

# State Politics in Contemporary India

Crisis or Continuity?

*Edited by*

**John R. Wood**



## About the Book and Editor

*State Politics in Contemporary India:  
Crisis or Continuity?*  
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Although the Congress Party has dominated Indian national politics in recent years, a more uncertain picture has emerged at the level of India's twenty-two states. Tensions resulting from modernization and increased popular participation in politics have aroused unprecedented factionalism in Congress-run states and brought opposition parties to power in others; in a few states, democratic government has been forced to a standstill. Prior to her assassination in October 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi strove to control state politics, but her efforts brought charges of interference and manipulation and, in some states, triggered massive violence.

Does this unrest point to a profound crisis in the politics of the world's most populous democracy? The evidence from some of the states suggest a continuation of past trends while current developments in others seem more ominous. The articles in this book examine the politics of seven of India's major states during the Indira Gandhi years to assess the effects of central government's intervention and the intensification of political conflict. Among the themes covered are the political results of social and economic change, the rise of previously disadvantaged groups in politics, struggles over agrarian benefits, electoral strategies and performance, the fragmentation and "de-institutionalization" of political parties, and the changing nature of the relations between the states and the central government.

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## 2

# Division in the Congress and the Rise of Agrarian Interests and Issues in Uttar Pradesh Politics, 1952 to 1977

*Paul R. Brass*

The years 1967 to 1969 form a major divide in the post-Independence history of the Congress in U.P., which turned out to have even broader implications in the developing struggle for power in the country.<sup>1</sup> Not only did the Congress lose power in the state for the first time, but the party split three ways, the Congress base in the countryside was severely damaged, and a new party was formed, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) of Charan Singh, that later formed the core of the Janata coalition that defeated the Congress in the 1977 parliamentary elections. The political struggles of the years after 1967 also brought more clearly to the fore than previously some basic issues of economic development strategy and of the role of agriculture and agrarian interests in the economic development of the country.

The manner in which these striking changes emerged out of the factional conflicts that had dominated the Congress in U.P. during the preceding two decades also provides insights concerning the relationship between power struggles and policy issues in Indian politics and in politics generally. The struggle of personalities and factions that became articulated also into a struggle of policies and principles developed in two stages in the two years between 1967 and 1969. In the first stage, Charan Singh outwitted and outmaneuvered C.B. Gupta, the dominant leader in the state Congress at the time, to become the first non-Congress chief minister of the state on April 3, 1967. Gupta, the man of organization and of patronage, who built a formidable Congress political machine in this

huge state through close attention to and cultivation of personal relationships was defeated by Charan Singh, who stood forth as a symbol of personal integrity, with a clear economic policy and a distinctive support base among the middle peasantry and backward castes in the state. The second stage began in 1969, when the Congress split and C.B. Gupta formed the Congress(O) and Charan Singh the BKD, leaving the Congress(I) in U.P. in the hands of Kamalapati Tripathi. In this stage it became clear that only one of the three former Congress factional leaders, Charan Singh, had a mass base and that his challenge to the Congress in this critical state was so formidable as to require the strong and repeated intervention of Mrs. Gandhi and the development of new Congress programs and policies to counter the appeal of the BKD in the countryside. Clear evidence of the mass base of the new political party of Charan Singh was provided in the mid-term election of 1969 when the BKD won 89 seats with more than 21 percent of the vote, a larger share of both seats and votes than that won by any other non-Congress party in the state in any election since Independence. As a consequence of the new challenge posed by the BKD to a Congress weakened in the electorate and reduced in strength in the legislature from its days of dominance in the 1950s and 1960s, agrarian issues and interests became more central than they had been during the Nehru period and it became necessary for competing political forces to pay closer attention to the distinctive interests of different social classes and castes in the north Indian countryside. Agrarian issues and interests also acquired increased importance during these years, which were the early years in the spread of the high yielding varieties of wheat and rice that came to be called the "Green Revolution."

In politics, it is normally the case that policy issues provide a cover behind which struggles for power take place that do not always follow the same lines as the issue struggles. In U.P. for two decades after Independence, there were two lines of conflict within the Congress: a persistent struggle for control over the party organization by rival factional groups and a policy question concerning the role of the peasantry in the economic development of the state. What is remarkable about Congress politics in those days is the extent to which social and policy conflicts were kept hidden under a cover of struggle for power that cut across the social and policy differences separating the main contenders.

Throughout the first twenty years of Congress dominance in U.P. politics, Charan Singh spoke consistently in internal conflicts within the party on behalf of the values of village life, peasant economy, backward castes, and rural democracy. However, he did so mostly in private



memoranda and letters, through anonymous press releases, and through books not meant for a mass audience. Only after his defection from the Congress and the formation of the BKD did he present his ideas in public manifestoes and policy statements. In Charan Singh, therefore, we have the case of a man who held a consistent and coherent ideological view, but did not break from a party with whose policies he was in fundamental disagreement until such a break could bring him into power directly. However, when he did make the break, his move led to a transformation of the terms of political debate, of conflict in the countryside, and of the struggle for power in U.P. and at the Center.

### FACTIONAL GROUPS IN THE U.P. CONGRESS, 1952 TO 1969

Between 1952 and 1969, Congress politics in party and in government in U.P. were characterized by persistent internal group factionalism which focused around the activities of three leading personalities — C.B. Gupta, Charan Singh, and Kamalapati Tripathi. The three principal groups differed considerably in their leadership styles and composition, in the competence and effectiveness of their leadership, in their regional support bases, and in the social forces supporting them. The core leadership of the Gupta group came principally from urban groups, most notably from the Bania caste category. However, through skillful forging of alliances with powerful rural leaders from the leading rural castes and through the liberal distribution of party and government patronage, a state-wide network was established for this group which remained the strongest in the Congress until the split in 1969. Once deprived of access to both party and government patronage, however, the social base of the group proved to be narrow and the Gupta group did not emerge as a powerful force in its reincarnation as the Congress(O).

In contrast to the Gupta group, Charan Singh and his closest allies and followers were identified with rural peasant interests and values. Although Charan Singh in the Congress never developed a political machine based on patronage ties comparable to that of C.B. Gupta, he did develop a network of relationships in the districts, particularly among the middle caste groups in the state — Jats and Yadavs especially. He also developed for himself a reputation as a man of integrity, action and clear direction in favor of peasant-based agricultural development, especially in the Jat and middle peasant-dominated districts of western U.P. His network of relationships and his personal reputation stood him far better than C.B. Gupta's political skills when Charan Singh left the Congress to

form his own party. In contrast to the Gupta group's fate in opposition, Charan Singh's BKD, formed in 1969, emerged in two successive elections as the second strongest party in the state with a strong rural base and with considerable urban support as well.

It is somewhat of an irony that the least cohesive group with the least skillful leadership emerged ultimately in control of the U.P. Congress organization. Tripathi rode to power as chief minister in 1971 only after both Gupta and Charan Singh had departed from the Congress and only on the back of Mrs. Gandhi. He remained in power for more than two years, but he left office in discomfort after a mutiny of the state police forces in 1973 that had to be suppressed by the Indian Army. He was replaced by one of his erstwhile, but none too faithful followers, H.N. Bahuguna, who remained in power until February 1976, when his own ineffectiveness as a leader and his egocentric behavior led Mrs. Gandhi to remove him also. Bahuguna was the last "political" Congress chief minister of the state before the Emergency. He was replaced by an "Emergency-type" figure, Narayan Dutt Tiwari, a policy-oriented but totally non-political man who lacked any political base of his own.

