be any better than the earlier one, reached under almost similar circumstances, and the parleys for settlement resulted in what is popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 4 March 1931. Consequently, the movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues was discontinued.

The Pact failed to secure any positive gains for the peasantry. In fact, while it provided some concessions for those who suffered for their participation in the movement, it gave such discretionary powers to the local government that on balance only a negative picture emerged. The leaders of the movement, therefore, did not find themselves in agreement with the various provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. However, they had to accept it because apparently they were hesitant to disown it and revolt against their “High Command”.

The implementation of the terms of the Pact proved to be almost impossible. While the government charged the Congress leaders with resorting to violent activities, the Congressmen charged the government with hostility towards the tenants and siding with the leading landlords in the matter of realisation of rentals. The cases of coercion and forcible ejections of tenants by the landlords, invariably helped by the local police, were increasing. It was estimated that in Unnao district nearly three thousand such cases took place in the course of only a few months’ period. The agrarian unrest soon reached a stage when the district level leaders found it extremely difficult to control the activities of village level activists. In spite of the instructions from the Provincial Congress Committee to discourage the tenants from withholding the payments of rents, the Unnao District Congress Committee could not abide by it. This, to a great extent, was due to the stand taken by Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi, then president of the District Congress Committee, who refused to be a blind follower of the provincial leaders.

The United Provinces Political Conference, which met on 2 May 1931, passed important resolutions on the problem of agrarian unrest.
In one resolution the landlords were advised not to "adopt illegal means for the realisation of rents, not to eject tenants as far as possible, and to reinstate all the tenants whom they have ejected during or after the civil disobedience movement on payment of fair rents, for if they do not act in this manner feelings of illwill and animosity are likely to develop between them and the tents". The feeling of the Congress organisation being undermined in the wake of rising agrarian unrest led the Political Conference to further advise the landlords to arrive at settlements with the tenants through the Congress. At the same time, the tenants were advised "not to harbour feelings of antagonism and hatred towards the landlords and in view of the fact that owing to the Gandhi-Irwin settlement the no-rent campaign has been stopped, they should, in spite of difficulties, duly pay the rents fixed by the Congress after arriving at an understanding with the landlords".

What was most disliked by the district Congress leadership was the direction given by the Conference to the District Congress Committees "to render help to the landlords in realising rent according to the settlement arrived at with the Congress".

The Unnao District Congress Committee exerted continuing pressure upon the provincial leadership to take some concrete measures to protect the tenants from the excesses of the zamindars but without any noticeable results. One example of atrocities and excesses on the tenants was the incident that took place in village Pipri in the Purwa tehsil where two landlords and their followers looted the whole village, tortured the tenants for refusing to pay rents, and even physically assaulted women leading to the desertion of the whole village by its inhabitants. This incident, which took place on 30 May 1931, attracted nationwide attention and sympathy and formed one of the major items in the charge-sheet submitted by Gandhi to the Viceroy, listing specific cases of violation of the terms of the Delhi Agreement by the government.

MOVEMENT FOR FAIR RENT

Ultimately, however, when the condition of the peasantry became intolerable, it greatly concerned the central Congress leaders, including Gandhi, who attempted to obtain relief for the unhappy and suffering peasants through personal visits and communications with the government. After protracted negotiations between Gandhi and the Governor...
of the United Provinces at Simla, the peasants were advised to pay their rents and the government agreed to grant extensive remissions. However, like the Delhi Agreement, the Simla Agreement between Gandhi and Governor Malcolm Hailey failed to bring any relief to the peasantry. The Congress leaders of Unnao district along with those of many other districts, therefore, directed the peasants not to pay "more rent than what they could afford to" after meeting the expenses of "food, clothing and housing". In some parts of the district the peasants even formed their own "rent tribunals" or "courts" to decide upon the fair rent. The zamindars, along with those tenants who paid their rents regularly, were tried by these courts and were socially boycotted. It may, however, be noted that these activities were neither formally approved nor disapproved by the District Congress Committee.

Significantly, the Landholders' Association, which was organised as a defensive measure to meet the Congress campaign, indicated a change in its attitude. It expressed concern for the welfare of the tenants. At a conference held on 26 July, it demanded substantial relief in the shape of remissions of rents and revenue to fully meet the situation created by continued low prices of agricultural products and the absence of a corresponding fall in wages, cost of irrigation, and the cost of necessities of life. It further demanded a complete overhauling of the existing system and a new adjustment of land revenue and rents with a view "to materially relieve the distress of the tenants and to secure their contentment and prosperity".24

The government immediately appointed a Rent and Revenue Committee, consisting entirely of landlords, to go into the matter of readjustment of land revenue and land rent and the question of remissions thereof. In the light of the recommendations of the committee, further revenue remissions amounting to 109.4 million rupees were granted. In Unnao district, the remissions in land revenue and rents were 0.44 and 1.2 million rupees respectively. The government rejected the committee's recommendation for making a remission in revenue strictly in proportion to the reduction in rentals.

The remissions were considered as inadequate to mitigate the sufferings of the peasantry, and dissatisfaction was expressed from all quarters. Since the landlords were not willing to forego their margin of income, many of them resorted to coercive processes, legal as well
as illegal, to realise the rents from the tenants. Ejectment suits were decreed in hundreds. The tenants, who found themselves unable even to pay the reduced rents, strongly resisted the demands for excess rents by the landlords. Consequently, tensions grew and the events moved fast. The chances of any compromise between the government, landlords, and Congress became very remote and there was a feeling of inevitability of an approaching conflict. Every step taken by either party seemed to indicate a desire to manoeuvre for a position. The Unnao District Congress Committee again demanded the permission to launch a defensive no-rent campaign which was conceded by the agrarian sub-committee of the Provincial Congress Committee in December 1931.25

**EMERGENCY POWERS ORDINANCE**

The entire district soon became a scene of violent clashes between the tenants, led by Congress workers, and the landlords, helped by the police. The tenants were advised to stop paying rents to the landlords if the same was not declared "fair rent" by the Congress leaders. As a matter of fact, this had such a tremendous impact on the landlords that many of them voluntarily announced reduction in rentals over and above those announced by the government. Those landlords who still tried to collect the rents on their own had to encounter stiff opposition from the organised groups of tenants. Consequently, the proportion of revenue collected to total revenue demand had shrunk to an unprecedented low level. Therefore, the United Provinces Emergency Powers Ordinance was issued by the Government of India on 14 December 1931. In the beginning, it applied only to five districts, including Unnao.

Under this ordinance the payment of land rent and revenue became a "notified liability" and could be realised by the local government by whatsoever means feasible. The ordinance gave enormous powers to the district authorities to punish individuals, or groups of individuals, or inhabitants of any particular area for either not abiding by the law or instigating others to do so. The person who instigated, verbally or in writing or through expression, any one not to pay or defer payment of a notified liability was to be punished with imprisonment up to six months or with fine or with both. Similarly, any person disobeying or neglecting an order to pay the notified liability was to be
punished with an imprisonment up to two years or with fine or with both.

