Land Reforms in UP and the KULAKS

Charan Singh

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as told by
Charan Singh

Charan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, had waged a relentless struggle for full three decades (1936-66) for the upliftment of the weak and the downtrodden. As a Parliamentary Secretary and a Revenue Minister, he led the movement for abolishing the "zamindari" system in Uttar Pradesh, the biggest State of the Union of India.

The land reforms carried out in U.P. were most revolutionary in character. It can be claimed that nowhere in the democratic world, have such far-reaching measures been taken to help the under-dog. Charan Singh always took a determined stand because he was convinced that under given conditions, small farms produced more, acre to acre, than large farms and that they were more economical to the nation. He was fully dedicated to enforcing and implementing the provisions of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act and other legislations enacted for land reforms.

Many a politician and journalist has often denounced him as a friend of the "kulaks" or rich farmers. It will be for the reader of this book to judge how far this accusation is justified and whether it is inspired by considerations of truth and public interest or by motives extraneous to these objectives of public life in any country.

The present work shows the author's deep understanding of the problems related to land reforms—an issue declared as Congress' main policy since pre-independence days, but yet to be fully implemented, except in U.P., where Chaudhry Sahib had the privilege of executing it.

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Preface

India inherited from the British a feudal or landlord-tenant system called "zamindari", under which ownership of land was concentrated in the hands of a few, while the vast majority who worked day and night on the land, were mere tenants.

Landlords performed no economic functions: the lands which were tilled by the tenants would not produce less if the landlords disappeared. They rendered no service in return for the rent they received and were in the truest sense of the term, parasites or "drones doing no good in the public hive".

With honourable exceptions, the big non-cultivating landowners passed their lives in luxurious pursuits, mis-spending the money they got without earning. They were none too ennobling examples to their countrymen and thus contributed to lowering of the national character.

For these and other reasons national leadership of the country decided that, if the decks were to be cleared for social and economic reform and for political stability, the feudal landlord-tenant system had to go.

Charan Singh, both as a Parliamentary Secretary and a Revenue Minister, took a leading part in abolishing this unholy system in Uttar Pradesh, the biggest State of the Union of India, which showed the path to many a sincere friend of those who laboured day and night to coax the Mother Earth without much recompense. With a view to denigrating Charan Singh in the public eye, however, many a journalist and politician has often denounced him as a friend of the "Kulaks" or rich farmers. It will be for the reader of this monologue to judge how far this accusation is justified and whether it is inspired by considerations of truth and public interest or by motives which are extraneous to these objectives of public life in any country.

In Russian language, before the Revolution of 1917, the term "Kulaks" was used to describe a dishonest rural trader who grew rich not by his own labour but through someone else's—through usury, by operating as a middleman. Subsequently, by 1930, how-

ever, according to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "by a transfer of meaning the term "Kulak" was used to smash the strength of the peasantry, when only a dozen years had passed since the great Decree on the Land had been promulgated—that very Decree without which the peasants would have refused to follow the Bolsheviks and without which the November Revolution would have failed. This was the perfect time to settle accounts with them of jealousy, envy and insult. A new word was needed for all these new victims as a class—and it was born. By this time, it had a marvellous sound: "Podkulcknik"—a person aiding the "Kulaks". In other words, "I consider you an accomplice of the enemy". And that finishes you. The most tattered landless labourer in the countryside could quite easily be labelled a "Podkulcknik".*

In India, the word "kulak" has come to be used as a term of abuse. If, however, the critics of Lok Dal want to convey by this word that its leader is an unflinching advocate of the cause of the small farmer who either is, or, should be made proprietor of the land on which he labours, or at least, invested with permanent rights of user, then, perhaps, one can have no quarrel with these "radicals" or friends of the underdog who would like to huddle the peasantry into collective farms and, thus, rob them of their liberty or force them into slums of the metropolitan cities.

The land reforms carried out in Uttar Pradesh were most revolutionary in character. It can be claimed without fear or contradiction that nowhere in the world have such far-reaching measures been taken to help the underdog in a democracy. In this State the "Zamindari" or landlord-tenant system has been eradicated root and branch. Credit for the achievement of this Herculean task—Herculean because of the bewildering complexity of tenure and the vast size of the State—unquestionably goes entirely to Charan Singh in every sense of the term.

The bitter opposition which the reforms evoked in the State Cabinet or outside it from the side of these, some of whom, were often known to the outside world as Socialists or Progressives, is a long story which has only been briefly told in the following pages. Charan Singh, whether as a Parliamentary Secretary or a Minister, took a determined stand, however, sometimes, even to the point of resignation because he was convinced that, under given conditions,

*Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archi Pelago*, Chapter II, p. 55.

small farms produced more, acre to acre, than large farms, that they provided more employment than the large farms, that they obviated large income disparities in the countryside, and that a person who is the owner of the patch of the land under his plough, however small it may be, was a greater bulwark of democracy than any other countryman.

One can only leave it to the bar of history and the judgement of such members of the present generation as may be interested in knowing the truth, to say whether a person who was responsible for these reforms, could be characterised as "Podkulcknik"—an accomplice of the enemy or a protagonist of large scale farming.

Although Revenue Ministers from three States, viz, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh considered it necessary in the 50s to visit Uttar Pradesh in order to study its land reforms on the spot, the people outside the State in general—even those interested in public affairs—still know little about them, if at all. The reason largely lies in the fact that neither the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission nor those who held the reins of political power in their hands in New Delhi, ever acknowledged the radical character of these reforms. Perhaps, because they went far beyond their own dreams or proposals.

No impartial reader of this monograph can escape the conclusion that, instead of being a "kulak" himself, Charan Singh had to wage a relentless struggle for full three decades, (1936-1966) in favour of the weak and the down-trodden against those who fully deserved this appellation themselves in every sense of the term.

AUTHOR

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Early Life of Charan Singh

Charan Singh's ancestors were the kinsmen of prominent freedom-fighter of the Revolt of 1857, Raja Nahar Singh of Ballabhgarh in district Faridabad of Haryana who was sent to the gallows in Chandni Chowk of Delhi. In order to escape the oppression which the British Government let loose on the Raja's followers, Charan Singh's grandfather Chaudhry Badam Singh moved eastward along with his family to a village called Bhatona far beyond the Yamuna, now in district Bulandshahar of Uttar Pradesh. A man's ways, views and attitudes owe their origin, to a large extent, to his social background. So do those of Charan Singh.

Charan Singh was born on 23 December 1902 in village Noorpur district Meerut of Uttar Pradesh in a peasant's home under a thatched roof supported by kachcha mud walls, with a kachcha well in front of residential compound of the family, used for drinking water as well as for irrigation. His father was the youngest of the five brothers who held the land under their plough as tenants of a big zamindar or landlord of a nearby village Kuchesar. Within six months of his birth, however, his parents moved to a village Jani Khurd, situated approximately twenty-five miles away, in the same district where the family had purchased some ten acres of land. The youngest two of his uncles had served as soldiers in the British Indian Army and participated in the Boer War fought by the English against the Dutch in South Africa in 1899-1902.

Charan Singh took his degree of Bachelor of Science in 1923, the degree of Master of Arts (History) in 1925 and the degree of Law in 1926. He started independent legal practice in Ghaziabad town in 1928. In 1930, he was sent to jail for six months for contravention of Salt Laws. In August 1940, he was prosecuted on a false charge, but was acquitted by the magistrate. Three months later in November 1940, he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment in the individual Satyagrah Movement. Again, in August 1942 he was arrested under the DIR and released in November 1943.

Along with a friend, Shri Gopi Nath 'Aman', who later on shifted to Delhi as a member of the editorial staff of the famous Urdu daily *Tej*, he established the Town Congress Committee of Ghaziabad in 1929 in which he held various positions till 1939 in which year he shifted to Meerut. In Meerut, he served either as President or General Secretary of the District Congress Committee continuously from 1939 to 1946.

In February 1937 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh for the first time at the age of 34.

In 1938 he introduced an Agricultural Produce Markets Bill in the Assembly as a private member. He wrote an article entitled "Agricultural Marketing" which was published in the issues of the *Hindustan Times* of Delhi, dated 31 March and 1 April 1938. The Bill was intended to safeguard the interests of the producer against the rapacity of the trader, was adopted by most of the States—Punjab being the first to do so in 1940. But it was only in 1964 that it could be put on the Statute Book of the State of its origin. Charan Singh was foiled in his attempt during this long period by representatives of vested interests who were entrenched in high places both in the Congress and its Government. It was argued by Shri C.B. Gupta that, as the farmers had become rich and educated and could, therefore, hold on their own against the traders and also it was a measure of control—and controls were not liked by the people—the Agricultural Produce Markets Bill was not only unnecessary, but also harmful. It was forgotten, however, that such legislation had to be enacted even in economically advanced countries where there was universal literacy and that it did not envisage any control on price or quantity of the commodity sold or purchased, but only on malpractices indulged in by the cleverer of the two parties.