Under the control of Mrs. Gandhi and the amorphous Tripathi-group forces, the composition of the leadership became much less diverse than it had ever before been. Although Mrs. Gandhi in U.P. and elsewhere attempted with some success to identify the Congress with the interests of the poor and the low castes, the state and district leadership of the Congress in U.P. became much more of a Brahmin affair than ever before. Tripathi, Bahuguna, and Tiwari were all Brahmins. Five of the fifteen cabinet ministers in Tripathi's government (including Tripathi) were Brahmins. Thirty-eight of the 75 District Congress Committee (DCC) and City Congress Committee presidents in 1973 also were Brahmins. The most notable underrepresentation was of the middle proprietary castes. There were no Jat presidents, only two Yadavs, and only two Kurmis.<sup>2</sup>

## AGRARIAN INTERESTS AND THE U.P. GOVERNMENT IN THE 1950s

During the long period of Congress dominance, agrarian interests in the U.P. government were represented most strongly by Charan Singh and his allies and followers. In the first post-Independence government of Pandit Pant, Charan Singh was Minister for Revenue. In that capacity,

he became the principal architect of that government's major piece of legislation, the famous Zamindari Abolition Act, which abolished the system of intermediaries in the collection of land revenue in U.P. and attempted to establish in place of the old and complicated system of land tenures a uniform pattern of land ownership based on an ideal of peasant proprietorship on personally-cultivated landholdings of moderate but economic size. While his colleagues in the Pant ministry were establishing bases in the party organization through the use of government patronage, Charan Singh was following a somewhat different course. He did not hold portfolios that controlled important sources of patronage. He did, however, differ from his colleagues in having a strong policy orientation, with an emphasis on protection of the middle peasantry, with whose interests he became identified increasingly over time.

Although it was not publicized at the time and it did not divide the government significantly, Charan Singh differed with Pandit Pant and the rest of his cabinet on an issue affecting the interests of the peasantry in February, 1953 when the cabinet voted to increase irrigation rates by 50 percent. Charan Singh, in a note to the Chief Minister dated February 7, 1953, pressed for reconsideration of this decision and used arguments which identified him clearly as a spokesman for three interests — rural interests over urban, western region peasants over eastern region peasants, and peasants who took up full proprietary rights under the Zamindari Abolition Act (*bhumidhars*) against those who did not (*sirdars*).<sup>3</sup> On the first point, he argued against the assumptions of his colleagues that rural areas were undertaxed in relation to urban areas. On the second point, he argued against excessive burdens of taxation on irrigated lands, which were more numerous in his own western region than in the poorer eastern region of the state. On the third point, he proposed that, instead of increasing irrigation rates by 50 percent, they be increased by only one-third, but that the land revenue of the *sirdars* also be increased by one-third. In making this third proposal, Charan Singh was also indicating his pique against the majority of the tenantry who had refused to take advantage of the provision in the Zamindari Abolition Act to establish themselves as *bhumidhars* by making a one-time payment equivalent to ten times their land revenue, in exchange for which they received a 50 percent reduction in land revenue and permanent, heritable, and transferable right to their lands. Although Charan Singh's proposal was not accepted, his behavior on this issue was characteristic of him and indicative of the role that he would continue to play in the politics of the state. That role was one as an independent and cantankerous gadfly, standing forth alone against his colleagues in defence of the interests of

the peasant proprietors of the state, particularly those of his own western region.

By the time Pandit Pant left for the central government in 1955, two lines of conflict were developing in the Congress. One involved a non-ideological struggle for control over the party organization among the second rank of Congressmen who were coming to prominence in the post-independence period. The second involved the broad policy question of the role of the peasantry in the economy of the state and the extent to which the peasantry should be taxed to provide resources for economic development. Neither of these problems affected the stability of Pant's government, but they were to figure in the stability of every government that followed.

Pandit Pant was replaced as chief minister of the state by Dr. Sampurnanand who, though a Kayastha, led a group that was solidly based upon the rural support of elite castes in the countryside, particularly the Brahmins, who predominated in the leadership of the group in the districts as well as in the state government. Sampurnanand himself was quite explicit in private in his wish to appeal to the rich and well-born. In a secret note presented by Sampurnanand during Pandit Pant's tenure as chief minister at a meeting of ministers held to discuss the defeats of Congress candidates in by-elections in 1953, Sampurnanand complained that Congress policies had antagonized the zamindars, middle class tenants who feared the loss of their lands, village patwaris, and primary school teachers whose demands had not been accepted.<sup>4</sup> He remarked,

It comes to this that we have antagonized every class which has so far possessed education, wealth, social status and, consequently, influence . . . .

The classes to which I have referred above belong, in general, to the Brahmin, Rajput, Bhumihar, Kayastha and Vaishya communities, namely the . . . "higher castes." The measures which we have adopted, and apparently intend soon to adopt, have had the definite tendency of affecting adversely the interests of the higher castes who, it must be remembered have, in general, been the people from whom the Congress has derived the greatest measure of support in the past. They have been culturally affiliated to our leadership and we have come to office literally on their shoulders.

Sampurnanand went on to argue that Congress policies had benefited mainly the landless and very small landholders who belong to backward classes and whose frustration "keeps them apart from others." These groups, he insisted, "instinctively distrust the great mass of Congress leadership" and, therefore, were not likely to support the Congress no matter what benefits the Congress government allocated to them.

Standing apart from both the urban-financed organizational machine of C.B. Gupta and the rural elite-based forces of Sampurnanand and his followers was Charan Singh. Although it is clear that the initial source of Charan Singh's discontent with Dr. Sampurnanand arose from the fact that he was denied the important Agriculture portfolio that he ultimately held under the Pant government, Charan Singh articulated his opposition to Sampurnanand in specific policy terms. He rejected the portfolios of Transport and Cooperation that were offered to him in January, 1955, but kept the important portfolio of Revenue because he wished to use that department to complete "the picture of rural democracy that has been established in our countryside,"<sup>5</sup> to extend land reforms to the few areas still untouched by the Zamindari Abolition Act, and to begin the work of consolidation of landholdings. He also argued that the state was heading towards bankruptcy under Sampurnanand's government, that the government was providing favors to big industrialists at the expense of the general public, that the bureaucracy had expanded and bureaucratic corruption had increased, that food production had declined, and that consolidation of landholdings had been stopped. During this period also, Charan Singh placed himself on record in opposition to the Congress policy of encouraging joint cultivation in agriculture. In a statement prepared in connection with his resignation on April 21, 1959, but never delivered, Charan Singh summed up part of the reasons for his opposition to Sampurnanand as follows:

We have all to accept one fundamental truth. In the conditions of our State or country no man can truly serve the people unless he knows the villages and understands the problems of the villages. Towns will go into ruins if the villages do not prosper. But, unfortunately, for Uttar Pradesh, the villages are a sealed book to its Chief Minister.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, in his criticisms of the Sampurnanand government Charan Singh was putting himself forth as the defender of rural society, "rural democracy," and peasant proprietorship against both the interests of

industrialists and business groups and misguided reformers who proposed joint farming and had no genuine understanding of village life. He also established for himself in the party organization a reputation for defending the interests of the backward castes against the dominance of the elite caste groups favored by Sampurnanand. In the disputes over selection of Congress candidates to contest the 1957 elections, Charan Singh supported the claims of backward caste persons, especially the Yadavs, but all the backward castes in general. Thus, in his policy positions and in his political actions, Charan Singh continued to carve out a unique position for himself as the defender of rural values, of peasant proprietorship, and of the backward cultivating castes.