The natural repercussion of the promulgation of the ordinance was that all leaders and active workers of the Congress were arrested. This, instead of dampening the morale of the tenants, pushed them towards militancy. In the absence of proper leadership, the tenants desperately started resorting to violence in the face of mounting excesses from the side of police and landlords. To cite one instance of police repression, it is reported that a peaceful meeting of nearly 4,000 tenants in Hasanganj was brutally attacked by a strong police force, resulting in serious injuries to about 50 persons. Similarly, there were numerous cases of tenants attacking district authorities who accompanied landlords for realisation of rents.

THE RESULT OF THE MOVEMENT

The government, unwilling to allow the movement to continue for a longer time, particularly in view of its inability to prevent the outbreak of violence, preferred to withdraw the Emergency Powers Ordinance as well as other orders issued in connection with the no-rent campaign, from 11 January 1932. The Zamindars’ Association, too, welcomed this move of the government since they were unable to collect the rents from the tenants, notwithstanding the support of district authorities. The authorities announced some further remissions in the rents and revenues. The movement, thus, ended with some positive gains. It resulted in the remissions in land revenue and rents. It injected among the tenants the need for effective organisation to seek redressal of their grievances. It attracted, perhaps much more effectively this time, the attention of the government and political leadership at various levels towards their economic hardships. And, finally, it created a feeling among at least some landlords to change their attitude towards their tenants.

Moreover, the movement had some lasting effects. The government had to pass two Acts—the Assistance of Tenants Act of 1932 and the U.P. Temporary Regulation of Execution Act of 1934—with a view to giving some relief to the tenants.
Third Phase: Emergence of Communist Influence 1936-1945

The third phase of the peasant movement in Unnao, as probably in other parts of the province, was a crucial one, and was marked by a tremendous upsurge among the peasantry. The Government of India Act of 1935 turned the tenancy problem over to the provincial legislature. The Congress party, while denouncing the new Constitution, decided to contest the elections. The Lucknow session of the Congress, held in April 1936, cleared the stage for the beginning of the new Congress strategy of strengthening the party and of bringing it in closer contact with the peasants. However, the apathy of a majority of the delegates, apparently under the influence of top central leadership, turned down the proposal of taking up the cause of peasants exclusively. This resulted in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha by some of the delegates. Simultaneously, Kisan Sabhas were organised at provincial and district levels. Though these Sabhas mostly functioned as a part of Congress organisation and under Congress leadership, their activities, not too infrequently, came in conflict with the Congress programme as would be revealed in the following pages.

The committee appointed by the Provincial Congress Committee to enquire into the agrarian situation in the province had suggested that: rent and revenue should be adjusted to existing conditions and be fixed on the basis of surplus profit of tenants; certain holdings should be rent-free; changes should be effected in the law of succession so as to consolidate land holdings; tenants and sub-tenants be given occupancy rights; there should be differentiation in the land revenue charged from rich and poor zamindars; all forms of extra-legal dues be abolished; arrears of rent be wiped out; the ejectment law be altered and ownership of houses occupied by tenants be established; agricultural income be assessed for income tax on a progressive scale; the crushing burden of rural debts be removed; etc.29 The election manifesto of the Congress did not envisage any final agrarian programme but broadly conformed to the above items.

The landlords organised themselves into a National Agriculturists’ Party (NAP) to fight the elections. The election manifesto of the NAP emphasised the welfare of the peasantry as the party’s sole concern. However, the NAP finally was left to be consisting of only the bigger landlords, and the unity and organisation achieved during the past
years seemed to have disappeared. As a result of this, all the three Congress candidates from the district were declared elected to the provincial legislature with an absolute majority.

The election successes generated further enthusiasm among the peasantry. Kisan Conferences were organised in all the four tehsils of Unnao during the months of June-July 1937. These conferences passed resolutions demanding immediate measures to give relief to the peasantry. The expectations of the people, aroused during the election campaign, were at a very high pitch. However, the leaders of the peasant movement were successful in containing the mass feelings for some time immediately following the elections. Some of the zamindars, particularly those who did not see eye to eye with their more influential and richer friends, started siding with the Congress, as this appeared for them to be the only course open for keeping their interests safe.30

CONGRESS AGRARIAN PROGRAMME AND GOVERNMENT

After the Congress formed the ministry in the province with Govind Ballabh Pant as the Premier (now Chief Minister) and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai as Revenue Minister, pressure grew from the kisan leaders for immediate legislative action to protect their interests. The Kisan Sabhas, at the district as well as at the provincial level, passed a number of resolutions demanding, among others, abolition of the system of zamindari and conferment of ownership rights on the tenants. The political situation was, however, not considered to be suitable for any drastic measure at the time. The Congress government was keen to arrive at an understanding with the zamindars while giving relief to the tenantry. A distinction was, thus, deliberately made between the immediate and the long-term goals of the government. The Provincial Congress Committee, on the basis of a similar directive received from the national working committee of the party, directed its legislature party members to press for the carrying out of the Congress programme only as enunciated in the party's election manifesto.

THE CRISIS

The government ordered the release of all the peasants who were arrested in landlord-tenant disputes. It further announced its decision to set up a committee to suggest an "equitable basis for the relations between the State and landlords on the one hand and the landlords..."
and peasants on the other so that adequate relief may be given to the peasants.”31 Pending the final submission of the report of the committee and governmental action thereon, it was considered desirable that, in order to avoid multiplicity of litigation and to ensure a calm and tranquil atmosphere in the province, all pending proceedings relating to ejectment of tenants or under-proprietors or suits for recovery of arrears of rent should be stayed. Therefore, an announcement was made for the proposed legislation for staying the ejectment proceedings on account of non-payment of rents by the tenants.32 This marked the beginning of a serious crisis. The announcement, which later became an Executive Order, was interpreted by tenants as the fulfilment of the promise to wipe out all rent dues. Consequently, they stopped payment of rents to the zamindars.

The government soon came out with a communique clarifying the staying of ejectment proceedings orders. The tenants were advised to pay their rents for 1933-34 F (Fasli or crop year) due in rabi because the orders related to dues up to kharif of that year. However, a large number of tenants continued to withhold the payment of their rents, and, as some of his close associates stated, this was done with Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi’s approval. By this time, his strong feelings against Congress agrarian programme, as visualised by the national level leadership, had been widely known. Instead of making the peasant movement just as a tributary to the mainstream of Congress movement in the district, he wanted the former to be conducted without any rigid outside control.