It was on 5 April 1939, that he brought a resolution before the Executive Committee of the Congress Legislature Party saying that, since it was in the interest of good government that the life-style and attitudes of public servants corresponded with those of the men whose affairs they were called upon to administer, a minimum of fifty per cent public employment be reserved for the sons and dependents of the cultivators or agriculturists who formed the mass of our people. But the party did not find time to consider the resolution which lapsed with its resignation from the legislature six months later, viz. in October 1939. Nor did the Congress leader-

ship of the State welcome it: it had assuaged its conscience by issuing an order reserving one seat to the son of a 'tenant' in the gazetted civil service of the State whenever the Public Service Commission was asked to make a selection.

In April 1939 he prepared Land Utilization Bill which mainly sought the transfer of the proprietary interest in agricultural holdings of U.P. to such of the tenants or actual tillers of the soil who chose to deposit an amount equivalent ten times the annual rental in Government treasury to the account of the landlord. In June 1939, he wrote an article entitled "Peasant Proprietorship or Land to the Worker" which was published in the *National Herald*, Lucknow, dated 13 June 1939. In December 1939 he wrote another article entitled "Prevention of Division of Holdings Below a Certain Minimum". Particularly, the former article was later to form the seed of the land reforms that followed.

Charan Singh also brought a resolution before the Congress Legislature Party in April 1939, requiring that "no enquiries should be made into the caste of a Hindu candidate who seeks admission into an educational institution or any of the public services. The only inquiry, however, that may be made, should be whether the candidate belonged to a Scheduled Caste". Also, it was at his instance that a decision was taken by the U.P. Government in 1948 not to enter the caste of a tenure-holder in the land records of the Revenue Department in future.

He took a leading part in the formulation and finalisation of the Debt Redemption Bill, 1939 which brought great relief to the peasantry. In August 1939 he wrote an article published in the *National Herald*, Lucknow, explaining the provisions of the Bill and replying to its criticism by the moneylenders' lobby. During discussions in the Executive Committee of the Party, others of his way of thinking and he found to their great disillusionment that some leading lights of the Congress Socialist Party, including, for example, Acharya Narendra Dev, who professed such great solicitude for peasants and workers from the public platform, took up a strong pro-creditor attitude.

A draft Congress Manifesto on Land and Agriculture providing, *inter alia*, for abolition of landlordism, as prepared by Charan Singh on 9 September 1945, was adopted by *kisan* workers in a meeting held under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev in Banaras in the last week of November 1945. It was the manifesto

which formed the basis of a resolution on the subject approved by the All-India Congress Working Committee in its meeting held in the following December 1945 in Calcutta.

The draft manifesto approved by the Kisan Organisation in Banaras also contained a clause saying that "the cultivators of the soil shall be given their due share in the administration of the country and their sons shall be recruited in ever-increasing number to the Public Services". In March 1947, Charan Singh wrote a long, reasoned article in exposition of the above views (vide Appendix) and got it distributed amongst members of the Congress Party in the Legislature as also amongst some other persons interested in public affairs. Nothing, however, came out of his efforts made in this regard. The hold of the non-agriculturists on public life and administration was so complete that according to a survey made in 1961, out of a total of 1347 members of ICS and IAS, only 155 or 11.5 per cent came from the homes of the agriculturists.

2

How Landlordism was Abolished in the Plains

Charan Singh was appointed as a Parliamentary Secretary to the State Government in 1946 and attached first to the Minister of Revenue, then to the Minister for Health, Local Self-Government and lastly to the Chief Minister himself. He was appointed as a full-fledged Cabinet Minister and given independent charge of the portfolio of Law and Justice in June 1951. His chief interest, however, lay in the Revenue portfolio which was entrusted to him only in May 1952. During the five years since 1946, even though he was a mere Parliamentary Secretary, he virtually enjoyed the full powers of a minister so far as the Department of Revenue was concerned as his thinking on land reforms had found favour with the Congress Legislature Party of the State and, more particularly, with the Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, who reposed full confidence in him owing to his ability and capacity for hard work.

A full account of his performances as Parliamentary Secretary or Minister of Revenue and Agriculture (as also Transport, Power and Irrigation, Home, Finance, Forest and Local Self-Government and some other departments which he held, only for brief periods) and the battles over public issues which he waged, in the cause of the people of Uttar Pradesh, will fill several volumes. Here, in this volume, however, it is intended to describe his achievements in the field of land reforms alone.

The point which is often missed and which needs to be highlighted, is that Uttar Pradesh gave a lead to the entire country in the matter of land reforms. In this State the zamindari or the landlord-tenant system has been eradicated root and branch. Every piece of legislation in the sphere of land reforms was so well thought-out and drafted that not one was invalidated by the judiciary as it was in quite a few other States. He had to write scores of articles in the Press and broadcast scores of talks or speeches on the radio in explanation of every major step that was taken. At the same time he addressed virtually hundreds upon hundreds of largely attended public meetings all over the vast area of the State,

each for hours and hours together.

The Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh passed the following resolution on 8 August 1946:

> This Assembly accepts the principle of abolition of the Zamindari system in this province which involves intermediaries between the cultivator and the State and resolves that the rights of such intermediaries should be acquired on payment of equitable compensation and that Government should appoint a committee to prepare a scheme for this purpose.

In pursuance of this resolution the State Government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the Premier (as the Chief Minister was then known) to prepare a scheme for the abolition of the landlord-tenant system in the State.

Immediately after, on 1 September 1946, the State Government issued orders staying ejectment of all tenants and sub-tenants whatsoever from the lands in their possession. The orders were given legal sanction by making necessary amendments in the U.P. Tenancy Act, 1939. Besides legalising the stay of ejectments the amending legislation, Act No. X of 1947, which come into force on 14 June 1947, provided, *inter alia*, for restoration of tenants and sub-tenants in possession of their holdings from which they had been ejected since 1 January 1940.

While the Zamindari Abolition Committee was still in the midst of its labours, all the residents of the village (exception, of course, the zamindars or landowners who already enjoyed the rights), whether tenants of any sort, agricultural labourers or any other, were also declared as owners of their houses. They were also given a right to convert their *kachcha* houses into pacca ones, make necessary constructions on the *sahan*, *darwaza* or land appurtenant to such houses under the U.P. Village Abadi Act which received the assent of the Governor on 12 January 1948. The legislation proved to be a boon for scheduled castes in particular, because having no rights of ownership in their residential huts they were blackmailed by the zamindars through threats of ejectment into rendering *begar* or free service to them. This Act was later on incorporated in Section 9 of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950 with the addition that every resident of the village was made owner of the trees he might have planted and the

well or wells he might have constructed on the lands appurtenant to his house. He had to pay no compensation for conferment of this right.

According to the *Census of India, 1951*, Vol. II: *Uttar Pradesh* (*Part I-A-Report*) the population of Uttar Pradesh in 1951 was more than 63 million people. Out of this, 54.6 million (85 per cent) were listed "rural" and living in some 1,10,000 villages and 257,500 hamlets. Of the total population, 46.9 million (74.2 per cent) were directly dependent on agriculture, and over 20 million were listed as "active or semi-active" workers in cultivation. There were about 2 acres of cultivable land per agricultural worker and 0.8 acre per person directly dependent on agriculture.

Population pressure on agricultural land is further illustrated by the fact that, according to the *Report of the Zamindari Abolition Committee*, 1948, more than 21 per cent of all registered landholders possessed less than 0.5 acre each. Less than one-fourth of the total cultivated acreage made up the registered holdings of more than two-thirds of the cultivators. The actual holdings were, in fact, even smaller than the above figures would indicate because they include the 4.1 million acres held by some 3.6 million cultivators listed in the *Report of the Zamindari Abolition Committee*, Vol. II, p, 8 as sub-holders.

The Zamindari Abolition Committee submitted its report in late 1948. As a member of the Committee Charan Singh submitted a memorandum to it in 1947, but no heed was paid to it, the reason being that there was a difference in the social origin of majority of the members of the Committee, on the one hand, and that of Charan Singh, on the other. So, the thinking of the majority on the rural problems greatly differed from that of his. Instead of appending a note of dissent, therefore, he thought it advisable to write a note to the Chief Minister on 18 October 1948 urging that at least, seven of the Committee's recommendations which formed the basis of the scheme it had formulated, be rejected outright. Whereupon the Chief Minister set up a Committee of Revenue and and Law Officers under his chairmanship to draft a bill as he thought best.

The part of his above note dated 18 October 1948, relevant here, was as follows:

First, the Zamindari Abolition Committee has proposed that

compensation should be paid by the Government in bonds payable over a period of 40 years. Bonds to the value of more than 90 per cent of the total compensation will, however, be negotiable immediately. I suggest that, for the reasons following, this recommendation should be reconsidered and payment should be made by the peasants instead of by the State.