Charan Singh continued to play the same role in the first government of C.B. Gupta, which came to power in 1960. The major policy issue that arose during the Gupta government concerned a proposal, introduced in response to demands from the Planning Commission to the state governments to increase revenue from agriculture, to impose a surcharge of 50 percent on the land revenue in U.P.<sup>7</sup> Charan Singh opposed this proposal in the cabinet meetings held to discuss the issue, in an extensive and increasingly bitter confidential correspondence with the chief minister after the decision was taken, and in a forty-page note prepared by him that placed the specific taxation issue in the context of the entire rural and urban economy of U.P. In these letters and statements, Charan Singh argued: 1) that the tax was an unjustifiable burden on the peasantry who, he insisted — against the prevailing notions — were already paying their full share of taxes in relation to urban classes and groups; 2) that, even if it were true, as proponents of the measure argued, that rural per capita income had increased, this did not justify a 50 percent increase in the land revenue; 3) even if the increase in rural incomes had been substantial, it was not wise to absorb it through taxation and, thereby, reduce the purchasing power of the peasantry, which would harm the entire economy; 4) the necessary resources could be acquired by other means than the proposed tax, such as through government economy or through an increased tax on urban incomes; and 5) an increase in the land revenue would be a political liability for the Congress.<sup>8</sup>

In place of the proposed 50 percent surcharge on the land revenue of all landholders, Charan Singh suggested a plan that he had for long wished to implement, namely, a new campaign to persuade *sirdars* (tenants of the state) to acquire *bhumidhari* (full proprietary) rights in their lands by paying in advance a single payment of ten times their land revenue. As for those *sirdars* who still refused to acquire *bhumidhari* rights, Charan

Singh proposed that their land revenue be increased by one-third. In an exchange of confidential correspondence with C.B. Gupta on this proposal, Gupta responded: 1) that Charan Singh's own proposal contradicted his claim that the peasants had no taxable capacity since he was himself proposing that the poorer peasants pay an increased land revenue; 2) that arguments against the tax based on low rural per capita income figures were irrelevant since the new tax was to be levied only on landholders; 3) that rural people were paying far less than their fair share of taxes compared to urban residents; and 4) that the current incidence of land revenue was only two percent of the state agricultural income and the proposed tax would increase that proportion by only one percent. Moreover, Gupta argued that Charan Singh's proposals were designed to protect the interest of a privileged rural class, the *bhumidhars*, and to discriminate against urban classes.<sup>9</sup>

As the correspondence between Charan Singh and Gupta extended over the months between March and October, 1962, increasing emphasis was placed on the distinctions between rural and urban classes and on their incomes and taxable capacities. Charan Singh continued to argue that urban classes, even if they were paying higher taxes, could afford to do so because their incomes were much higher than rural incomes and that manufacturing, commercial, transport, and service sectors produced much larger surpluses than the agricultural sectors. Moreover, he pointed out that urban people received many amenities provided by the state that rural people did not, such as electricity, roads, railways, post and telegraph services, and the like. In the course of the correspondence, Charan Singh also revealed that his counter-proposal for saving state revenue through economy in government expenditure was directed in part at urban groups for he complained that, since Independence, the numbers of government servants had increased by three times and of gazetted officers by four times and he noted that "our official machinery, at least, in the higher reaches is overwhelmingly drawn from the cities." Gupta in reply again disagreed that urban people had a greater ability than rural people to absorb new taxes and pointed out that central government taxes also hit urban people more than rural people. Charan Singh's relentless opposition to the tax measure, however, and his symbolic framing of the issue as one involving a defence of rural life and rural economy persisted to the end, even after a compromise measure was introduced reducing the surcharge to 25 percent and exempting dwarf landholders and even after the Chinese attack of October 20, 1962, which put an end to the controversy for most politicians. However, Charan Singh wrote his last letter on the land tax issue to the then Home Minister of the Government

of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, on October 25, 1962, five days after the opening of the Sino-Indian war. In this last letter, Charan Singh regretted that he had to disturb the Home Minister at a time of national danger, but he appealed to him nevertheless to use his influence to have the land tax withdrawn and noted that the young fighting men of the country were mostly from the agricultural classes!

The dispute between Charan Singh and C.B. Gupta over the land tax issue revealed the presence in the Congress government of the state of two entirely distinct ideological perspectives on economic planning and development, which in turn presumed two different images of the future ideal society. Charan Singh stood forth on this issue, as always, as a person devoted to the ideal of developing a society based on a prosperous agricultural economy, in which the *bhumidhars* or peasant proprietors would be the leading class. Resources were not to be taken from the agricultural sector for the sake of projects that would benefit the urban sectors primarily, but rather the development of the urban-industrial sectors would depend upon increasing the prosperity of the peasantry and, hence, the purchasing power of the peasants. In contrast, C.B. Gupta defended the predominant view of Indian planning efforts and of the desirable future social order, which involved the goal of creating a modern industrial society and which was based on the presumption that it was necessary to extract resources from agriculture to support industrial development.

#### CHARAN SINGH AND THE IDEOLOGY OF PEASANT PROPRIETORSHIP

By this time, Charan Singh's views on Indian economic development and the place of agriculture in it were not only well-formed, but had been published in book form. In 1959, in response to the Nagpur Resolution of the Indian National Congress, which proclaimed as one of the principal goals of the Congress the establishment of large-scale cooperative farms in India as a means of solving India's agricultural problems, Charan Singh published his *Joint Farming X-Rayed: The Problem and Its Solution*.<sup>10</sup> Although the book takes off from the issue of cooperative farming and is an attack upon it, it is far more interesting as a positive statement and proposal for an economic development strategy for India based upon agricultural rather than industrial growth and as a defence of the system of peasant proprietorship as the most suitable form



of social organization to achieve both the economic goals of development and the political goals of democracy. It is also interesting for its criticism of every form of large-scale mechanized farming as completely unsuited for Indian conditions. The book was published at the height of the Nehru-era emphasis on an economic development model based upon rapid industrialization, with the agricultural sector providing food for the cities and revenue for plan projects.

Charan Singh's book is based upon three premises, which are defended and elaborated at length. The first premise is that capital-intensive industrialization is an inappropriate strategy for India. India's physical resources, he argued, were insufficient to sustain such a process in the manner of earlier developing countries, whereas its high population density required the creation of employment opportunities in both industry and agriculture through small-scale, low capital-intensive industrial development combined with a land-augmenting agricultural strategy calling for the investment of capital in agriculture, that is, for a capital-intensive strategy for agriculture in India, but without "large machinery."<sup>11</sup> Industrialization in India must not and cannot be based on the exploitation of existing agricultural resources but must be preceded by "a revolution in agricultural production — a technological revolution which will ensure far greater production per acre than to-day."<sup>12</sup> In order to achieve such an agricultural revolution, however, the priority given to industrialization in the first two plans would have to be reversed.<sup>13</sup>

Charan Singh's second premise is implicit in his first, namely, that land, being India's most valuable resource and also being scarce, must be used in such a way as to bring the greatest return possible and to provide "a living to a maximum number of people."<sup>14</sup> Capital also being scarce and labor abundant, what is required for India is an approach to agricultural development calling for capital investments that are both land-augmenting and labor-intensive in their impact, with the emphasis on increasing production per acre of land. In this strategy, it is the use of and return from the land that takes priority so that the approach is not simply capital-intensive and not merely labor-intensive either.