The situation in Unnao, which had become by now a pace-setter for the peasant movement in other districts, was viewed very seriously by the Congress leaders. Premier Govind Ballabh Pant and Revenue Minister Rafi Ahmed Kidwai started associating themselves more closely with Unnao Congress affairs with a view to moulding it towards broader Congress policy pursued by the government. However, they were hardly able to persuade the Congress workers to wean away from V. D. Tripathi and his supporters. In several Kisan Conferences held in Unnao during October-December 1937, they pleaded for the regular payment of rent by the tenants and the adoption of non-violent course of action within the Congress organisation. But these conferences invariably ended with the resolutions demanding immediate action by the government to meet the demands of the peasantry.
ORGANISATION OF LANDLORDS

Under the Kisan Sabha leadership the tenants not only withheld rent payments but also collectively resisted rent collection resulting in violent clashes between the tenants and the landlords, the latter being outnumbered by the formers' organised strength. The landlords, therefore, felt the need for strengthening the Landholders' Association (also called Zamindars' Association), which had been functioning in an unorganised manner. One Kunwar Gur Narain, a very influential taluqdar of Unnao, took the lead in organising the landlords' associations not only in Unnao district but also in the neighbouring districts. He was also the key man behind several provincial and all-India landlords' conferences. The British India Association made liberal financial grants towards these activities. This action of landlords was not a sudden development. Rather, it was based on repeated counselling from the British officials and the influential press.33

The district landlords' association had set up branches in all the four tehsils of the district. The activities of the branches were coordinated by a coordinating committee. The landlords further formed a volunteer corps, with many zamindars as volunteers, "for self-defence and for preventing irresponsible people from creating ill-feeling between tenants and landlords and carrying on mischievous propaganda in the rural areas against the zamindars". The creation of the volunteer corps, with zamindars' supporters as its active workers, further aggravated agrarian unrest. In several cases there were violent clashes between the volunteers of the Kisan Sabha and zamindars. And the blame for these was passed on to the Congress.

COMMUNIST INROADS

This situation was not confined to any single district or to the province. The Congress leadership at the national level had always been opposed to the idea of running Kisan Sabhas in a manner not liked by them. The Congress position on the role of Kisan Sabhas was made clear in late 1936 at the time of its Faizpur session where it was stated that though the Congress was not opposed to the formation of separate peasants' organisations, there was not much need for such organisations since the Congress itself was, in fact, a peasants' organisation. Subsequently, the position was clarified further by Nehru when he stated: "Where genuine (i.e., those working within the Congress)
peasant organisations exist we would cooperate with them. Where such organisations are politically reactionary, they are not true peasant organisations and we cannot cooperate. Also, where the peasant platform is utilised as a platform by the opponents of the Congress, we cannot have anything to do with that. But while we cooperate with peasant organisations, our primary duty is to make Congress in rural areas as nearly a Kisan organisation as is possible."

By the beginning of the year 1938, Communist influence among the peasants of the district had increased substantially; and the activities of the Kisan Sabhas, particularly where these were under Communist control, also became increasingly militant in nature. V. D. Tripathi was still the leader of kisans and the president of the District Congress Committee. He had a crucial role to play in controlling the Communists, Socialists, and Congress workers. He had, as was stated by an interviewee, "identified himself with kisans and their organisations without any immediate threat to this position as a Congress leader".

The activities of kisan leaders in the district during the year 1938-39 continued to be geared towards (a) persuading the tenants to withhold the rent payment over and above that fixed in consultation with the kisans; (b) collecting "fair" rents from tenants and keeping the money with them or depositing it with the local authorities; (c) socially boycotting the landlords who charged excess rents and who forced tenants or their family members to do begar; (d) organising frequent meetings of the kisans at village, tehsil, and district levels, demanding the government to abolish the zamindari system through a legislative measure; and (e) organising "raids" or dhava on the residences of selected landlords who were considered hostile towards the tenants and the Congress. The outbreak of violence was not infrequent in these activities. There seemed to be operating a very well-organised force of the tenants which would be rushed to any place where they were facing difficulties. In fact, the Congress workers in the district were apparently much influenced by the Communist ideology of radical agrarian reforms.

The first public evidence of active involvement of Communists in the peasants’ movement in the district was the historic "kisan march" of nearly 100,000 kisans to Lucknow on 1 March 1938. The march was jointly organised by the district kisan leaders—Congress, Congress-
Socialists, and Communists—to press the government to introduce the tenancy reforms Bill without further delay. And it is noteworthy that the provincial Congress leaders had apparently no knowledge of this mass demonstration which was perhaps the largest in the political history of the province. The address presented to the Premier by V. D. Tripathi highlighted the following main demands of the peasants: (a) conferment of occupancy rights on the tenants; (b) stopping of all ejectments in the future; (c) wiping out all arrears of rent; (d) cheap credit facilities to the tenants; (e) reduction in rent and canal rates; (f) free medical aid, free justice, and free education; and (g) removing the ban on the Communist Party.36

THE TENANCY LEGISLATION

It was in the wake of such pressure that the government hastened to introduce the U.P. Tenancy Bill in the provincial legislature. The Bill sought to curtail landlords' rights on land, including "sir" land, and to grant hereditary rights to the tenants.

The tenancy legislation sparked off a serious confrontation between the landlords and government on the one hand, and the landlords and tenants on the other. The District Kisan Sabha considered the Bill as inadequate and unsatisfactory and urged the government to revise it so as "to incorporate fully the immediate and minimum demands of the tenants". Later, when the zamindars referred the Bill for "arbitration" to the Congress High Command, the kisan leaders became more critical of both the government and the moderate Congressmen. V. D. Tripathi, in a statement, said: "It seems that we have fallen a prey to the deliberate tactics of big zamindars. Thousands of peasants in the district have been forcibly dispossessed by the zamindars of their lands, and any law giving hereditary rights to them has been rendered useless for a very large number of peasant families which have been reduced to a state of pauperism. While the zamindars are resorting to violent direct action, the peasants and Congress workers have been prohibited from even talking of any kind of satyagraha, however peaceful it may be, for safeguarding their legitimate rights. If this state of affairs continues we are bound to lose the confidence of the masses... If the proposed Bill is whittled down as a result of negotiations with the zamindars and is not amended in accordance with the pledges given by the Congress to the tenantry, the agrarian
situation in our province is bound to become extremely serious." 37

Earlier, he had threatened in connection with the cases of violence and coercion by landlords "to adopt some abnormal methods to get the reasonable grievances of kisans redressed". 38

This more radical posture of V. D. Tripathi encouraged the Communist workers to intensify their campaign in the district. Earlier, the Unnao Youth League, which was a training and assembly forum for the Communists, in its Conference held in the first week of June 1938, had declared Communists' total lack of faith in the doctrine of non-violence. The conference, blessed by V. D. Tripathi and presided over by Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee, had resolved that their object was "to organise the masses and to prepare them for a bigger fight separately from the Congress which is zamindar-ridden". 39

The landlords were equally sore about the proposed tenancy legislation and were desperately agitating for making it more moderate. A large majority of the zamindars in the United Provinces in general, and in Unnao in particular, was strongly opposed to the idea of arbitration by Congress High Command. And when a few leading taluq-dars decided to go in for arbitration, the organisational unity achieved by them was totally destroyed. The Unnao Zamindars' Conference, attended by nearly 7,000 zamindars and held on 15 and 16 October 1938, unanimously deplored the move for arbitration. The main contention of the opponents of arbitration was that a party to the case could never be expected to do justice to the affected party whose interests were no longer its concern. Moreover, the arbitration was to be only on three issues, viz., ejectment, sir rights, and planting trees, thus implying that all other provisions of the legislation were totally acceptable to the landlords. 41 In the wake of growing discontentment among both the peasants and landlords, and doubtful representative character of those who had pleaded for the arbitration, the Congress High Command ultimately dropped the idea of arbitrating in the matter. The U.P. Government was, thus, free to get the legislation enacted after necessary modifications.