Secondly, in my opinion, no limit should be placed on the purchase-money of land. The only ground put forward is that the transferee, in case he has to pay the market price, will be left with too little capital for efficient farming. Now, this motion has been borrowed from literature on European and Russian farming where the word "capital" is used mostly to denote machinery. Here, in our country, all capital that we need, is a pair of bullocks which, in 99 cases out of 100, if not invariably, a cultivator himself already possesses.

Further, as a matter of hard fact, even in times of acute economic depression, the actual price of land varied from 40 to 50 times the circle rate whereas the Committee proposes to pay only 12 times the rate. Today, the multiple has risen to at least 175; in many cases it is higher and far higher still. This drastic artificial depreciation of land values will lead to subterfuges and evasions of the law in a hundred and one ways. For example, people will purport to transfer the land to a purchaser ostensibly by a gift-deed instead of by a sale-deed; we cannot possibly regulate or prohibit gifts or interpose the Panchayat in between, in any way.

Thirdly, similarly, no limit should be placed on the lease money of land. The limitation, viz. that a lessor shall not receive rent which may exceed the land tax payable to the Government by anything more than 50 per cent, has been proposed with a view to avoid exploitation; but we should not forget that widows, miners and other disabled persons who alone will be entitled to sublet, will do so not because they want to exploit the labour of others, but because they are physically incapable of tilling their holdings themselves. The limitation will render the right of subletting of no practical or monetary value to these lessors.

Fourthly, with these two restrictions removed, the Panchayat will have left nothing to do with the land of an individual. (Management of the common waste, *abadi*, thoroughfares, ponds, etc., will still remain the concern of the Panchayat.) And this is as

it should be. The power of selling much-coveted land at a largely-depreciated price, either in perpetuity or even for a limited period, is too great an economic power to be safely entrusted to an elected body in the present conditions of our rural society: it will lead to much corruption and conflict.

Fifthly, the status of ownership or *Samyukt kissedari*, the Zamindari Abolition Committee says, should be accorded to all sub-tenants also, whether they hold under a tenant or a *sir*-holder, with regard to the area in their cultivation, except to the extent that such land is required to render the holding economic, if any, of the tenant-in-chief, or, in the case of a sub-tenant of *sir*, to make up the minimum reserve of 50 acres of *sir* for the Zamindari.

Sixthly, large farms, whether under the cultivatory occupation of a proprietor or a tenant, should be broken up and any land in excess of 50 acres distributed, first, among uneconomic holdings of the village so as to make them economic and then among landless agricultural workers in economic lots. The suggestion has been discussed in the *Report* and rejected on the ground that it would (*a*) arouse a spirit of opposition among the substantial cultivators; (*b*) inflict great hardship upon the landlords whose income we are curtailing by abolition of Zamindari; (*c*) not, in view of the smallness of the area available, be of any practical utility; and (*d*) displace a large number of agricultural labourers for whom it may not be possible to find an alternative occupation within a reasonable time.

The last argument about unemployment of agricultural labourers released from large farm is the least convincing. In effect it amounts to a plea for continuance of capitalistic farming, which is, perhaps, nobody's intention. Agrarian economists all the world over are agreed that, besides giving greater yield per acre, small holdings provide greater employment than large holdings. That is, as regard employment, breaking up of large farms will be a gain rather than a loss. Also, it will eliminate exploitation of human labour which is inherent in large-scale private farmings. National interest, therefore, very clearly points only to one course, viz. that large farms should go.

Seventhly, one of the recommendations says that holdings less than 10 acres in area each will be impartible. What about those which are 10 acres or more in extent? If they are partible, then

it means that uneconomic holdings will continue to come into existence in the future also, for according to the Committee, all holdings below 10 acres are uneconomic, and the purpose of the reform will be frustrated. I had put the minimum limit at 6¼ acres (I insist on the fraction because 6¼ acres is equivalent to 10 standard bighas which is what our peasantry understands so that, a holding of less than 12½ acres being impartible, all holdings will obviously henceforward vary between 6¼ and 12½ acres. From the point of veiw of impartibility then, I may be said to have put the figure even higher than the Committee has done. I did not however, choose the figures arbitrarily: I consider an 'economic' holding to be one that provides full employment for one indivisible factor of production, i.e., the minimum agricultural equipment, viz. one yok of oxen that a peasant must maintain under all circumstances, and employment for the labour of an average peasant family. In actual fact, 6¼ acres of good agricutlural land can provide this employment fully just as in the case of indifferent land it may require 12½ acres to do it. Further, a lower limit of 6¼ acres is likely to limit the liberty of lesser number of individuals in the matter of transfers etc., also.

Lastly, I am very sceptic again about cooperative farming as envisaged in the *Report*, although, in view of its voluntary nature, I do not oppose it, for there is no harm in making an experiment.

The ZALR (Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms) Bill as prepared by the Drafting Committee and approved by the State Cabinet in may 1949, was introduced in the Assembly on 7 July and referred to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of the Legislature on 15 July. The *Report* of the Select Committee was presented to the Legislature Assembly on 9 January 1950. The Bill as finally passed by both Houses and approved by the Governor was submitted to the President of the Union of India and received his assent on 24 January 1951. Its enforcement was, however, delayed till 1 July 1952 owing to a law suit filed by the zamindars which was ultimately dismissed.

The above Bill of legislation abolished or proposed to abolish the rights of intermediaries and vest all agricultural land in the State. It further simplified the bewildering structure of 46 land tenures or so, covering a vast area and vast population, by replacing

it only with four new classes of interest in land, viz. *bhumidhar* (holder of land), *sirdar* (wielder of the plough), *asami* (non-owner) which involved the only type of tenancy permanently recognized under this measure and adhivasi* (occupant)—a transitory tenure of those who possessed only temporary tenancy or sub-tenancy rights.

Bhumidhar

On enactment of the above Bill, roughly, the following persons automatically became bhumidhars:

(*a*) intermediaries, as the landlords were defined, with respect to *sir*, *khudkasht* and groves (excepting the let *sir* of an intermediary assessed to land revenue of more than Rs 250 annually) or *sir* let to a tenant on *patta dawami* or *istimrari* (permanent lease) with rights to transfer the holding by sale where the sir and khudkasht of such land was proportionate to their interest in the holding;

(*b*) all disabled intermediaries of sir and khudkasht lands irrespective of the amount of land revenue they paid; and

(*c*) Fixed-rate tenants, sub-proprietors and under-proprietors and rent-free grantees.

Bhumidhars enjoyed full rights of user and transfer.

Sirdars

The following persons became sirdars at the commencement of the act;

Ex-proprietary tenants; occupancy tenants; grove-holders; hereditary tenants; tenants on patta dawami or istimrari; and tenants and sub-tenants of sir and khudkasht lands of those Zamindars who paid more than Rs 250 as land revenue annually.

The sirdars were liable to pay the same rent (henceforward to be called 'revenue') to the Government as they were doing to the zamindars subject to the stipulation that it did not exceed twice the

*Not to be confused with the term *adhivasi* (meaning an "aboriginal inhabitant") which refers to a member of a scheduled tribe. The term *adhivasi* (meaning an "occupant") was coined for the purpose of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act.

statutory rate fixed a decade and a half earlier in the thirties during settlement operations. In terms of agricultural produce the rents in U.P. therefore, were, in no case, higher than 1/20th the value of the agricultural produce computed at the prevailing rates, and were far less than such rent payable in other States. The sirdars who were to hold their lands in propetuity, were given full rights of using the land for agriculture, horticulture or animal husbandry but no rights of transfer* whether in the form of a sale or usufructuary mortgage.

Rights of both bhumidhars and sirdars being permanent and hereditary, exchange of land between them was allowed, the parties acquiring their old rights respectively in the lands they received.

Asamis

Broadly speaking, the following persons became asamis at the commencement of the Act:

Every person who, on the date immediately preceding the date of vesting, occupied or held land:

(*i*) as a non-occupancy tenant of an intermediary's grove;
(*ii*) as a sub-tenant of grove land;
(*iii*) as a mortgagee of a tenant;
(*iv*) as a tenant or thekedar who cultivated sir or khudkasht land on patta dawami or istimrari of an intermediary assessed to land revenue not exceeding Rs 250 annually.

Such cultivators, however, were liable to ejectment if their lessor was, at the time of letting out his land, a student in a recognised institution and not more than 25 years of age, suffering from a mental or physical disability, confined in prison or serving in the armed forces of the Union;

or

(*v*) in lieu of maintenance as long as the right to maintenance existed; and
(*vi*) every person admitted by the Gaon Sabha or the Collector of

*According to an amendment in law made later on, the Sirdari lands carried a statutory charge for realization of loans advanced by cooperative societies or *tagavi* loans, that is, loans advanced by Government for improvement of agriculture, etc. The amendment was made with a view to enhance the creditworthiness of the sirdars who did not enjoy rights of voluntary transfer.

the district on its behalf as a tenant of pasture land, tract of shifting and unstable cultivation or any other land which the latter had a right to do so.