The bulk of the book then focuses upon elaborating the third premise, namely, that the most effective use of India's land and the solution of its economic problems lies in "an economy of small farms operated by animal, or . . . manual power."<sup>15</sup> Charan Singh's defence of this premise was based upon evidence he found from various sources that "an increase in the size of the farm does not lead to greater production per

acre."<sup>16</sup> Rather, he argued that available evidence demonstrated that maximum productivity per acre on family farms using manual and animal labor was achieved on farms of a size between 2.5 and 27.5 acres. Charan Singh insisted that a system of peasant cooperatives would provide the peasantry "all the benefits and technical advantages of a large-scale undertaking" while still retaining the "freedom or advantages of private property." The aim of agricultural policy in India should be not institutional reform through joint farming, but the provision to the farmer of technical and technological improvements, namely, "water, manure, improved seeds, pesticides and better farming practices in general."<sup>17</sup> Noticeably left out of this list were chemical fertilizers, which Charan Singh considered a poor substitute for organic manure because of their tendency to "give rise . . . to a number of plant maladies" which cannot be adequately controlled even with the use of insecticides and pesticides.<sup>18</sup> Also left off the list were tractors and other large-scale machinery which, Charan Singh argued, increase output per worker but not per acre and which also cause erosion of the soil and depletion of soil nutrients. Although Charan Singh has modified his opposition to the use of chemical fertilizers in recent years, he has continued to argue for maximal use of organic manure in preference to fertilizers and he has maintained unequivocally his opposition to mechanized farming in India.<sup>19</sup> Charan Singh opposed mechanization because, he thought, it did not increase productivity per acre, because it would displace labor when there was already a serious problem of rural unemployment and under-employment, because there was "no work in the sphere of agriculture that human or animal labour cannot perform," and because the necessary labor "to complete any farm operation in the quickest possible time" can easily be procured in Indian villages.<sup>20</sup> Charan Singh was not arguing against the "use of all machines by the peasant farmers." Any machine which lightened the peasant's "drudgery" and increased his "efficiency and productivity" without displacing human or animal labor was to be welcomed, but "the all-purpose tractor" clearly did not fit this description.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in a telling remark made long before the spiraling increases in petroleum prices, Charan Singh argued that it would be sheer "lunacy" to plan for an agricultural economy dependent on external fuel and foreign exchange resources.<sup>22</sup>

What the Indian peasantry required was a knowledge of "improved techniques" of agriculture relevant to Indian conditions, credit, and capital inputs into irrigation. However, Charan Singh argued against the emphasis on large-scale dams and irrigation systems and on tubewells and insisted instead that capital should be invested in masonry wells "fitted

with Persian wheels, and other small irrigation works." The larger irrigation works tied up large amounts of capital for too long and either were not accessible to the small cultivator, as in the case of tubewells, or took so long to complete that, by the time they were ready to provide water to farmers' fields, "the wealth they will produce, distributed evenly among the people, would leave them no better off than they were before."<sup>23</sup>

Charan Singh's defence of peasant agriculture in India was based not only on economic and ecological grounds, but also on ideological and political grounds. In an agricultural society, he insisted, democracy was dependent upon the existence of small farms. Large farms, whether capitalist or collectivist, were inimical to democracy. In large capitalist farms, the few give orders to the many. In collective farms, bureaucratic control, compulsion, and political propaganda restrict the liberty of the cultivators and are used to extract capital from them for large-scale industrialization.<sup>24</sup> Both types of big farms inevitably involve concentration of power and the direction of farm operations by a few, offering to the peasantry the prospect of a countryside "turned into huge barracks or gigantic agricultural factories."<sup>25</sup> In contrast, peasants and peasant agriculture offer the greatest support for democracy for "where the worker himself is the owner of the land under his plough," the people will be independent in "outlook and action," conservative but not reactionary, non-exploitative, giving orders to none and taking orders from none. A "system of family-size farms" offers stability also "because the . . . peasant has a stake in his farm and would lose by instability."<sup>26</sup>

It should also be noted, of course, that Charan Singh's proposals favor a particular social class or group of classes, namely, the locally dominant landed proprietors in the countryside who, according to the 1971 agricultural census, constitute approximately one-third of the landholding classes and control approximately 70 percent of the land.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Charan Singh's policies have never offered much hope for the marginal farmers with less than a hectare of land or for the landless. Although he has argued for placing a maximum limit of 27.5 to 30 acres of land on the permissible holding of a farm family, he has never advocated large-scale redistribution of surplus land either to the marginal farmers or to the landless. Instead, he advocated and, as Revenue Minister, implemented abolition of landlordism and granting of rights in the land to the actual cultivators, the taking away of land from families holding more than 30 acres per worker,<sup>28</sup> and the placing of restrictions on the acquisition and sale of lands to prevent large landholders from acquiring holdings above

27.5 acres. However, he did not argue for rigorous land ceiling legislation and redistribution of land. The BKD party manifesto in 1969 did call for a land ceiling of 27.5 acres and for redistribution of land to the landless and those holding less than 2.5 acres of land, but Charan Singh has never favored giving everybody "a patch of land to cultivate" and thereby increasing the number of poor peasants in the country. Rather, he has favored the development of small-scale industry to draw off the surplus labor force from the countryside and the maintenance of a stable, self-sufficient body of peasant proprietors cultivating economically viable holdings and free from the threat of "class conflict" aroused by "land hunger" among the poor and landless villagers.<sup>29</sup>

Despite his political disaffection from and his ideological disagreement with the Congress leadership and its policies in U.P. and in New Delhi, expressed so forcefully and coherently in *Joint Farming X-Rayed*, Charan Singh remained in the Congress and in the state government for several years more, serving as Minister of Agriculture until 1965 in the government of Sucheta Kripalani, which replaced that of C.B. Gupta, and as Minister for Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Forests, and Local Self-government until 1967. During this period, Charan Singh continued to disagree with the party leadership on matters of agricultural policy. His principal complaint during his tenure as Minister of Agriculture was that the division of responsibility at the ministerial level for various aspects of agricultural development, with such matters as credit, irrigation, and fertilizers each handled by different departments of government and not under the overall coordination of the agriculture ministry, made it impossible to develop a coherent agriculture policy to increase production.<sup>30</sup> As a result of his disagreements with the chief minister on this and other matters, the Agriculture portfolio was taken away from Charan Singh in 1965.

### AGRARIAN INTERESTS AND U.P. GOVERNMENTS IN THE POST-GREEN REVOLUTION PERIOD

It was not until after the 1967 elections and the formation of the second government of C.B. Gupta in a precariously balanced legislature that Charan Singh found the decisive political moment to break from the Congress. On April 1, 1967, Charan Singh and seventeen followers defected from the government and formed a coalition with nearly all the non-Congress parties in the legislature. On April 3, the first

non-Congress government in the state was formed with Charan Singh as chief minister. Between 1967 and 1971, Congress and non-Congress governments alternated in power, each successive government being either a coalition or minority government (see Table 2:1). During this period also, Charan Singh formed the BKD, a party with a specific appeal to the interests of the self-sufficient cultivating peasantry and with a manifesto that drew its leading ideas from Charan Singh's *Joint Farming X-Rayed*.