On the other hand, reoccurrence of division among the ranks of landlords in the district affected their power to counteract the kisan movement. The kisan volunteers intensified their activities again and a series of raids on and social boycotts of some leading landlords were organised in the district, particularly in Behta and Sahukhera villages.
in Purwa tehsil. The District Congress Committee started Kisan Volunteers' Camps at these two villages from 24 November 1938, with a view to organising a para-military type of committed kisan workers. It further empowered the Satyagraha Committee, working in close liaison with the Kisan Sabha, to launch a direct agitation in any village of the district to redress tenants' grievances against landlords. The tenants and landlords who defied the orders of Congress workers were punished with fines. These actions frequently resulted in violent clashes between the supporters of landlords and their tenants during May-July 1939. Mention may also be made here of the kisan raids in Akbarpur (9 May 1939), Rasulpur Baquia (20 July 1939), and Rau Karna (29 July 1939). The government became more strict in dealing with the cases of violence. Leading Communist and Congress-Socialist workers were arrested and prosecuted, notable among them being Shiv Kumar Misra, Sekhar Nath Ganguli, Nand Kishore, Balgangadhar Tripathi, and Jata Shankar Shukla.

IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The U.P. Tenancy Bill was ultimately passed in September 1939 which was followed by the celebration of Victory Day on 15 October 1939. Though the Landlords' Association pleaded with the Viceroy not to grant his assent to the Bill, it became an Act with effect from 6 December 1939. The Act was a major landmark in the history of agrarian reforms. However, after the resignation of the Congress ministry after the outbreak of war, the provisions of the Tenancy Act, in effect, remained only on paper, and the landlords not only continued but further accelerated the process of ejecting the tenants from their lands. This led to further violence. Significantly, the District Congress Committee suspended the Constitution of the All India Congress Committee in Unnao district and decided to go ahead with its plan to oppose India's participation in war. War Councils with "dictators" were formed at tehsil and mandal levels. The Communists and the radical Congressmen were working together. However, after the arrest of all of their important leaders, the tenants were left alone to face the repression from the landlords and police.

After the German attack on Russia, the Communists came out openly in support of British war efforts. They actively campaigned against the "Quit India" movement launched by the Congress in
1942 and started working in close collaboration with the landlords and the local authorities. It was not uncommon to see police officials addressing the kisan rallies organised by the Communist workers.41

The peasant movement in Unnao till the end of the Second World War was characterised by a relative lull and peacefulness. The rent collections in the district, which had always been a problem for both the landlords and the local authorities, also progressed satisfactorily. The tenants had to be regular in their payments as there was no one to protect them from ejectment in case of default. As is revealed by Table 2, the per cent of total rent collections to total rental demand, after granting remissions for agricultural calamities in Unnao, increased from only 49 in 1936-37 to 54 in 1940-41. To some extent this might have been possible due to rise in prices of agricultural produce and, therefore, an improvement in the economic position of the tenants. However, it may be mentioned that the proportion of rent collections to total rental demand had throughout been the lowest in Unnao district as compared to other districts in its neighbourhood. Possibly this is an indication of greater incidence of the peasant movement in Unnao.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1936-37</th>
<th>1940-41</th>
<th>1944-45</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lucknow</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Unnao</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Rae Bareilly</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Sitapur</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Harboi</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Kheri</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Office of the Board of Revenue, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.

Fourth Phase: Movement for Abolition of Zamindari System and Allied Issues 1948-1955

After the Second World War was terminated, when the Congress leaders came out of jails they found that the Communist influence in the peasant movement in the district, as everywhere else, had increa-
sed much beyond their expectations. V. D. Tripathi, in spite of having a soft corner for the revolutionary policies pursued by the Communists, successfully attempted to free the Congress organisation from them, presumably on the advice of his Congress colleagues.

The first major offensive against the Communists was to free the Congress organisation in the district from their control. The Communists moved out of the Congress but continued functioning in the Kisan Sabha. The Congressmen did not seriously try to recapture the Kisan Sabha, possibly because they were assured of Communist support to Congress under V. D. Tripathi. This, however, does not mean that there was no clash of interests between the two. On the other hand, a large number of smaller zamindars and money-lenders, who had joined the Congress in the district after the war, were diametrically opposed to the Communists. However, V. D. Tripathi’s mediating role avoided any immediate crisis.

MOVEMENT FOR THE OCCUPATION OF LAND

The Kisan Sabha launched a vigorous agitation demanding from the government immediate abolition of the zamindari system. The government appointed a committee, known as the Zamindari Abolition Committee (Z.A.C.) with V. D. Tripathi and 14 others as members, to suggest ways and means of abolishing the zamindari system. However, the report of the committee was bound to take a few years’ time, and the Kisan Sabha leaders feared that this might enable the landlords to further increase ejectments, etc. In fact, the zamindars had already started preparing for such a contingency. A Zamindars’ Union, with Kunwar Gur Narain of Maurawan as its convener, was formed to protect the interests of landlords. They had also started leasing out to the tenants pasture land, thoroughfares, and other abadi lands in the district with a view to increasing the rental value of their lands which, they thought, would be the main criterion for giving compensation while acquiring their rights by the government.

The Kisan Sabha leaders strongly opposed these actions of the zamindars. In many cases violent clashes took place in the district on this issue. Ultimately, the government announced its decision to take action under the Criminal Procedure Code against those zamindars who had brought under their cultivation or leased out to tenants pasture land and other lands which was likely to lead to a “breach of peace”.

42
The period 1946-1952 was characterised by the movement for the occupation of land belonging to various landlords in the district, particularly in Hasanganj tehsil. The movement was initiated and carried out by the Communist leaders. They had organised a Red Volunteer Corps which, significantly, was working in close association with the Congress Volunteer Corps. It may be noted that the land reforms measures initiated by the Congress government since 1937 had practically left out the landless agricultural labourers, mostly belonging to low castes. The Communist activists, therefore, concentrated their activities in organising them into the Kisan Sabha and securing lands for them through forcible occupation of zamindars’ land. The centre for the Kisan Sabha activities was now in Makur village in Hasanganj tehsil. The plan of action of the Communists was in line with the programme outlined in their party manifesto.43

Apart from the movement of forcible occupation of land by the landless labourers, which had spread to the whole of the district, particularly in Makur, Mandanli, Delhepur, Kursath, Pirthikhera, Samasia, Kulha, Hasanpur, Atora, Pilakhana, leading to the arrest of hundreds of workers and serious cases of violence, the Kisan Sabha started an agitation for more irrigation facilities, cheaper and better seeds and manures, and taqavi loans (for agricultural purposes). The agitation registered significant successes to its credit and the government distributed large amounts of foodgrains and taqavi loans in the district besides taking certain other measures such as construction of new roads to give employment to landless workers, medical facilities, and cheap grain shops in rural areas.