The asami had heritable but no transferable rights.

Adhivasis

Tenants who occupied land more or less at the pleasure and convenience of the landholder, or, at best, for limited periods of time stipulated by custom or contract, were known as adhivasis and assured security of tenure for a period of five years beginning with the commencement of the ZALR (Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms) Act. The rights were neither heritable nor transferable, and subletting was not permitted. The principal classes of tenants with these limited rights were:

Tenants under a permanent tenure-holder, tenants of sir and khudkasht (other than on patta dawami or istimrari) of those zamindars who paid Rs 250 or less as land revenue annually; tenants under rent-free grantees or grantees at favourable rates of rent and sub-tenants cultivating land on leases not exceeding a five-year period. Also included in this class were occupiers of land without consent and cultivators working land without written leases. These classes were almost all those which had been enumerated in Part II of khatauni (vide *Report of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee*, Vol. II, Table 6, p. 8).

Adhivasis were entitled to become either sirdars of bhumidhars after the expiry of 5 years from the commencement of the Act but within a time-limit fixed by the Government, on payment of certain amount as compensation failing which they were liable to ejectment from their holdings.

By an amendment of the ZALR Act in October, 1954, however, the status of sirdars was conferred on all the adhivasis whose number stood at about 5 million irrespective of the fact whether their landholders were bhumidhars or sirdars and without their having to pay anything for the acquisition of these rights. As sirdars, they continued to pay land revenue at their former rates of rent and it was the State which compensate the landholders out of these rent payments. But, as the later pages will reveal, a battle ryot had to

be waged by Charan Singh in order not only to secure this status for these poor men but also to ensure that no 'right of resumption' of a tenant's land was conceded to the landlords or zamindars—a battle which had political consequences both for the State and for him—favourably for the former and adversely for the latter.

The figures of area available to the four classes of cultivators mentioned above will give the reader an idea of the over-all magnitudes involved. For example, the average holding per bhumidhar come to about 3.4. Actually the unlet sir and khudkasht holdings of zamindars alone varied from an average of 3.17 acres for the group of zamindars assessed to less than Rs 250 of land revenue annually to 245 acres average for the zamindars assessed to more than Rs 10,000. As regards sirdars the average holding amounted to approximately 2 acres, varying from the average of slightly more than 0.5 acres of the pre-abolition grove-holder to the average of 2.66 acres of the former exproprietary tenants; again there were wide variations within each group. The average holding of asami and adhivasi of about 1 acre included the average of ¾ acre for tenants under rent-free grantees to the average of a little more than 1 acre of sub-tenants.

Those of the sirdars who made a deposit of ten times their rent to the credit of Government, were entitled to a reduction of 50 per cent in this amount which was hitherto payable by them to Government as land revenues, and would stand promoted to the status of a bhumidhar. This scheme, known as the bhumidhari or ZAF (Zamindari Abolition Fund) Collection Scheme, launched in the field in September, 1949, that is, even before the ZALR Act came into force, was commended by the National Planning Commission for adoption by other States which some of them did. This scheme was based, by and large, on the Land Utilization Bill which, as the reader must have already noted, was prepared by Charan Singh as a private member of the Legislative Assembly in 1939.

In order that the tenants might take advantage or be not deprived of the benefits that would accrue to them as envisaged in the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill, as early as possible, the Legislature had, as an anticipatory measure, rushed through the Agricultural Tenants' (Acquisition of Privileges), Act No. XI of 1949.

Further, inasmuch as the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms

Bill which was still on the legislative anvil, would adversely affect the interests of the landlords they were expected to put up a barrage of propaganda to mislead the unwary. Charan Singh organised a Zamindari Abolition Publicity Campaign in accordance with a note submitted by him to the Chief Minister on 22 August 1949. The campaign was to be carried on through public meetings, agency of Information Department and cooperation of his colleagues in Government and the Pradesh Congress Committees. The campaign was intended to educate the rural masses in the provisions of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill, their rights and duties under it, the revolutionary effects it will have on our entire social structure and to put them on their guard against the misleading propaganda of the interested parties.

All uncultivated lands (along with trees, except those planted by non-proprietors of land to whom they would continue to belong), abadi sites or pasture lands, paths or thoroughfares, ponds, tanks or ferries, threshing-floors or markets (except where they were held on the cultivatory holding of a bhumidhar), that is, all lands other than those which were in the exclusive possession or enjoyment of individuals as cultivatory holdings, groves, houses or wells, were taken over by the State. The village community had already been invested with certain judicial and administrative powers under the Panchayat Raj Act. A Gaon Samaj Manual was brought out detailing the rights and duties of the panchayats in regard to land vested in them which became a model for other States to follow.

According to official records, 4.8 million hectares of privately owned surplus *parti* (fallow) land, *banjar* (barren) land and forest and public utility land were vested in the State after the abolition of landlordism in 1952. 880,000 hectares of this area were transferred to the Forest Department for afforestation. The rest, that is, 3.92 million hectares were handed over to Gaon Sabhas for distribution. The Panchayats, that is, executive committees of Gaon Sabhas, set up land management sub-committees under the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act. "These sub-committees", writes the correspondent of the *Times of India* dated 13 September 1973, "were, however, dominated and controlled by representatives of the traditional landowning classes, Brahmins and Thakurs. It is not surprising that in allotting land influential Brahmin and Thakur *pradhans*, and their supporters preferred their relations and friends

to Harijans. Harijan pradhans were few and far between." Most of the land belonging to the community was grabbed by landowning Thakurs and Brahmins with the help of officials of the revenue department and the Land Management Sub-Committees. The abuse of power by them was so blatant that the Congress Ministry decided to scrutinize 1,00,000 *pattas* between 1 October 1964 and 30 September 1967 and found that 90 per cent of them were irregular.

Houses and buildings occupied by agriculturists (along with their bullock-carts, etc.) were already exempt throughout the country under Section 50 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1882 from attachment or sale in execution of a money decree. In Uttar Pradesh, they were now exempted from sale even in execution of a mortgage decree.

In certain areas of the State, particularly, in towns, there existed a custom of Zer-i-Chahrum under which a landlord or a lessor of a building lease was entitled, in case the building was sold away, to realise from the leasee-seller or the purchaser of the building a portion of the purchase-price, usually one-fourth. This custom was abolished.

So far as the compulsory acquisition of land for a factory, school, hospital or any other public purposes was concerned, Charan Singh got a rule added to the Land Acquisition Manual of U.P. in 1949 to the effect that no cultivable land could be so acquired if *usar* or uncultivable lands was available within a radius of half a mile from the spot. The Government of India followed with an amendment in the Land Acquisition Act to the above effect as late as some fifteen years after.

The law of pre-emption under which a landowner was entitled to pre-empt the sale of land by a co-sharer to an outsider was repealed. This law was a prolific source of litigation and corruption and its repeal resulted in immense relief to the peasantry.

Section 198 of the ZALR Act provided that, next to a recognised educational institution, imparting instruction in agriculture, landless agricultural labourers in the village had the first right to be admitted to all such lands as the Land Management Committee might like to let out for cultivation under Section 195 or 197. Also, while all other applicants or allottees were liable to pay an amount equal to ten times the rent of the land calculated at the hereditary rates, no such amount was payable by a person belonging to any

of the Scheduled Castes. Rules under this section also provided for preference being given to landless agricultural labourers in allotment of abadi sites by the LMC. Provision was made in the Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1953 also that, while preparing a Statement of Principles, land was to be set apart for Harijans and landless agricultural labourers in the village for purposes of extension of their abadi.

As originally proposed by the Drafting Committee under Charan Singh's chairmanship and approved by the Cabinet in its meetings held in Naini Tal from 12 to 17 May, 1949, the ZALR (Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms) Bill roughly provided that no tenant of sir and khudkasht lands who had been given the status of a sub-tenant under the existing law or adhivasi (though entered as a trespasser) of the land of those zamindars who paid Rs 250 or less as land revenue (those of bigger zamindars having been declared sirdars rightaway) and no tenant of a tenant, that is, no sub-tenant shall be ejected. In including the 'trespassers' in the above decision the Cabinet accepted his contention that, at least, 95 per cent of them were genuine tenants but had been entered in the revenue records as trespassers owing to collusion between the zamindar (landlord) and the *patwari* (the revenue record-keeper of the village).