Opportunities for innovative agricultural policies were, however rather limited in this period because of the instability of governments. Moreover, although Charan Singh led two of the governments in the years between 1967 and 1971, the nature of the political issues affecting agriculture within the U.P. government changed substantially. Whereas in the Congress governments issues could often be framed in terms of the interests of the peasantry in general against urban, industrial, commercial, and bureaucratic interests, some of the issues that arose between 1967 and 1971 in the coalition governments that often included parties of both the Right and the Left had the potential for dividing the poor peasantry from the middle and rich peasants and the landless from the landowning peasantry. For example, two agriculture-related issues that divided the first government of Charan Singh concerned foodgrains procurement and abolition of land revenue. On the first issue, Charan Singh found himself faced with opposition from a big farmer lobby that demanded a reduction in the foodgrains procurement target. On the second issue, the Chief Minister was faced with a demand from the Left parties that would benefit principally the poorest peasants, would affect the middle peasantry only marginally, but would withdraw substantial revenue from the state exchequer. On the latter issue, Charan Singh, who had opposed any increase in land revenue by the C.B. Gupta government, now opposed also any reduction in it. Although he was compelled finally to compromise on both issues, his stands on both of them defined his position in relation to the various rural social classes more precisely. He favored a graduated procurement policy that drew most heavily from the biggest farmers. While he did not support any increases in land revenue, he saw no reason why the middle peasantry should not continue to pay the traditional, and very modest, land revenue charges that also provided the principal basis for maintaining the peasants' records of title to their lands. However, he did agree to abolition of the land revenue payment on small holdings.

During his second government, between February and October, 1970, Charan Singh promised that "all measures shall be taken to increase agricultural production." In his government, he said, "the interests of big

Table 2:1  
Governments of Uttar Pradesh, 1952 to 1976

Chief Minister	Date of Formation	Date of Termination	Governing Party or Coalition
1. Govind Ballabh Pant	May 20, 1952	Dec. 28, 1954	Congress
2. Dr. Sampurnanand	Dec. 28, 1954	Dec. 6, 1960	Congress
3. C.B. Gupta	Dec. 12, 1960	Oct. 1, 1963	Congress
4. Sucheta Kripalani	Oct. 2, 1963	Mar. 13, 1967	Congress
5. C.B. Gupta	Mar. 14, 1967	Apr. 1, 1967	Congress
6. Charan Singh	Apr. 3, 1967	Feb. 17, 1968	Coalition: Jana Congress, Jana Sangh, Swatantra, SSP, CPI, RPI, Independents
7. C.B. Gupta	Feb. 26, 1969	Feb. 10, 1970	Congress
8. Charan Singh	Feb. 17, 1970	Oct. 2, 1970	Coalition: BKD, Congress
9. T.N. Singh	Oct. 18, 1970	Mar. 30, 1971	Coalition: BKD, SSP, Congress(O), Jana Sangh, Swatantra
10. Kamalapati Tripathi	Apr. 4, 1971	June 12, 1973	Congress
11. H.N. Bahuguna	Nov. 8, 1973	Jan. 21, 1976	Congress

traders or businessmen and big industrialists or financiers shall be given a second place."<sup>31</sup> However, it was not possible for Charan Singh to frame the issues that arose during this period as exclusively between agriculture and big industry and big business. He adopted, partly by choice and partly because of pressure from other parties, positions that identified him with the interests of the middle peasantry as opposed to those of the big peasantry, on the one side, and the landless, on the other side. True to the position taken in the BKD party *Manifesto* for the 1969 elections, Charan Singh's government moved to reduce land ceilings from 40 acres to 30 acres. At the same time, however, he dealt very firmly with the "land grab" movement of the CPI and SSP, which sought by forcible action against the allegedly illegal holders of large estates to symbolize the plight of the landless and to grab lands for them. Nor, of course, did he move for a more radical reduction in land ceilings and for a major redistribution of land to the landless.

Charan Singh's second government was a coalition government with the Congress(I). It was marked by conflict, tension, and persistent maneuvering for advantage by the two parties throughout. During the eight months in which the government was in power, Mrs. Gandhi played an active role, directly and indirectly, in decisions concerning the fate of the U.P. government, which affected critically the fate of her rule and that of the Congress at the Center, which at that time was functioning with a precarious majority in Parliament. In fact, it was clear throughout that Kamalapati Tripathi, the state Congress leader, could take no initiative without consulting the Center. The fate of the U.P. government became, in effect, a contest between the political skills of Mrs. Gandhi and Charan Singh that presaged a similar contest in 1979 when Charan Singh became Prime Minister with the support of the Congress(I).

It is clear that the breakup of the coalition in U.P. related primarily to matters of power in Lucknow and Delhi, and especially to Mrs. Gandhi's anger over the unwillingness of the BKD members of parliament in the Rajya Sabha to support her attempt to abolish the privy purses of the princes. After its passage on September 2, 1970 in the Lok Sabha, the Twenty-Fourth Constitutional Amendment Bill, whose object was removal of the privy purses, failed by three votes to acquire the necessary two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha. Those three votes were in the hands of the BKD, whose three members in the upper house voted against the Amendment. It was this failure of support to Mrs. Gandhi in September, 1970 that brought the Charan Singh government down.

At the same time, several issues were also outlined during Charan Singh's government concerning agrarian and urban industrial interests in which the BKD and the Congress(I) leaders attempted to demarcate their own and their rivals' positions. Thus, the Congress insisted and Charan Singh agreed, "much against my better judgment . . . to abolition of land revenue on holdings of a size of 5 bighas or less simply in order to meet New Congress half-way."<sup>32</sup> Charges were traded concerning the postponement of nationalization of the sugar factories in the state, whether the postponement was the fault of the state or the central government, and whether or not such postponement indicated that the other side was captured by the millowners and, thereby, was deluding the peasantry.<sup>33</sup> On the issue of the privy purses, the Congress sought to portray the BKD as on the side of the former princes, whereas Charan Singh argued that the Congress stand was only a political stunt, that it represented a "breach of faith" of the original agreement, whose abrogation might ultimately threaten the right of "private ownership of property" in the country.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Charan Singh argued, the Congress was falsely putting itself forth as hostile to the former rulers when there were several ex-rulers in its ranks. Moreover, its attack on the privy purses diverted attention from its partiality to the "big capitalists and industrialists," whose income tax arrears alone were "equivalent to 180 times the amount of the privy purses."<sup>35</sup> Finally, Charan Singh pointed out that he had only recently proposed to Mrs. Gandhi that a law should be passed "demarcating the sphere of small and big industries" such that big industries in such sectors as textiles would be confined to export markets only while the supply of the internal market would be left to small-scale, labor-intensive industry, thereby solving the problems of rural unemployment. However, the Prime Minister's secretariat dismissed the proposal as impractical, which Charan Singh used as a basis for supporting his charge that "the old policy of laying emphasis on big or heavy industries and thus favouring the rich as compared with small enterprises . . . still continues."<sup>36</sup> Finally, to the charge made by the Congress that the BKD's opposition to abolition of the privy purses reflected its attachment to the "landed interests" generally, Charan Singh pointed with pride to his role in the enactment of the Zamindari Abolition Act in U.P. and his insistence that no loopholes be allowed in it that would permit ejection of tenants, as had happened in other parts of the country.<sup>37</sup>

Even if most of the charges and counter-charges are dismissed as political rhetoric, the two sides were taking quite different positions on major issues of agrarian and industrial policy. Charan Singh and the BKD adhered to the policy of promoting the interests of the



self-sufficient peasantry who, it was insisted, could afford to pay the modest traditional land revenue and who did not require and should not be permitted to hold more than 30 acres of land. The Congress, in contrast, succeeded in placing itself in the position of beneficiary of the marginal peasantry by compelling Charan Singh to accept elimination of land revenue payments on the smallest holdings. It also used the privy purses abolition issue symbolically against Charan Singh and the BKD to identify them with the big landed interests, which the Congress has continued to do ever since.<sup>38</sup>

The two sides also revealed fundamentally different positions on industry, employment, and property. The Congress did, in fact, adhere to its traditional position that large-scale industry was vital to the development of the country. It also revealed, in its willingness to abolish the privy purses of the princes through amendment of the provisions in the Constitution protecting private property, that it was not committed to private property as such. Charan Singh and the BKD, in contrast, presented themselves as in favor of protection of private property and small-scale industry.