The growing Communist influence alarmed both the landlords and the government. The landlords held the Congress responsible for the activities of the Kisan Sabha.44 In the wake of their inability to put effective checks on the Communist activities, the government declared the Communist Party unlawful. A series of repressive measures were adopted to crush the kisan movement, which was taking a more militant form. The provincial Congress leaders started their campaign against Communists and zamindari system simultaneously with a view to strengthening the Congress organisation in rural areas. The Unnao Kisan Conference, which was attended by nearly 12,000 people and organised on 3 September 1946, was addressed, among others, by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Kukum Singh, and Charan Singh, specially de-
puted to contain the Communist influence in the rural areas of Unnao. The peasants were advised neither to accept on lease from zamindars nor forcibly occupy the usar, banjar, talabi, and other waste and grazing lands of the villages as they would have to vacate all of them soon.\textsuperscript{45} Notwithstanding the central and provincial Congress leadership’s opposition, V. D. Tripathi’s leanings towards left radicalism continued and he remained the general secretary of the All India Forward Block.

Z.A.C. REPORT AND AFTER

The report of the Z.A.C. was finalised and submitted to the government in July 1948. The arguments for the abolition of zamindari system were based on considerations of ethics, income distribution, the behaviour of zamindars and financial loss to the state due to zamindari system. The report concluded: “Every section of people must perform a definite economic function. Experience has shown, however, that the various classes of intermediaries functioning as rent receivers, whether zamindars or taluqdars or under proprietors or other subordinate holders, have done nothing to improve the land and have left the land and tenantry where they were, and indeed in a plight worse than before.”\textsuperscript{46} It further said that “landlordism is an inequitable anachronism; that land can no longer be allowed to be treated merely as a source of income; that it is for use, and therefore, it should be regarded as a definite and limited means for supplying labour to a category of citizens whose occupation in life is the tilling of soil”.\textsuperscript{47}

The report recommended that there was an urgent need for the creation of new sources of employment, such as cottage industries for surplus population on land; fixation of minimum wages of agricultural labourers on the lines of Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, of England; and recognition of trade unions of agricultural labourers, if and when they were formed.\textsuperscript{48}

The U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, was passed in January 1951 and came into force on 30 June 1952. The Act created three permanent kinds of tenures: bhumidari, sirdari, and asami, roughly comparable to the owners, hereditary tenants, and statutory tenants of the earlier Act. Besides, adhivasi tenure was created as a transitional measure to take care of tenants of sir land.
NEW OFFENSIVES

The landlords had no option but to reconcile themselves to the new system, although they termed it as "unjustifiable radicalism". The smaller ones, who constituted a vast majority in Unnao, did not lose much as they retained their land and received a higher amount of compensation for land acquired by the government. The leaders of the Kisan Sabha, which was now completely under Communist control, reacted to the new Act very sharply. First, they were opposed to the zamindars being given bhumidari rights and compensation in large amounts. Second, they argued for the scrapping of the provision of acquiring bhumidari rights by paying an amount equal to 10 times their revenue. Further, they demanded "free" distribution of land rendered surplus by the Act among landless agricultural labourers. It may be mentioned that it was due to the intensive campaigning by the Kisan Sabha leaders in Unnao and in other districts that a clause was later incorporated in the Act for the distribution of gaon sabha land to agricultural labourers and others.

The abolition of zamindari system did not materially change the socio-economic structure in the rural areas of Unnao. The former zamindars became the most powerful owner-cultivators; their influence on their old tenants was hardly affected; and the local authorities including patwaris and police continued to be sympathetic towards them. Therefore, the peasant movement did not restrict its area of activities to only agitating for the formulated demands of the Kisan Sabha, as outlined above, but also directed them against the local police and other authorities. This, in many cases, particularly in villages of Samadha, Arer, Karwankhera, and Murtajanagar, led to violent clashes between the followers of the Kisan Sabha and zamindars on the one hand and the former and police on the other. Several prominent workers of the Kisan Sabha were allegedly killed by the zamindars and their followers. In this connection, particular reference may be made to the murder of Siya Ram, a prominent kisan leader of Murtajanagar in Unnao tehsil. The retaliatory steps taken by the Communists led to many murders of money-lenders and followers of zamindars, particularly in Pansara and Samadha villages in Purwa tehsil. Several workers of the Kisan Sabha were later sentenced to death.

The two other important issues on which the District Kisan Sabha launched agitation during 1953-1955 were: increase in the canal rates
by 50 per cent and new octroi in Bangarmau. The agitation against the rise in canal rate and other grievances of the peasants was supported by other political parties, including the Congress. The agitation achieved some positive results and the increased canal rates were reduced by 50 per cent in March 1954. The government further agreed to release more water for irrigation, to arrange for the hearing of canal water disputes within a five-mile radius, to dispose of the cases within two or three hearings and to make suitable arrangements to replace the current practice of imposing collective fines on cultivators for damages caused to the canal. Similarly, the Kisan Sabha’s campaign against the introduction of a new octroi in Bangarmau was successful and the octroi was subsequently withdrawn as it caused considerable inconvenience to the farmers. During the rest of the period in this phase there was no important activity in which the District Kisan Sabha was actively involved.

Fifth Phase: Movement for General Peasant Demands and Distribution of Land 1956-1970

CONSOLIDATION OF LAND-HOLDINGS AND OTHER ISSUES

The Kisan Sabha intensified its activities on the eve of the second general elections. The major issues which immediately concerned the Kisan Sabha leaders were the dispossession and eviction of adhivasi tenants who had small land-holdings without any permanent tenures and the programme of consolidation of land-holdings enunciated by the government. In regard to the former, the District Conference of Kisan Workers held in March 1956 passed the following resolution:

Ever since the adhivasi cultivators were granted the right to acquire sirdari tenure, the landlords taking advantage of faulty and inaccurate land record entries have joined hands with the local authorities and, with the help of organised gangs of goondas and police, are forcing these cultivators to voluntarily surrender their lands. While government has conceded the demand to grant sirdari rights to adhivasi cultivators, the conditions under which these rights have been given have hardly benefited the cultivators. First, the legislation for this came much after the zamindari abolition which gave the ex-zamindars sufficient time to manipulate
the land records. Second, the government while enacting this legislation, has not done justice to the small owners of land who for various reasons, such as shortage of labour in their family or employment of some family members in other occupations, had let out their holdings to *adhivasis*. The new legislation, therefore, had created a situation in which small land owners and *adhivasis* have become each other's enemies, thus further complicating the whole situation.\(^{51}\)

The Kisan Sabha was in a dilemma. On the one hand, it did not want, and perhaps could not afford, to neglect the problems of *adhivasis* whose main demand was the conferment of *sirdari* rights of tenure. On the other hand, it could not launch a district-wide agitation on the issue since many of its active workers were actually trying to retain their lands from the *adhivasi* cultivators. Therefore, the movement was launched with varying intensity in different parts of the district. In places where Communist workers were to lose their land, the pace of the movement was quite slow. But wherever the *adhivasis* constituted a significant membership of the Kisan Sabha and Communist Party, the movement was quite strong and the leadership of the Kisan Sabha concentrated their activities in those areas. The Kisan Sabha leadership was mainly in the hands of well-to-do peasant proprietors or persons with small land-holdings. The movement against dispossession of *adhivasis* was interlinked with the movement for strengthening the Kisan Sabha organisation. The *adhivasis* were enrolled as members of the Sabha before their cases were taken up.