Conferment of security of tenure on the tenants of sir and khudkasht lands and sub-tenants was the only economic or agrarian demand made by the provincial Shoshit Sangh —an association of the exploited—a rapidly growing organisation of the extreme section of the backward classes and Harijans in the eastern parts of U.P. An announcement at a public meeting organised in the interior of Allahabad district in June, 1949 and attended by Charan Singh that Congress proposed to grant the status of bhumidhari or sirdari to all the adhivasis (including the so-called trespassers) after an expiry of five years from the enforcement of the legislation re-abolition of zamindari, had an electric effect and resulted in virtual disbandment of the Shoshit Sangh. The workers of the Sangh had now no grievance left and, attracted by the revolutionary character of the land reforms, joined the Congress in large numbers. It soon became apparent, however, that leading Congressmen coming from higher castes, who controlled the organisation throughout the State, did not welcome this development.

The Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill, as introduced in the Legislature on 7 July 1949, however, contained a provision (clause 237) that in districts which Government may notify, an intermediary who held less than 6.25 acres under his plough was entitled to resume such area of land from the adhivasis as may make his holding 6.25 acres, provided he could not make up the deficiency by bringing his vacant land under cultivation (which was or was to be vested in the Gram Samaj).

As already stated earlier, ejectment of all tenants whatsoever, stood stayed since 1946. After the ZALR Bill had been referred to the Select Committee, the Revenue Minister, Thakur Hukam Singh, proposed that at least those who were entered as trespassers should be made liable to ejectment forthwith, but he could not carry the Select Committee with him. As a gesture to his attitude, however, the Select Committee agreed, much against Charan Singh's wishes, to upgrade the limit of 6.25 acres mentioned above to 8 acres and, instead of the landlord, it was the ejected adhivasi who was left to find for himself and recover the requisite area from the Gaon Samaj (village community) as best he could.

Two provisions of the ZALR Bill, viz these relating to non-ejectment of adhivasis and prohibition of subletting in future were targets of sharp criticism by some Congressmen, particularly, by those belonging to the eastern districts of the State. Charan Singh was bitterly attacked on this account in a Divisional Conference in Banaras which he addressed in October, 1949, as part of a state-wide programme—the reason obviously being that most of the Congress workers in this division (as well as in most other parts of mid and eastern parts of the State) who came from socially higher sections of our society, particularly Rajputs and Brahmins, did not usually cultivate even their own lands (entered as sir or khudkasht in revenue records) with their own hands and were in the habit of letting them out to members of Scheduled or Backward Castes or cultivating them with the aid of labourers who were allotted as a part of remuneration a plot or two as tenants-at-will. Even members of the Socialist Party coming from the central and eastern parts of the State were not reconciled to the provision against subletting in future. This will be clear from a resolution tabled by Shri Rameshwar Lal, PSP member of the Assembly from Deoria district, entered in the agenda for 13 September 1955. The resolution enjoined upon the State Government to lay down a

new law or so amend the existing law that no rights will accrue to a tenant or mortgagee if the land the lessor or the mortgager holds, is not more than 3.25 acres.

Ten years later, viz., on 17 November 1965, the leader of the Praja Socialist Party, Shri Genda Singh who had joined the Congress and was appointed Agriculture Minister by Smt Sucheta Kripalani, vehemently supported a proposal sponsored by the latter for allowing all bhumidhars and sirdars, irrespective of the area they held and whether they suffered from any disability or not, to let out their lands to others for cultivation (emphasis added).

Obviously political ideology is not always relevant where a man's economic interest or the interest of his class is concerned. Here in the matter of land reforms, both interests overlapped one another.

In order that landlordism might not raise its head again, the law was so framed that, in future, title and possession over a piece of land would not get separated into the hands of two persons. Under the new dispensation if a cultivator sold away his hand or allowed it to be auctioned for non-payment of land revenue, taqavi or debts of a cooperative society, or, if he was a bhumidhar, for non-payment of a private debt, the purchaser would also be entitled to possession: the seller will have no right to retain possession as an exproprietary tenant as of old. Nor was a cultivator allowed to usufructuarily mortgage his land, or, if he was able-bodied and of sound mind, to let it out to another person unless he was serving in the Armed Forces of the Union or serving a sentence of imprisonment or receiving education in a recognized institution, but had not attained the age of 25 years or unless the lessee was an educational institution. If he did, and he was a bhumidhar, he forfeited his title to the lessee: if he was sirdar, he and his lessee would both be liable to ejectment at the instance of the Village Community, or, failing it, the Collector. Partnership in cultivation was, however, permissible both to a bhumidhar and sirdar.

Further, in order to ensure that land did not again get concentrated into a few hands, Charan Singh later on, viz. in 1958 introduced an amending provision to the ZALR Act to the effect that (instead of 30 acres as originally provided) nobody along with his or her spouse and minor children, if any, would, in future, be allowed to acquire land which would make his holding more than 12.5 acres or 20 standard bighas including the area, if any, that he

might already be holding. (This concept of a family was, later on, borrowed almost by the entire country.)

In order that further sub-division of tiny or sub-basic holdings may be discouraged the ZALR Act, as amended in 1954, laid down that a joint holding or holdings where they did not exceed 3.125 acres or five standard bighas in size could not be partitioned through a law court. Originally, this figure stood at 6.25 acres. If the co-sharers could not carry on amicably and one or more of them approached the court, the land shall be auctioned amongst themselves and sold off to only one of them. In regions where holdings had been consolidated, it was further laid down that, if land was sold to a person other than an adjoining farmer and the seller's *chak* of which the land formed a part, consisted of less than 3.125 acres, the chak shall be sold in its entirety. There was no restriction on the area that might be sold if the purchaser was an adjoining farmer.

While, as a result of abolition of landlordism, the land revenue demand rose from Rs 9.2 crore to Rs 22.3 crore, the exchequer was burdoned with payment of compensation and a rehabilitation grant to the erstwhile landlords. Every landlord was entitled to a compensation equivalent to 8 times his net assets in the form of State-guaranteed bonds, but the smaller ones were also given a rehabilitation grant whose amount varied in inverse proportion to the amount of land revenue that was payable by them. The net assets of an intermediary were determined by deducting from his gross income an amount of land revenue to which the intermediary was assessed, the amount of agricultural income tax, if any, which he had to pay, local taxes and cesses payable by the intermediary before abolition, and an amount equal to 15 per cent of gross assets to cover the cost of management and irrecoverable arrears of rent.

A cheap, clean and effective machinery for assessment and payment of compensation and rehabilitation grant to millions of zamindars, small and big, was set up which completed its job within record time, as also a machinery for realization of land revenue which has worked smoothly and at a very small cost to the State without any complications, ever since.

As a commentator said:

The work relating to the preparation of compensation rolls is in itself a huge job. In U.P. alone, about 10 million compensation rolls will have to be prepared. Intricacy of such work when records of the last 10 years or more have to be seen, should not be under-rated. The government has to scrutinize the doubtful contracts entered into by the zamindars. There will correspondingly be huge work relating to the transfer of lands to the cultivators. Since appeals to the District Courts and High Courts are provided at each stage, the courts will be flooded with objections and controversies. The administration will also have to decide whether the zamindars are to be taken over in one batch or only gradually. (Vide Charan Singh, *Recent Trends in Agrarian Reforms*, Delhi: Atma Ram & Sons, 1962, p 169).

In order to assist the erstwhile zamindars or intermediaries (as they were called in the ZALR Act) out of the clutches of the money-lenders, their debts were reduced by a separate measure known as the Debt Reduction Act) roughly in the same proportion which the amount of the compensation that the landlords received, bore to the value of their lands calculated at a rate admissible under the U.P. Encumbered Estates Act, 1934. In a layman's language, the debts were reduced by 60 to 80 per cent. Further, it was provided that proceedings for recovery for this reduced amount could be taken out only against three-fourths of the compensation and rehabilitation grant payable to the ex-zamindar. If the decretal amount, to the extent it was relatable to landed property acquired by the State, still remained unsatisfied the creditor could not proceed against the bhumidhari or sirdari land, if any, that the ex-zamindar might be holding. The outstanding amount was rendered unrealizable.

If, however, the debt was an unsecured one and the creditor chose to proceed against the compensation or rehabilitation grant of the debtor, the amount of the bond auctioned shall, for purposes of adjustment of the decree, be appreciated in the proportion which the above-said multiple under the U.P. Encumbered Estates Act bore to 8, which means that satisfaction of the decree for every rupee of the bonds sold off, was appreciated 2½ to 5 times.

The ZALR Act applied to the land owned by public trusts, whether religious or charitable in character, just as it did to private lands. So that the tenants of the above-mentioned trusts or institu-

tions were given the benefit of land reforms in an equal measure with tenants of private lands. With a view of safeguarding the public interest, however, the State Government granted an annuity in perpetuity to those institutions over and above the compensation they were otherwise entitled to. An annuity was equal to the amount of the net assets of the trusts concerned minus an amount calculated at 2½ per cent on their compensation.