Finally, there was also a somewhat subterranean issue that bobbed to the surface less prominently at this time, but has become increasingly important since then. Congressmen accused Charan Singh of favoring his own and other backward caste persons in administrative postings. He replied that, in fact, persons from these castes were hardly represented in the senior postings in "the entire administration" in U.P.<sup>39</sup> During the next decade, this issue of elite and backward caste representation recurred on several occasions and also linked naturally with the broader question of the support bases of the Congress and the BKD among elite and backward caste groups, respectively, in the U.P. countryside.

Charan Singh's second government was followed by another short-lived coalition government led by T.N. Singh, in which the BKD was the principal coalition partner in alliance with the Congress(O), Swatantra, the Jana Sangh, and the SSP. In this government, as in previous coalitions, the BKD and the SSP differed again on the land revenue issue. In his own government, a compromise had been worked out that exempted land holdings of less than 3 1/8 acres from payment of land revenue, but the T.N. Singh government under pressure from the SSP agreed to raise the exemption to 6 1/4 acres.

The T.N. Singh government was defeated in the U.P. Legislative Assembly on March 30, 1971 and was followed by a succession of Congress governments. During the restoration of Congress rule between 1971 and 1977, the U.P. and the central governments passed several measures and adopted positions that identified the party more with the poorer peasantry and the landless than with the middle peasantry. For example, the Congress in this period passed new land ceiling legislation that reduced land ceilings to 18 acres of irrigated land per family and reduced the range of the ceiling for non-irrigated or otherwise less productive land from 17 to 60 hectares per family. During the Emergency, the enforcement of land ceilings was one of the 20 points. The U.P. government moved more vigorously in the implementation of the ceiling laws during the Emergency, especially against former big zamindars and talukdars, than previous governments in this state.

It was during this period of restored Congress rule that the government of U.P., along with other states, took over the wholesale trade in wheat, a move which antagonized not only the traders but all peasants with a marketable surplus. On the other hand, the Congress government made specific efforts to provide benefits to the rural poor, the landless and the small farmers. Funds were provided for rural public works projects. Housing sites were allotted to Scheduled Caste persons. Greater efforts were made to provide government jobs for Scheduled Caste persons. The implementation of land ceiling legislation was directed largely to providing surplus land to the landless, especially from the Scheduled Castes. Wells were dug in Scheduled Caste villages to ensure adequate supplies of drinking water. Small and marginal farmers also became special objects of attention by the Congress governments in this period as the Small Farmers Development Agency and the Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labour Agency came into operation to provide subsidies to the small and marginal farmers for agricultural loans, to spread knowledge of the new agricultural technology among them, and to provide them with help in developing new sources of income through such activities as "dairy-farming, poultry, piggery, sheep and goat rearing."<sup>40</sup>

During this period, the BKD was the principal opposition party and Charan Singh the Leader of the Opposition in the U.P. Legislative Assembly. In several debates in the assembly during the chief ministership of Kamalapati Tripathi, the differences between the Congress and the BKD on agrarian issues were made clear. In his speeches in the assembly, Charan Singh pursued the general themes raised in his *Joint Farming X-Rayed*.<sup>41</sup> He insisted that economic development in the

country, especially in U.P., had been unsatisfactory because too much emphasis had been placed on the development of heavy industries and too little on agriculture. This emphasis had been "inspired," Charan Singh charged, "by Soviet or socialist ideology." Whereas Nehru himself had "realised his mistake" at the end of his life, his daughter, Mrs. Gandhi, continued to pursue "the old policies."<sup>42</sup> While some large-scale industries were no doubt necessary, the government was misguided in permitting new textile factories to be set up that deprived handloom operators from the possibility of a livelihood. Urban residents had benefited more from such economic development as there had been, leading to disparities in the incomes of the rural and urban populations to the disadvantage of the former. Among the greatest beneficiaries of "economic development" had been the government employees, who were continually being given excessive pay increases that were eating up a huge portion of the state budget.

The government should reverse its policies, Charan Singh argued, and provide non-agricultural, non-governmental employment by promoting the production of mass consumption goods through cottage industries. Big factories should not be permitted to compete with the small-scale sector in such production for the domestic market. The salaries of government employees should be frozen.

Charan Singh also criticized some of the specific policy measures adopted by the Congress in these years on behalf of Scheduled Castes and the landless. The BKD did not oppose the reduced land ceilings introduced by the Congress, but Charan Singh criticized several features of the new legislation. He argued against introducing the legislation with "retrospective effect" because that would "undo genuine transfers also [in addition to bogus transactions] and unsettle people's mind in regard to their property rights." Insofar as redistribution of any land made surplus was concerned, he supported preference for Scheduled Castes, but proposed that beneficiaries should be persons holding less than a hectare, who should be given a full hectare of land, that is, enough for a viable holding.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, he argued that reducing the land ceiling and distributing surplus land was an inadequate substitute for a policy of promoting rural industries that would provide employment to the poor because there was not sufficient land to distribute. He also castigated a government proposal to bring about a "White Revolution" by giving every landless and Scheduled Caste person a milch animal as based upon pure ignorance.

Charan Singh also opposed the takeover of the wholesale trade in wheat, which he predicted would hurt the grower and would lead to administrative corruption. He also argued that the procurement prices for wheat of Rs. 72 to 74 per quintal to be offered to the growers were too low and should be a minimum of Rs. 90. Higher prices to the grower were necessary because the cost of inputs for irrigation, power, and fertilizer had gone up. For the same reasons, he argued, it was improper for the government to impose a "development levy on the farmers in Uttar Pradesh."<sup>44</sup> He criticized especially the imposition by government of a tax on fertilizer and contrasted this unheard-of policy with central government policies to promote television production and purchase by giving a subsidy to buyers of television sets.

Caste issues also continued to be raised during this period. As Charan Singh had been accused during his chief ministership of being partial to the backward castes and of doing nothing for Harijans, so he accused the Tripathi government of pursuing casteist policies that favored Brahmins in appointments while atrocities against Harijans were being committed in increasing numbers in the countryside. The latter, Charan Singh argued, were directly attributable to the chief minister's "attitude towards castes which he considers lower than his own caste and his inefficiency."<sup>45</sup>

Two features of the debates in this period are especially worth noting. The first is the linkage between state and central government policies. Just as the politics of U.P. and the stability of the state government were a matter of the utmost concern for the central leadership and the intervention of the central leadership in state politics a matter critical to the political future of the state, so were the government's policies seen as interlinked. Pay increases given by the central government to its employees were criticized by Charan Singh as inevitably precipitating demands by state government employees for similar increases. State government neglect of agriculture and support for heavy industries were attributed to the central government and the leadership of the Nehru family, even though agriculture is primarily a state subject.