The scheme of compulsory consolidation of land-holdings was designed with the main objective of bringing the small-size scattered holdings into one or more larger farms to enable the cultivators to make more economic and productive use of their land and labour on the one hand and to facilitate the cooperativisation of farming on the other. The network of consolidation machinery created for the purpose in each district, however, was soon found to be working in a manner which was allegedly against the interests of small cultivators. The consolidation officers and their staff soon earned a bad reputation by accepting gratifications from rich farmers. With the discontentment among the cultivators mounting, the Kisan Sabha found in it a good opportunity to get mass support.
The agitation on the above issues was on the whole peaceful. The results of militant actions of the Kisan Sabha workers in the past, which had led to the arrest, prosecution, conviction, and in some cases even hanging of Kisan workers, had convinced the leaders that these might not be fruitful on the eve of general elections. The strategy adopted by the Kisan Sabha, therefore, was mainly to organise meetings in different rural areas, submit memoranda regarding specific charges of corruption and partiality against consolidation staff to the local authorities, and, as a last resort, to resist any attempt by the ex-zamindars to forcibly dispossess the cultivators of their lands.

This strategy proved to be a success, and in the 1957 general elections all the three Kisan Sabha candidates, namely, Mullaprasad, Bhikhalal, and Sajeevan Lal, who contested as Communist Party candidates, were elected to the State Assembly, defeating their influential Congress rivals. As a matter of fact, all Congress candidates for the Assembly were defeated in Unnao district, though V. D. Tripathi won the parliamentary seat by an overwhelming majority. The success of Kisan Sabha candidates gave immediate fillip to the organisation in the district and the membership of the Sabha was reported to have registered a substantial increase. A new major issue which had concerned the Kisan Sabha leaders by now was the arrears of taxes levied by the village panchayats. The peasants were advised not to pay these arrears as these were levied without the permission of the respective gaon sabhas. The Communist Party and the Kisan Sabha celebrated August 15 as "Kisan Struggle Day" and held big demonstrations at tehsil and district headquarters. The office-bearers of the U.P. Kisan Sabha and, perhaps for the first time, leaders of some other political parties, including a few Congressmen, actively participated in these meetings and demanded immediate stoppage of consolidation operations in the district and wiping out of the arrears of panchayat taxes. The Communist leaders were successful in mobilising a large number of rural people at these meetings.

Kisan Sabha Isolated

It was in the wake of such intensive campaigning by the District Kisan Sabha that the twelfth annual conference of the U.P. Kisan Sabha was held in Unnao from 23 to 27 October 1957. The choice of Unnao for holding the conference for the second time within a
period of four years was significant. The leadership of the Provincial Kisan Sabha was keen to retain its traditional hold among the peasantry in the district and make Unnao the main base of its activities. However, it may be mentioned that this conference was perhaps the last occasion when V. D. Tripathi, who also attended the conference, sympathised and supported the cause of peasantry in his district being championed by the Kisan Sabha. Further, it was during this period that the Kisan Sabha activities in the district were at their peak.

In the subsequent period the Kisan Sabha activities had several serious set-backs including the one it received after the death of V.D. Tripathi and gradually passing away of the entire Congress organisation in the district into the hands of those who had been hostile towards the Kisan Sabha from its inception. Balgangadhar Tripathi, who had extended active help and cooperation to the Communists from time to time, was removed from the presidentship of the District Congress Committee, thus rendering it difficult for the Kisan Sabha leaders to get any moral or material help from the Tripathi family. The local police also got a free hand to crush the Communist movement in the district. A large number of cases under various sections of criminal law, including dacoity, murder, loot, conspiracy, etc., were launched against prominent leaders of the Kisan Sabha in the district. Farid Ahmed, an important leader of the District Kisan Sabha, was allegedly murdered by the men of ex-zamindars with the knowledge of local police. All this had a dampening effect on the activities of the District Kisan Sabha and it was rendered virtually inactive for quite some time.

OTHER ACTIONS

The Kisan Sabha, however, launched an anti-food policy and land reforms policy movement in August 1958. The agitation, which was described by kisan leaders as the biggest struggle after Independence, commenced with protest meetings and demonstrations on the demands for which the Kisan Sabha had been agitating for the past three years. The increasing police repression had ultimately provoked the Kisan Sabha to resist it with organised strength. The murder of Satti, a prominent Kisan Sabha worker in Ajgain police circle, in the month of August offered further provocation to them. A five-day
hunger strike was resorted to by the district leaders from September 5; an anti-repression day was observed on September 11 which had led to the arrest and conviction of 28 Kisan Sabha workers; and a general strike was started from September 12. The Kisan Sabha volunteers started courting arrest by violating the prohibitory orders. All prominent leaders were arrested. By the end of September, when the agitation was called off, more than 400 peasants were reported to have been arrested and convicted. The terms of calling off the agitation, as outlined below, were claimed to be an indicator of its partial success: (a) setting up an all-party food committee with executive power; (b) distribution of seeds and taqavi, suspension of rent, and free education to students of the poor peasants so far as possible; and (c) release of all persons arrested in connection with the agitation.55

However, the experience of the peasants in the period following the calling-off of the agitation was in no way better than before. The complaints of peasants started pouring into the Kisan Sabha office. The main grievances of the peasants were: non-availability of seeds from seed stores to poor peasants who could not pay a bribe; difficulties in getting taqavi loan without paying commission to intermediaries; and organised attacks on peasants who were active in the Kisan Sabha. This led the Kisan Sabha to revive its agitational activities. Kisan Day (December 10), Save Democracy Day (December 14), Kisan Sabha membership enrolment campaign (December 7-21), and token strike by cane growers (December 20) were organised. These activities, however, could not achieve anything positive for the peasants except highlighting their demands.

The Provincial Anti-Consolidation Conference was held at Makur village in Unnao on 25-26 February 1959 in accordance with the decision taken at the Sultanpur conference of the U.P. Kisan Sabha. A meeting of about ten thousand peasants was also organised on February 25, which demanded immediate suspension of consolidation operations. It also demanded immediate legislation to put ceiling on land-holdings.56 The District Kisan Sabha endorsed the demand of the Provincial Kisan Sabha that the ceiling should not be above 20 acres for any family. In fact, it demanded 6·25 acres land for each family unit and taking an average of two family units, the ceiling was demanded at 12·5 acres only.57 The Kisan Sabha further demanded
that all the surplus lands to be acquired by the government under the proposed land ceiling legislation must be distributed among the poor peasants and landless agricultural workers without delay.\textsuperscript{58}

The campaign of the Kisan Sabha was successful to a great extent in so far as the Government of Uttar Pradesh introduced Land Ceiling Bill in the legislature on 20 August 1959, which was enacted into an Act in August 1960. The Bill was, however, criticised by the Kisan Sabha leaders and their supporters on the ground that the ceiling put under the proposed legislation was too high. (The ceiling varied from 40 to 128 acres.) The activities of the Kisan Sabha were, however, restricted to mere pointing out the loopholes in the new Act through mass media and meetings.\textsuperscript{59}