The ZALR Act also laid down that the land-revenue payable by the sirdars and bhumidhars will remain unaltered for the next 40 years. It will not be irrelevant to point out here that when ten years later, viz. in 1962, the then Chief Minister, Shri C.B. Gupta sought to increase it by 50 per cent. Charan Singh who was Agriculture Minister of the State at that time opposed the move tooth and nail and provided the intellectual opposition to it in a long confidential memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, dated 19 September 1962.

The opening para of the memorandum ran as follows:

> In order to finance the Third Five-Year Plan, the State Government has introduced a Land-Holdings Tax Bill which seeks, in effect, to raise the land revenue payable by cultivators today by 50.0 per cent. There are, however, following five very good reasons why the State Government should not proceed with this measure:
>
> (*a*) The economic condition of the peasantry does not justify any increase in its financial burden;
> (*b*) The land in Uttar Pradesh is already fully taxed and the villager or the agriculturist is not lagging behind in his tax effort;
> (*c*) The tax is unnecessary, for the necessary funds can be found, and the desired results obtained in other ways;
> (*d*) The Bill will prove to be politically a most damaging measure for Congress; and
> (*e*) Any increase in land revenue will run counter to an assurance solemnly given to the masses and incorporated in the ZALR Act, 1952 to the effect that revenue demand of the State will not be increased for the next forty years.

The matter went up to the Planning Commission and the Congress leadership in New Delhi: the note on the subject which Charan Singh addressed to New Delhi on 29 September 1962, ran into 45 pages. He had earlier made it clear to Shri C.B. Gupta that he would resign if the State Government committed a breach of faith with the peasantry. Ultimately, the proposal was dropped.

3

Criticism Answered

Perhaps, it will not be out of place to reproduce here an article written by Charan Singh in reply to the various kinds of criticism levelled by opponents of the Congress against the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill as or in the form it was referred to a Select Committee by both Houses of the U.P. Legislature. The article was published in the *National Herald*, Lucknow, on 16 August 1949 under the caption "Abolition of Zamindari in U.P.: Criticism answered" :

The U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill is now before the public. It has received enthusiastic and almost universal support in the Press and on the platform. Still there has been criticism in some quarters, interested or uniformed. That such a far-reaching measure which will tear our entire rural structure from the very roots, will meet with opposition, be it owing to ignorance or design, was only to be expected. It is proposed here to reply to the main objections hitherto raised and to refer to some other relevant matters.

As the reader must be aware by now, the Bill seeks to remove all zamindars to the extent they are mere rent-receivers, that is, all intermediaries between the State and the tiller irrespective of the size of their estates, to vest in the State legal title to all land in the U.P. and to confer bhumidhari rights on all those in lawful cultivatory possession irrespective of their present status or nature of tenure today, but in the case of a tenant or a sub-tenant, only on payment of 10 or 15 times respectively of the annual rental payable to the zamindar. A bhumidhar, it may be stated here, will have the right to transfer, right to put the land to any use he likes and right to reduction in his rental by half. All non-cultivated land of whatsoever kind shall be managed by the village community which has already been vested with certain judicial and administrative powers under the Panchayat Raj Act. All zamindars shall be paid a com-

peasation equal to eight times their net income, and those paying Rs 5,000 or less as land revenue, a rehabilitation grant, too, which will vary from two to twenty times the net income and in inverse ratio to the amount of land revenue payable, the total of the two payments coming to 137.5 crores for the entire province.

Future Tenure

Provision has been made for establishment of cooperative farms, even under compulsion in given conditions, and all possible state aid and encouragement thereto has been guaranteed. In order that exploitation of man by man may not emerge on land again in future, letting or subletting by way of either an ordinary lease or an usufructuary mortgage, and also capitalist farming by way of an increase in the area of a joint family holding beyond 30 acres, have been prohibited altogether, attempts at evasion being visited with confiscation outright. So that uneconomic holdings may not multiply, holdings of ten standard bighas or less have been declared impartible, and those of bigger size shall not be so partitioned as to render a share or parcel less than minimum ten bighas in area. No revenue settlement shall take place or increase in State demand come into effect for the next 40 years. These in brief are the main provisions of the Bill which covers 310 clauses in all.

During the stage this gigantic legislative measure was under preparation, it was vehemently propagated by opponents of the Congress that it was an inefficient regime to have taken an unduly long time to formulate its proposals, that, in fact, it was doubtful whether the Congress Government was at all honest or serious in its professions regarding abolition of zamindari. The critics forgot, however, that we had not only to abolish the zamindari, that is, not only to destroy, but also to rear a durable structure instead, that will answer the needs of the present and stand the test of times ahead. And construction of every sort, much more so, construction of the bases of society which amounts to planning for the future, requires fore-thought and calls for application of soundest statesmanship. "Abolition of Zamindari" is a negative slogan, whereas those in charge of affairs have had to produce a positive solution—an alternative land system.

Russian Parallel

Such critics have always had Russia in mind. But while Russia

destroyed the existing system in haste, she had no plan ready and took full ten years to evolve a substitute. From 1917, the year of the Revolution, to 1927, the year when collectivisation was finally decided upon, they had to change their land policy half a dozen times, which let to much misery and avoidable national loss. In February 1917, all land was integrated in the communes and redistributed among its members on old principles. Eight months after, Lenin, with a view to getting the support of the peasantry in elections to the Constituent Assembly, raised the slogan of "loot that which was looted". In February 1918, all ownership in land was abolished, and it was to be distributed to working people on the principle of equalised land possession. All dealings in land were forbidden. A year later, when the Communists found themselves in unqualified control of state power, all land was proclaimed a single state fund, "all forms of individual land possession" were declared to be dying out: big Soviet state farms, communes and other forms of associated farming were pointed out as "the best means towards organising a system of farming on socialist lines". But this proved a damp squib; the peasants did not respond. In March 1921, therefore, was announced the New Economic Policy with a view "to develop a national economy based upon the real psychology of the well-to-do peasant whose motives and sentiments", Lenin admitted, "we have unable to change during these three years." Compulsory deliveries of grain were reduced, rouble was revived and buying and selling in open market allowed. In 1924, the Communists further "deviated" to the right and the Government changed its attitude entirely. Land taxation was placed on the monetary basis, and peasants were allowed to rent out land, hire labour, and also purchase agricultural machinery.

Here we have taken only three years—years of abnormal stress and strain to the Government—to evolve a system which will be entirely acceptable to our peasantry. While the Russian system, if they had the freedom, would be rejected by the peasantry even today after more than two decades of its establishment.

Capitalists

Yet another objection, which has nothing to do with the merits of the scheme of abolition, but often voiced in connection therewith, is that we are partial to the capitalists inasmuch as we are not nationalising industries simultaneously. The reply is that while the

Congress is committed to nationalisation of big and basic industries, the capitalists and the landlords cannot be put on the same footing. "The capitalist performs at least an active function himself in the development of surplus value and surplus products. But the landlord has only to capture his growing share in the surplus produce and the surplus value created "Without his assistance."

Secondly, nationalisation is not going to bring about any fundamental change in the living conditions of the industrial proletariate; for, they will simply exchange private employers for the state and will still work in the same factories for a regular wage as before, while abolition of zamindari means a change in the peasants' life. Next, large-scale industries employ a very small proportion of our people, 2.25 millions in all, compared to the numbers that are employed on land. So, statesmen have necessarily to apply their energies first to liquidation of zamindari, the worst ill of the body politic, just as a doctor would concern himself first with treatment of fell diseases rather than with that of comparatively minor ailments. Lastly, unless we have trained technical personnel at our disposal and unless moral and administrative standards markedly rise nationalisation in the immediate present is likely to result in lowering of production instead of increasing it.

Now as to the method of abolition, only three methods are known to history. The first is provided by Japan whose two hundred and fifty feudatory chiefs, called Diamyos surrendered in 1868, their rights, administrative powers and hereditary distinctions to the Emperor of their own free will. They were simply guaranteed a fixed percentage of the income of their old territories. Their example, was followed by the inferior nobility called Samurai and some 400,000 in number who were at first confirmed in the enjoyment of their revenues, but in many cases the hereditary principle was abolished. These pensions amounted to something like £12,000,000 a year. This was a heavy charge on the national funds. But the problem was solved largely by the Samurais themselves. In 1873 an enabling Imperial Decree commuted the revenues of the Samurai at the rate of six years' purchase of hereditary pensions held and four years' purchase for life pensions. The Samurari voluntarily accepted the arrangement according to the spirit of the times, as a recognition that their utility had departed. No country in the world can offer similar example of self-sacrifice for the common good on the part of their landed nobility. It released a wave of

patriotism which carried Japan within a short time of six decades to the first rank of nations in the world community.

The second example is provided by the Russian Revolution of 1917 where, consequent upon the utter defeat of Russian armies at the hands of Germans, a large number of tenants rose in armed revolt; the persecution of the boyars—the land-owning gentry—had surpassed all limits. The fury against the landlords extended even to their possessions, and much valuable property, including even things that were of obvious value to the peasants, such as farm machinery and animals, were senselessly butchered.