Second, economic and caste issues were also linked by both sides, directly and indirectly. The direct link focused around the status of the Scheduled Castes. Many Congress policies were specifically directed to the benefit of these castes in this period or to the poor and landless generally, the largest percentage of whom were from these castes. Charan Singh's argument that a reorientation of government policies and resources

to agriculture and rural employment would serve them better could only be seen as "pie in the sky" whatever its merits on economic grounds. In this respect, the Congress acquired an advantage in this period that has persisted to the present.

The indirect linkage of economic and caste issues arose out of the charges and counter-charges of casteism, that Charan Singh favored Jats and other backward castes while the Congress government favored Brahmin and other elite castes. Over the next decade, the linkage gradually became one of identifying Charan Singh's policies for the benefit of agriculture, high farm prices, and the backward castes as a policy to favor *kulaks*, whereas the Congress, which depended even more heavily on rich peasants and ex-landlord support, downplayed its reliance on these social forces while emphasizing its policies for the poor, the landless, and the Scheduled Castes.

It was during the period from 1967 to 1977, when both the representation of agrarian interests in the U.P. government and the type of agrarian issues that were articulated changed in the ways indicated above, that new resources were being put into agricultural development activities and demands were being made for even greater investments in agriculture as a consequence of the spread of the Green Revolution technology. For example, between the First Five Year Plan and the Fourth Plan, allocations for agricultural production programs increased from 2,663 lakhs of Rupees in the First Plan to 9,202 lakhs of Rupees in the Third Plan, doubling to 18,041 in the Fourth Plan. The bulk of this increased allocation went for minor irrigation projects, for which funding increased by a multiple of 18 from 580 lakhs in the First Plan to 5,749 in the Third Plan and 10,629 in the Fourth Plan. Dramatic increases also occurred in the allocations for irrigation and power development, which rose from 5,622 lakhs in the First Plan to 55,500 in the Fourth Plan, with those for power development alone going from 2,331 lakhs in the First Plan to 40,828 in the Fourth Plan.<sup>46</sup>

Although the absolute level of expenditures for agricultural production and irrigation and power increased greatly, only the allocations for irrigation and power showed a relative increase in relation to other plan sectors (as indicated in Table 2:2). It deserves to be especially noted, however, that the relative increases in the allocations for irrigation and power occurred at the expense not of industry, but of non-production-oriented aspects of rural development and social services. During the Fifth Plan, however, which began in 1973-74, during the

Table 2:2  
Percentage Distribution of Expenditure by Broad Sectors,  
First Through Fifth Plan Periods, Uttar Pradesh

Sectors	First Plan	Second Plan	Third Plan	Three Annual Plans	Fourth Plan	Fifth Plan
Agricultural production and allied programmes	19.14	17.05	19.14	25.57	19.23	18.40
Co-operation and Community Development	6.40	13.62	10.13	3.16	2.59	1.80
Irrigation and Power	36.66	35.21	39.01	50.34	52.13	43.10
Industry and Mining	4.16	5.54	3.72	3.94	4.18	4.50
Road and Road Transport	4.47	6.59	5.02	3.79	5.87	12.60
Social Services	29.17	19.47	18.32	11.04	13.69	19.30
Miscellaneous	—	2.52	4.66	2.16	2.31	0.50
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00*

\*Figures adjusted and rounded off to equal 100.00

Source: Government of Uttar Pradesh, Planning Department, *Draft Fifth Five Year Plan, 1974-79*. Vol. I (Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, 1973), pp. 73 & 291.

period of restored Congress rule, the allocation for social services, which provides most of the benefits for the rural poor, was increased once again to 19.3 percent of the total plan outlay while that for irrigation and power was reduced to 43.1 percent.

From the perspective of the government of U.P., therefore, the role of agrarian interests has changed over the past three decades in two important respects. During the long period of Congress dominance from 1947 to 1967, the Congress in U.P. followed the lead of the Center and emphasized in principle, if not in practice, economic development policies oriented towards large-scale industrialization and mechanized agriculture, to be financed by extraction of resources from the peasantry. These policies, however, were effectively blocked in U.P. even during the period of Congress dominance. Large-scale industrial development has been very limited in U.P. since Independence, the state government has been unable to tax the peasantry, and economic policies have increasingly been oriented toward providing agricultural inputs to the peasantry. The Green Revolution has been spreading since 1967 in this state, particularly in the wheat-producing regions. Allocations for agricultural development, particularly for minor and major irrigation projects and for power, have increased substantially.

The second important change has concerned the character of the agricultural issues that have divided the government. During the first period of Congress dominance, the principal issues affecting agriculture that arose within the government concerned the relative attention to be paid to rural and urban interests and to agriculture and industry. This period was also marked by the displacement of the former zamindars and talukdars by the middle and rich peasantry as the principal rural social force. Increasingly since 1967, however, as the non-Congress parties entered the government, issues arose within the government that concerned the relative attention to be paid to the needs and interests of different rural categories — particularly the interests of the middle and rich peasants who benefit most from the new agricultural technology as against the interests of the small and marginal farmers, on the one hand, and the interests of all the landed proprietors who employ agricultural labor against the landless and dwarf landholders, on the other hand.

## CONCLUSION

The conflicts and issues concerning the place of agriculture and the peasantry in Indian economic development that arose after the first displacement of the Congress from power in U.P. in 1967 and the rise of the BKD in 1969 have not only persisted but have become central issues in the struggle for power at the Center since 1977. The struggle for power in the north Indian countryside between the Congress on one side and the BKD, the Janata party, and the Lok Dal on the other side, has also continued. In the course of these struggles, which have become increasingly critical as the parliamentary election results have come to depend upon huge swings in the north, the Congress has pursued a political strategy of squeezing the middle peasantry between the former landlords and rich peasants, on the one hand, and the rural poor, on the other hand. The Congress has increasingly mobilized the support of the dominant castes of Brahmins, Rajputs, and Bhumihars, who continue to be the most powerful landed castes in the north Indian countryside, while providing ameliorative measures to the rural poor and landless, of which the latest in a long series of such measures is the Integrated Rural Development (IRD) program. Under the IRD programs, grants, subsidies, and loans are provided to the poor and landless for purchase of buffaloes, establishment of piggeries, purchase of carts, and the like.

Part of the strategy of the Congress, to which the press and many Indian intellectuals have contributed, is to brand Charan Singh and the Lok Dal as *kulaks* and to attempt to associate the backward castes and by inference the Lok Dal with various atrocities committed against the poor and landless in the countryside. In fact, if *kulaks* are defined as labor-employing rich peasants and farmers, hostile to the "rural proletariat" below them, such a class is far more powerful in the Congress than in the Lok Dal.<sup>47</sup> Close scrutiny of incidents of alleged atrocities against the low castes, the poor, and the landless in U.P. also does not indicate any clear pattern of association of such incidents with the middle castes or the Lok Dal. Such incidents tend to be more complex and diverse in origin and are not even necessarily tied to class struggles in the countryside.