SPLIT IN THE KISAN SABHA

The Kisan Sabha did not launch any major agitation during 1960-1962. In late 1962, after the India-China armed conflict, the ideological differences and organisational crisis that betook the Communist Party at the national level had their impact at the provincial and local levels. After the release of the Kisan Sabha and other Communist workers from prisons in 1964, the split in the Communist Party and the Kisan Sabha in Unnao district, as everywhere else, was given a formal shape. Shiv Kumar Misra, a prominent Kisan Sabha leader and a member of the Communist Party National Council, was expelled along with 31 other leftist members from the Party.\textsuperscript{60} He became the leader of the Communist Party (Marxist) in U.P. and with him all key Communist activists in Unnao left the CPI. A few persons such as A.K. Tewari, Sajeevan Lal, and Bhikhulal continued in the CPI. But they had very little following among the peasantry. Moreover, they had shifted their base to the provincial headquarters of the Kisan Sabha at Lucknow and were not in direct touch with the situation in Unnao district as such. However, since almost all the workers of the CP(M) were either arrested or were operating underground, the CPI leaders could claim to be in control of the Kisan Sabha, although for all practical purposes it had ceased to function as an organisation. There was complete dislocation of office records, which are not traceable even now. Later, in 1966, a majority of the persons who had solidly supported Shiv Kumar Misra returned to the CPI. The main reason for their deserting Shiv Kumar
Misra was their eagerness to lead freer public life and avoid police repression on them and on the members of their family. This was frankly stated by many of them during the course of our interviews with them.

**LANDLESS AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS**

Since its inception, the Kisan Sabha had been engaged mainly in seeking redressal of the problems of the farmers having some land under their possession. The problems of landless agricultural workers were always a secondary consideration. In fact, as stated by several Kisan Sabha leaders during the course of our interview, it was a difficult task to keep both the farmers and landless workers within the Kisan Sabha. While the farmers' fight has been directed mainly against the government and the big landlords, the landless workers' demands such as higher wages, better treatment, and greater share in produce in case the land was given to them on share-crop basis, had a direct bearing on the farmers who were deeply entrenched in the Kisan Sabha. The leadership of the Kisan Sabha, too, had come mainly from among the farmers. The Communist Party, which was now the only political party in effective control of the Kisan Sabha, did not want to lose the support of any of the two sections of the peasantry.

The formation of a separate organisation solely for landless agricultural workers seemed to be the only solution to the organisational dilemma before the Communists. The attempts at organising such a body at the State level and in various districts were started in late 1959 and a State level conference of the organisers was held at Lucknow on 30 September 1959, when the Khet Mazdoor Sabha was formed. Apparently, with a view to minimising the possibility of any direct confrontation between the landless workers and the farmers, both under the control of the same political party, the major demand on which the organisation campaign for the Khet Mazdoor Sabha was to be launched at local level was distribution of surplus and fallow land to the landless agricultural workers. The movement, thus, was planned to be directed at the government and some big landlords rather than at the middle-level farmers who were said to be exploiting these workers by paying very low wages in spite of rapid increase in the value of agricultural produce due to price-rise. Besides, the land-
less agricultural workers' demand that they should be given the ownership rights on the lands which they were actually cultivating but which belonged to other farmers, was also left out from the organisational campaign of the Khet Mazdoor Sabha. The inclusion of this demand, it was feared, would have resulted in the withdrawal of support by a large number of farmers to the Kisan Sabha.

The Khet Mazdoor Sabha, however, could not make much headway for want of effective leadership and, consequently, the landless agricultural workers continued to be represented by the Kisan Sabha till 1966 when its organisational activities were started again. In July 1966, the District Kisan Sabha launched an agitation for the distribution of land to landless workers and reduction in land revenue and irrigation charges. Nearly 250 workers of the Kisan Sabha were arrested during this agitation. The agitation was soon called off without achieving any tangible gains. Another agitation was launched in May 1968 with the same demands. This time it lasted for a few days. Attempts were made to occupy the waste land and land belonging to ex-landlords. According to the office-bearers of the District Kisan Sabha, about 50 acres of land occupied during the movement was still in the hands of occupants and their cases were pending for a decision by local authorities. Since then the District Kisan Sabha has been organising small meetings and demonstrations on the issues of distribution of land, lowering of land ceiling, and reduction in land revenue and irrigation rates.

The Khet Mazdoor Sabha held its first annual conference on 20 June 1969 at village Jhalotar in Unnao. The convener of the Khet Mazdoor Sabha was one Bansilal, a devoted Communist leader of Makur village. The conference demanded: (a) immediate steps by the government to distribute all surplus land to landless people; (b) severe action against those ex-landlords and police officials who were terrorising and exploiting the scheduled caste people; and (c) eviction of all ex-landlords and other influential persons who had illegally occupied surplus waste and forest land in different parts of the district.

The movement for the distribution of land to landless persons was launched in January 1970. The leaders of the Khet Mazdoor Sabha and the Kisan Sabha adopted two major strategies. First, they organised meetings and demonstrations and sent several notices to the local authorities reiterating the demands of eviction of certain
influential people from the land which was illegally under their occupation and distribution of such and all other surplus land among the landless persons.\textsuperscript{63} Second, in areas where the village panchayats were either controlled by the Communists or were sympathetic towards them, the landless persons were directed to gradually and peacefully start cultivating waste and surplus lands. This was done without any publicity and propaganda lest they would be prosecuted. This strategy was unique and was totally different from the declared policy of the all-India and provincial bodies of the Kisan Sabha and the Khet Mazdoor Sabha. According to the leaders of these two organisations in Unnao district, this strategy was successful to a great extent and several hundreds of acres of land occupied by the landless people was later allotted to them by the authorities without much difficulty. However, the land so occupied constituted only a small fraction of the total land available for distribution, Hence, the Kisan Sabha, the Khet Mazdoor Sabha, and the Communist Party of Unnao jointly launched a movement for occupying the surplus land, described as "land grab movement". The movement, which commenced from 1 July 1970, could not be covered in this study since the field investigation was terminated at this point.

CONCLUSIONS

The above account of the emergence and working of the peasant movement in Unnao district during the past five decades leads to the following main conclusions.

1. The peasant movement, like the urban labour movement, owes its origin mainly to the worsening economic conditions of the peasantry and its exploitation by the landlords who had unlimited discretion under the existing feudal set-up. The main grievances of the peasantry, around which were centred their earlier protests, were insecurity of land rights, rack-renting, concealment of rents, nazrana, and forced labour. As in the case of industrial workers, the initial attempts on the part of the peasantry also had to encounter very strong and organised resistance from the landlords, who were favoured by the local government. Consequently, their effectiveness in terms of tangible results was very limited. This also led to the active involvement of political leaders in the movement.
2. From the very beginning, the leaders of the peasant movement adopted political methods to achieve the economic objective of betterment of the conditions of peasantry. The movement started in the form of "no-rent campaign" which was an integral part of the civil disobedience movement launched by the Indian National Congress. The leaders of the movement, it is significant to note, belonged mainly to the category of small landlords and well-to-do farmers who had joined the Congress. The Congress was, at that time, essentially an organisation of the peasants, who formed the overwhelming majority of the masses and whose support was crucial for the success of the freedom struggle. Therefore, almost every programme of the Congress, before the achievement of Independence, was aimed at securing justice for, and betterment of, the peasants. The conflict, thus, was mainly between the Congress on the one hand and the British government on the other, both trying to protect the interests of the peasants and the landlords respectively. Active and continuing intervention of the government in disputes between the peasants and the landlords reduced the directness of confrontation between the latter. However, instances of direct confrontation between the tenants and the landlords at the local level, occasionally resulting in violence, were not too infrequent.