The third is furnished by Ireland, Denmark, Germany, Rumania and other European countries where landlordism was abolished by law, instead of by sword, and landlords were compensated.

The stage for the first method has passed; had our zamindars offered to tread on the path of Japan, Congress government and the country would have heartily blessed them. The second course is, in view of the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, neither desirable, nor, in view of the fact that political power now rests with the masses themselves, is it necessary. The third and the only proper course left for us, is that of abolition by pen—by non-violent means. And it is this that is being pursued.

Compensation

Now about compensation. This question is closely related to the method of abolition. In Japan the landowning gentry accepted nomial compensation, because they had already decided to efface themselves in the interest of the country. In Russia no question of compensation arose because nobody who could claim it, survived, for the zamindars themselves were abolished along with the zamindari. In all other countries, where the feudal system was liquidated by the state through legislation, compensation had to be paid, law had to proceed on certain principles and to take account of all the parties affected.

Those who advocate the policy of confiscation usually refer to the questionable means whereby some of the land was obtained in the past. But how are the equities to be adjusted between the various persons through whose hands quite a good proportion of it has passed during almost a century now? Also, the propriety of punishing a great-grandson for the sin of his ancestors is doubtful particularly, when at least a few of them have atoned for the sins

of their ancestors by actively participating in the latter-day struggle for freedom.

The critics can, and sometimes do, point to the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi expressed to Mr Louis Fisher in two interviews granted by him in June, 1942. Mahatmaji, when questioned about the role the peasantry was expected to play in the upheaval which actually burst on the country in August following, had declared that they would seize the land, without anybody having even so much as to ask them to do it, and compensation could not simply be paid. Why then is it being paid at all? Because Mahatmaji was talking of a revolution which, along with the foreign domination, would have consumed, if not the entire social structure, at least, the existing land system, which served to prop up the foreigner, in its flames. We failed him then, and cannot complain now. It was, therefore, the same Mahatma who, in the changed circumstances, advised the Congress High Command in December 1945, at the time the Election Mainfesto was drafted, to provide for "equitable compensation".

As for the rates, the zamindars have pleaded that it should be left to the courts to decide what is equitable. But were the courts to do it for every bit of land, abolition of zamindari might well be postponed till Greek Kalends. Everywhere the procedure followed in regard to land has been for the legislature—the representatives of the people—to lay down the principles, to say what they consider equitable, and for the courts only to determine the actual amounts.

Socialist Critics

The Socialist critics of the Bill, for want of any major defect or defect of principle in the schemes have concentrated on the hugeness of the compensation that is proposed. They would make payment of compensation conditional on redistribution of land "through curtailment of rights in respect of sir, khudkasht and grove lands"" and would not pay more than one lakh of rupees to anybody. It may suit them now to say whatever they like, but their own leader, Acharya Narendra Dev, in his memorandum submitted to the Zamindari Abolition Committee, did not attach any such condition, would put the upper limit of compensation payable to an individual at five lakhs, and estimated the total compensation at Rs 100 crores. Whether curtailment of large farms has any relevance to payment of compensation, and whether the gap

between 100 and 137.5 crores is so great as to get into hysterics over it or as can be magnified into a difference of principle, is for the reader to judge.

Now that compensation has to be paid, there are only two courses open. Either the State may pay it in instalment bonds or ask the tenantry to pay it cash down. Those who advocate the first alternative forget that, inasmuch as all taxation is, in the last analysis, shifted on to the producer, compensation will ultimately have to come from the tenants, the tillers of land, who form the vast majority of producers in the province. The State cannot simply pay the compensation out of a juggler's hat.

Bhumidhari Rights

The Bill leaves the operation to the tenants either to pay it up today and acquire bhumidhari rights in the bargain, along with fifty per cent deduction in rent, or to pay it up by instalments in the form of rent payable today and to remain content with sirdari, or cultivatory rights only. This enabling, but a vital provision has formed the target of attack, mainly on the ground that tenants have not the wherewithal to pay. Well and good: if they have not, nobody will compel them to. But the U.P. Government believes that, although the agricultural classes are not so well-off as the city-dwellers or manufacturing classes, or, as prosperous as those of other advanced countries or as it would like them to be, still they have the means to pay up ten times their rental. In 1940, the currency notes in circulation in the country amounted to the value of 290 crores of rupees; in 1945, the value leapt to 1180 crores. If anything, it must have gone higher by now. True, the traders and industrialists have made their piles during the war; yet, a major part of the liquid currency has found its way into the villages. That rural indebtedness was, as a consequence, wiped out by 1942, at least, in Uttar Pradesh, is a fact to which all those conversant with rural affairs must testify.

Further, the critics fail to take note of the peasant's passion for the land; in fact, it will take to be a peasant to realise the lure which land has for him. Land instils a sense of security and carries an assurance of future gain which no other form of property does. It is living property. Money and other assets will be used up, but land never. Men dies, but land remains. For generations past, the peasant has been dreaming to see the day

when he will be able to call the land under plough his own; that dream stands fulfilled today. Can this fulfilment or the satisfaction that the tenant will enjoy in acquiring full dominion over his holding be measured in terms of money or material goods? No, it is imponderable. He will part with all that he possesses, even the ornaments of his wife in order to become a bhumidhar.

Tenant's Gain

The gain of the tenant, even if calculated in terms of money, is incomparably great. Suppose, he possesses five acres of land; on an average he will be paying Rs 25 as rent today. On payment of Rs 250, he will be liable to pay in future Rs 12.5 annually, which will in no case be enhanced for the next forty years. This means that he stands to earn or save Rs. 500 in forty years that is double the amount that he pays today. At the bank rate, Rs 250 would multiply only to Rs 400 during the same period. Further, and what is more, today he cannot sell his land, or raise any loan on its security: on acquisition of bhumidhari rights, the value of his land will shoot up at least, to Rs 7,500 at Rs 1,500 per acre.

The country, or the province, too, stands to gain very substantially by this scheme. Today, our production is almost what it was in 1939, and the currency has multiplied fourfold since. According to the law of supply and demand, therefore, prices have also gone up almost fourfold, or 378 per cent, to be exact. There is a demand for consumer goods in the countryside and we cannot satisfy it. Our schemes for pushing up agricultural and industrial production will take five to ten years to materialize. The result is that the consumer, with the purchasing power in his pocket, has gone in for foreign goods, which has led to an adverse balance of trade to the amount of 95 crores of rupees for the entire country. Payment of compensation by instalment bonds would have amounted to creation of another 137.5 crores of fresh money, which would have had a marked bullish tendency on the market. Payment cash down by the peasantry would, on the contrary, mean mopping up of so much purchase money from several millions of pockets, to be gathered, substantially, only in 30,000 pockets, for, that alone is the number of zamindars paying more than Rs 250 as land revenue. This means there will be, after abolition of zamindari, so many times less purchasers of consumer goods which means there will be disinflation, and prices

will go down. The economic situation, instead of worsening, will have greatly improved.

Bonds

Issue of land bonds would have amounted to mortgaging of the future of the province for forty years or so. And were depression or even recession to set in, there would be a demand for reduction in rents, which, with so overwhelming a percentage of votes that the peasantry will command, would be simply irresistible. Concession of the demand would result in crippling of the capacity of the province for nation-building activities, or going back upon the promises made to landlords and devaluating their bonds, if not cancelling them altogether.

Hearts at Rest

This provision should, further, set the zamindar's heart at rest; at least, the bigger zamindar was not being paid the market price. To spread the payment of whatever compensation he was to get, over a period of four decades or so, with a not very remote probability of devaluation or cancellation hanging over his head, was not fair, he argued. It is not necessary to go the whole hog with the zamindar, to realise that there was force in his pleadings. He will now get in cash whatever he does: and—this is still another good point of the scheme,—as he cannot afford to waste the amount in cars, Alsatian dogs, or, race-horses and the like, he will invest it in industries, which, consequent on ruin of the Punjab and the incapacity of the middle classes to save, and therefore, to invest, are suffering for want of capital.

More Capitalists

Another objection that is trotted out, is that the scheme amounts to creating, in the form of bhumidhars, so many times more capitalists or zamindars than the number that are being abolished, that exploitation will continue. A careful study of the Bill will, however, dissipate all such fears. What is being abolished, is landlordism, the landlord-tenants system, and not all interests in land. On enactment of the measure, there will be no tenants, big or small, left in the U.P. Sub-tenants, too, who had never enjoyed any right, or assurance of any rights, will be getting a chance of promotion to bhumidhari after five years, and, as letting is being

prohibited absolutely (except in the case of disabled persons for the period of their disability), no tenants will come into being in the future, too, and, therefore, no landlord. Mere right of transfer do not make the bhumidhar an exploiter, for, only he will purchase or possess land who is prepared to cultivate it himself. It does not matter to society if B takes the place of A as a peasant; only what the Government is concerned with is that no exploiter shall come into existence in future and this has been doubly assured. By putting an upper limit to the farm for the future, even exploitation of fellow-man as a farm labourer has been largely eliminated. In face of the above, to call the bhumidhar, a peasant proprietor that he will be, a capitalist, is a perversion of facts. He will not be performing a capitalist's real job of accumulating capital. And, although occasionally employing others, he will necessarily be performing an important and larger part of the manual labour himself.