It is to be expected, of course, in a competitive political system, that competing parties will attempt to blur the genuine differences in their social bases, which often also become blurred in practice as politicians themselves attempt to make inroads into their opponents' social bases and as they sacrifice principle for power at critical moments of opportunity.



There has, nevertheless, been a fairly persistent set of social divisions in the north Indian countryside that is reflected also in the bases of party support and that, in U.P. at least, can be traced back to the events of 1967 to 1969.<sup>48</sup> Those divisions take two forms: conflict among the dominant landed castes in the countryside for political control of available economic resources and the struggle for survival of the low castes, the poor, and the landless in relation to all the landed castes above them. In the struggle among the landed castes, the Congress and the BKD/Lok Dal have been fairly evenly divided, which means that the low castes hold the balance electorally. In these struggles, the Congress, with its dual base among the elite landed castes and former landlords and the rural poor has continued to hold the edge against the BKD/Lok Dal, with its base primarily among the middle peasant castes. The Congress lost its edge only in 1977 when the Janata coalition was able to reverse the Congress advantage by capturing some of the Congress' own support among the poor.

Finally, it should be noted that the continuities in political conflicts and issues discussed in this chapter between U.P. politics and politics at the Center exist largely because of a major discontinuity that occurred in the early 1970s between politics in U.P. at that time and in the previous decades. In 1970 and 1971, state politics in U.P. became much less autonomous than they had been in the 1950s and 1960s and central and state politics more closely linked than ever before. The decisive watershed in this transition occurred during the second government of Chaudhuri Charan Singh when, for the first time in the history of the state, both the formation and termination of a government were considered critical for the future of the Union government, which played a determining role in both outcomes. Since then, the state of U.P. has not been considered a separate arena in which political forces acted relatively autonomously, but a base of power for the stability of the Union government that must be maintained at all costs. The closer interlinking, therefore, of political conflicts and policy issues in Lucknow and Delhi is related also to transformations in the dynamics of the federal system itself.

## NOTES

1. The first draft of this paper was written several years ago, but was never published. It was revised in 1984 for publication in a collection of my essays under the title, *Caste, Faction, and Party in Indian Politics*, Vol. 1: *Faction and Party* (New Delhi: Chanakya Press, 1984). Permission of Chanakya Press to reprint the article in this volume is gratefully acknowledged.

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2. Figures provided to the author by the UPCC office, Lucknow.

3. Personal papers of Chaudhuri Charan Singh, hereafter referred to as *CCS Papers*.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, its relationship to factional conflicts in the Congress, and the role of opposition parties at the time, see Paul R. Brass, "Uttar Pradesh," in *State Politics in India*, ed. Myron Weiner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 100–109.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Charan Singh, *Joint Farming X-Rayed: The Problem and Its Solution* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1959). A second revised edition was published under the title, *India's Poverty and Its Solution* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964). All citations are from the earlier edition.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

19. Bharatiya Kranti Dal, *Aims & Principles* (Lucknow: BKD, 1971), pp. 10 and 14.

20. Charan Singh, *Joint Farming X-Rayed*, p. 79.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–96.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

27. Government of Uttar Pradesh, Board of Revenue, *Agricultural*

*Census in Uttar Pradesh, 1970-71* (1973, no other publication details).

28. Charan Singh, *Joint Farming X-Rayed*, p. 91.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

30. *Statesman*, 25 March 1966.

31. Press release, 16 February 1970: *CCS Papers*.

32. Chowdhary Charan Singh, *The Story of New Congress-BKD Relations: How New Congress Broke the U.P. Coalition* (Lucknow: BKD, 1970), p. 9. The *bigha* is a land measure that varies considerably in different parts of north India. The exclusion of "5 bighas" here translates to 3 1/8 acres.

33. Charan Singh, *The Story*, p. 11. Characteristic of the exchanges at the time in which the opposing sides attempted to tar each other with the same brush is this excerpt from a letter of Charan Singh to Mrs. Gandhi, dated 2 September, 1970 (*CCS Papers*):

As you must be aware, a mendacious campaign has been launched against me particularly by Congressmen both here and in Delhi that I have accepted huge funds from sugar factory owners in consideration of postponement of nationalization of these factories by one year. I am said to have accepted these funds as the sinews for the next election . . . .

I want to state categorically, once again, that, perhaps it is BKD alone which has not accepted donations from capitalists while almost every other political party has done so and continues to do so. It is fantastic, indeed, to find that those who themselves are guilty of this practice should accuse others who are absolutely innocent of it.

34. Charan Singh, *The Story*, pp. 17-18.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

38. A letter from K.D. Malaviya to Charan Singh, dated 8 September 1970, is illustrative, as the following excerpts indicate (*CCS Papers*):

The decision of the B.K.D. to oppose the Constitution (24th) Amendment Bill abolishing Princes' Purses and Privileges and the consequential opposition by you of this epoch-making measure has indeed given the final blow to all our hopes of any Congress coalition government to continue in U.P. . . . The whole country has learned with shock and sorrow that your leadership

and that of the B.K.D. Party stood to maintain the unjust and anti-social rights enjoyed by a group of privileged people . . . .

Why have you sided with the Princes? . . . I was especially pained at the fact that with your eyes open you chose to remain on the side of this super-class obviously with the plan that in future you would be able to mobilise the caste and sectarian emotions of considerable section of our society with the help of rajas and maharajas to win elections . . . . As history records at this critical moment of your Party going against wishes and interests of people, we of the Congress in U.P. must dissociate ourselves with your conservative, die-hard and sectarian policies.

39. Press release of 19 September 1970 and *National Herald*, 20 September 1970. From *CCS Papers*.

40. Biplab Dasgupta, *Agrarian Change and the New Technology in India* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1977), p. 308.

41. The arguments by Charan Singh referred to below were made in debates on demands for grants in the U.P. Assembly in July, 1971, in a motion of no-confidence in the Tripathi government in August, 1972, and in a speech on the budget in August, 1973. References to these speeches in the text below come from the *CCS Papers*.

42. From "Points for Budget Speech," dated March 14, 1973, p. 1, in *CCS Papers*.

43. Comment on the Imposition of Ceilings on Land Holdings (Amendment) Bill, 1972, by Charan Singh, Chairman, B.K.D., 13 May 1972; *CCS Papers*.

44. Press release, 19 June 1972; *CCS Papers*.

45. From "Points for Budget Speech," p. 5.

46. Government of Uttar Pradesh, Planning Department, *Draft Fifth Five Year Plan, 1974-79*, Vol. I (Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, 1973), pp. 89-90.

47. Lenin himself used the term "peasant bourgeoisie" rather than *kulaks* to refer to "well-to-do peasants," who controlled "no less than half of all the implements of production and all the property owned by the peasants," who cannot exist without employing seasonal and day labourers," and who are "certainly hostile to serfdom, to the landlords, and to the bureaucracy." However, he argued, "still more certain is its hostility to the rural proletariat." V.I. Lenin, "The Proletariat and the Peasantry," in *Collected Works*. Vol. 8, January-July, 1905 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2nd. rev. ed. 1965), p. 234.

48. The social divisions themselves were reflected in patterns of voting even before 1967, but were not articulated clearly until after the defection of Charan Singh from the Congress and the formation of the BKD. See Paul R. Brass, "The Politicization of the Peasantry in a North Indian State: 1 & 2," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 7:4 (July 1980), pp. 395-426 and 8:1 (October 1980), pp. 3-36.



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