The study demonstrates that violence was probably the natural outcome of the existing socio-economic and political structure. While the landlords were in easy reach of police protection and help against the tenants, the latter constituted more or less an isolated mass who, in a desperate bid to resist their exploitation, often adopted militant tactics. The smaller tenants without any security of tenure, who constituted a huge majority, had not much to lose because of their extremely bad socio-economic conditions and due to the active support made available by the Congress leaders. Indeed, their efforts were successful, to a great extent, in making the government realise the need for paying serious attention towards their problems. This ultimately led to the enactment of several statutes providing some protection, however inadequate, to the tenantry.

3. It is a well-known fact that in the history of labour movements in different countries of the world, the first among the industrial workers to organise were those who were relatively in higher income and occupational levels and were located in more developed sectors. Our
study supports this trend in India, too. Our study reveals that the somewhat better sectors of the peasantry played a key role in organising the peasantry in Unnao, and the most depressed classes of the peasantry, *i.e.*, landless agricultural workers, were always under-represented. Further, those individuals who were socially, culturally, and economically better off, as compared to other groups of people, furnished leadership and active workers to the movement. Thus, political leaders, who were mainly lawyers, better-off peasants, traders, and medical practitioners, have been playing an important and dominating role in the peasant movement in Unnao.

4. The history of the peasant movement in Unnao suggests that it is perhaps much more difficult to control and discipline the tenantry, once their expectations are raised, than to motivate them to the movement. The period between 1937 and 1939, when the Congress government was in office, witnessed several serious cases of violent actions on the part of the peasants even when these were not authorised by the leadership. These actions of the groups of peasants in different parts of the district may well be compared with a spate of unauthorised and lightning strikes by industrial workers in the neighbouring district of Kanpur during the same period. The hypothesis that the actions of the peasantry of Unnao might have been influenced by the happenings on Kanpur trade union scene appears to be correct. The massive demonstration by the peasants of Unnao at Lucknow on 1 March 1938, against the wishes of the Provincial Congress Committee, to demand the speedy enactment of tenancy legislation, was actively supported by the Communist trade union leaders of Kanpur, and a large number of Kanpur mill workers had also joined it. Moreover, this was the period when the Communists had started openly working among the industrial workers and the peasantry in Kanpur and Unnao respectively; most of the Communist workers active in the peasant movement in Unnao had received their education and training at Kanpur. By the time the Congress government resigned in 1939, when the Second World War broke out, the Communists were successful in creating a strong base both in Kanpur and in Unnao. The experience of Unnao during this and the subsequent periods clearly supports the hypothesis that the peasantry in general is more likely to be carried away by militant leadership, mainly belonging to the Communist or other radical ideologies, than by the policy of modernisation.
In Unnao, however, the key leader of the Congress party adopted a radical philosophy *vis-a-vis* the peasants with the result that any serious clash of interest between the two otherwise divergent political ideologies was avoided.

5. The peasant movement in Unnao, as represented through the Kisan Sabha organisation, is currently in the hands of the Communist Party of India, following the Dange-Ahmed faction. The leaders of the Congress as well as of other political parties, notable among them being Praja Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, and Bharatiya Kranti Dal, in Unnao claim to be serving the cause of the peasantry, including landless agricultural workers, through the programmes of their respective parties. The well-being of the peasantry, no doubt, constitutes the main thrust in their respective election manifestoes and programmes. However, this is essentially so because these sections constitute the vast majority of electorate in the district. None of these political parties has any organisation to effectively represent the case of the peasants. Hence, inter-organisational rivalry in the peasant movement in Unnao is almost absent. The extreme left wing of the Communist leadership, which is opposed to the Dange-Ahmed faction, has some pockets of influence in the district, but these are ineffective.

6. Though the movement has been free from inter-organisational conflicts, which characterise the trade union movement in the country in general, there is some evidence of intra-organisational leadership conflict in the Kisan Sabha. This, to some extent, is to be expected in any mass organisation of this nature. However, what is peculiar about the peasant movement in Unnao is the fact that leaders, after being active in the movement for some time, tend to become inactive at the local level and want to keep their base in the city office. Some prominent leaders have moved out of the district and have made their base at the Kisan Sabha office at Lucknow. This tendency, to our mind, may pose a serious problem for the movement in the coming years. In the absence of new and active leadership emerging to replace the old one, the strength and effectiveness of the movement are likely to decline. The effects are already being felt as was revealed by our discussions with the local leadership. Except for the “land grab movement”, which has activated the movement and which has brought about a unity of action between the Kisan Sabha and the Khet
Mazdoor Sabha, the movement has been relatively inactive during the past one decade. There is, therefore, an urgent need for creating and adequately training new set of leaders from among the rank and file to work among the peasantry with a view to keeping the movement effective and to sustain the interest and confidence of the peasants in it.

7. The peasants and landless agricultural workers in Unnao seem to be fast losing their faith in peaceful means of action. The change in their attitude and approach in favour of not-so-peaceful methods is already being reflected in their recent activities. Some of the prominent leaders of the CPI, whom we interviewed during the course of our study, clearly indicated the possibility of the entire peasant movement in the district passing into the hands of extreme-left faction if immediate and substantive measures were not taken by the government to eliminate the "existing evils" of the "discarded feudal system" and to improve the conditions of rural people through reduction in land revenue and irrigation rates; proper distribution, in adequate quantity, of the improved varieties of seeds and fertilizers; liberal distribution of government loans to the peasants; construction of tube-wells and other minor and more reliable sources of irrigation; and quick distribution of land to landless agricultural workers in the district. A few leaders even expressed their intentions to join and intensify the Naxalite movement in the district at a suitable time.

8. Like the urban labour movement, the peasant movement, too, has a tendency to develop, through stages, from generalism to particularism. The landless agricultural labourers, as we have discussed, found it difficult to bring about a rapid and material change in their conditions from within the Kisan Sabha. Consequently, they had to organise themselves into a separate organisation.

9. The success and failure of any organisation and movement may be considered in terms of two separate implications: survival as a movement and organisation, and realisation of the goal. The peasant movement in Unnao, as described above, may be regarded as "partly successful" in both the respects. It has been "partly successful" because while the movement did survive many periods of crisis, it does not seem to have grown in terms of organisational strength and effectiveness. This is clearly reflected in its present status. It is also a partial success because, while some of the demands of the movement have been
conceded by the government, it has yet to accomplish its broader goal of removing economic inequities in the agrarian sector through radical land reform measures and through redistribution of land. It is towards the realisation of this broader goal that the peasant movement in Unnao, or for that matter in India, is geared to. Historically, the movement has played an important role in bringing about a change in the then existing feudal, political and economic system. However, it has not played a leading role in this process due to its own weaknesses resulting from low economic and social status of the peasants. The movement has been more successful in those periods when the government has had to encounter external pressures. The fulfilment of peasants' demands was, therefore, viewed more as a strategy for overcoming the avoidable outbreak of violence than anything else.

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