Uneconomic Holdings

Still another criticism by which the opponents lay much store, is what no remedy for uneconomic holdings has been provided in the Bill. The reader will remember that care has been taken to avoid coming into existence of uneconomic holdings in the future. Also, an uneconomic holder will have, in the absence of a co-operative farm in the village, the first claim on land that may be reclaimed by the village community. Still, frankly enough, there are uneconomic holdings and will remain: for, there is simply not enough land to go round, and it cannot be created. Socialist spokesmen in the Provincial Assembly suggested two remedies, viz. to distribute the land equally among all the peasants, or, at least, to cut down big farms, say, those above fifty acres in area, and allot the excess land to uneconomic holder.

Redistribution

Now there are at least 75 lakhs of peasant families in the province. Is it a feasible proposition to disturb the possession of all of them and then to distribute the entire land equally? Nothing may be impossible but it will take fifty years to do so by which time, provided the country is firmly set on the road to progress, it may be unnecessary to do so. But, suppose such redistribution is possible and can be brought about in a day; will the new equalized holdings be eco-

mic? The total cultivated area is 413 lakhs of acres today; whereas putting the economic holding at the figure at which the socialists themselves put it, viz. 12.5 acres per family, we would require 900 lakhs of acres. And there are only 80 lakhs of acres recorded as "cultivable waste", a very small proportion whereof being actually capable of reclamation. Where from will the critics bring the needed 475 lakhs of acres or so?

As for cutting down of big farms, there are only nine thousand zamindars owning amongst these were nine lakhs of sir and khudkasht land, which gives an average of one hundred acres each. These farms can release 4.5 lakh acres for distribution; there may be an equal number of tenant farms of this size, but exact figures are not available. However, how many farms will this surplus area of nine lakh acres or so serve to make economic? For, we have to remember that not less than two-thirds of existing farms are uneconomic. Further, if we decide to tackle this business of cutting down of farms, demarcation of the excess area and its settlement on the very few out of so many who must clamour for it, we must wait for yet another five years for the achievement of our aim. Moreover, this curtailment of big farms, which does not relieve the agrarian situation in any appreciable degree, has nothing to do with objective proper of liquidation of landlordism, and, if the country's interest at all so requires, can be taken up conveniently at some future date.

Landless Labour

This Bill carries no message of hope for the landless, is yet another criticism that has been heard. It may not be out of place to allay an apprehension in this regard that has been voiced, viz., that the position of the landless people is likely to be worsened inasmuch as nobody will, in view of an absolute prohibition of letting, give any land to his farm labourer in lieu of wages, or, enter into a partnership for cultivation. This argument has no foundation; the position in regard to both kinds of employment has not been changed at all, but remains the same as before. Settlement of land in lieu are for duration of service, and a working partnership, do not amount to letting under the Bill.

As for a positive step in favour of the landless, inasmuch as the Bill vests the entire non-cultivated land in the village community as a whole, it gives them as definite a stake and interest in land as

possible in the circumstances; also, they have been declared owners of their houses, from which they could be ejected almost at will till yesterday without payment of any compensation at all.

Cooperation and Compulsion

Some of the critics have, for want of a better solution, been driven to suggest compulsory cooperative farming as a way out of uneconomic holdings or a way of employing the landless. Cooperative farming, as will be seen, has not been forgotten. But it cannot be forced on the people wholesale. Now does "compulsory cooperation" make any sense. It may be "compulsory collective" farming but, by no stretch of imagination, can anybody call it "cooperative farming". Further, even if compulsory collectivisation is possible, does it solve the problem? *First*, in view of the compulsion exercised peasants will lose the necessary incentive and production will go down. Pooling of labour resources; involved in collective farming, will reduce the self-regulated peasant of today to a labourer, which situation he will resist to the bitter end. *Secondly*, the basic reason why small holdings should go, is that they do not provide full work to their present holders. But does their merger into larger units create the much-needed work, not only for their present occupants but for another 25 per cent of extra hands? No, it does not. Further, instead of finding employment for the landless, find cooperative or collective farming will increase unemployment, for joint ownership of animals being unworkable, machinery will come increasingly into use, which will displace labour.

What else is the remedy, then? It is the establishment throughout the countryside of a network of cooperatively-organised handicrafts or small cottage industries as also small mechanised industries run with electricity supplied from the hydro-electric dams that are under construction. It is such decentralised industry alone that can find employment for the vast number of people, who are in India far more readily available than capital, and who today either have no work at all or are under-employed. That small industry gives more employment per unit investment than big industry, is a fact now admitted all the world over. The stage passed long ago when reduction in the cost of large-scale production giving rise to increased demand, increased production, led to extensification, and therefore, to increased employment. Now, thanks to advanced technology, we require proportionately fewer men to produce additional

wealth, with the result that manufacturing industry is today not able to employ the same percentage of people as it formerly did.

Man-power

But even if land were available to employ all our man-power, there is a vital reason why our countrymen should prefer, or, be provided with, industrial employment today rather than agricultural, for that is the only way to make the country prosperous. In a just society, labour should be rewarded according to its quantity and quality, that is, the amount of energy expended and the skill required, so that an hours' labour devoted to, say, ploughing ought to earn about the same reward as an hour's work by an ordinary factory machine-minder. But, in actual fact, according to a calculation made by an economist on the basis of statistics taken from twenty-two countries "all other human activities are, on an average, 4.35 times more productive than agricultural activity". I need not go into the reasons of this disparity here, but that is why the agricultural class has everywhere and always been comparatively poor, poorer than the industrial, trading and other sections of the community. And that is again why, as a consequence of policies deliberately pursued by their statesmen, in all countries—even the most agricultural—rural population is going down and, as time passes, forms a smaller and still smaller proportion of the whole population. Our country, however, has a different tale to tell. Here the proportion of the population depending directly on agriculture increased from 61 per cent in 1891 to 73 per cent in 1921. And the percentage of population supported by industry fell from 12.3 in 1880 to 9.7 in 1931.

Decentralisation

So, it will not be a service either to the country or to the landless people themselves to tie them down to agricultural occupation. Standardisation and hydro-electricity have made it possible today for a country to become industrialised without its population being herded, as in the last century, into big cities, or without uprooting them from their village homes. So we have to bend our energies towards decentralized industry, as the only panacea of unemployment. Indeed, in order to strike a correct balance between industry and agriculture, we will have to divert into industries quite a good percentage of our peasant population which is under-employed today.

In this connection it may not be out of place to dispose of one other point: Socialist critics prophesy development of rural society into two clear-cut camps and, in the near future, a sure conflict between the two—the exploiting bhumidhar on the one hand and the exploited landless labour on the other. In U.P., however, according to the census of 1931, while the number of cultivators stood at 13,807,157 that of agricultural labourers amounted only to 3,419,185—the ratio between the two working out at 100: 25. There can, therefore, be no question of wage slavery and a proletariat, and consequently no question of a class-war, in a society where the number of potential employers is far greater than that of those available for employment.

Production

To take another objection: people have not been wanting who have complained that the abolition scheme does not help in relieving poverty or increasing production. Suffice to say that, if anything, this scheme provides the incentive to produce more as no other scheme possibly could. A peasant-owner has been known to work harder and for longer hours than a tenant or a wage-labourer. Those who doubt the veracity of this statement would do well to go to the villages of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts and compare their condition with those of villages in Avadh; there is a world of difference, the reason lying in the tenure that obtains in the two places. In the former ownership and possession of the farm are mostly linked in the same hands, not so in the latter.

Secondly, the claim has nowhere been made that we need do nothing else to increase production but abolish zamindari. Close upon the magic of ownership as a factor in production, follow the needs for water, manure, good seed, education and communications leading to markets. The U.P. Government is addressing itself to the task of providing all these in right earnest but this is not the place to detail these programmes.

A Suggestion Refuted

The leader of the zamindars in the U.P. Assembly very naively suggested that, instead of piloting such a huge Bill in the teeth of their opposition, the Government might as well bring a short Bill enabling the tenants to acquire proprietary rights by paying ten times their rental to the landlords directly, and that the zamindars would

welcome it.

Perhaps, it will not be inadvisable to point out here that Charan Singh had prepared a Bill entitled "Land Utilization Bill" in 1939, exactly to the above effect, but for reasons following, did not press it for Cabinets' consideration, viz. first, that, were his proposal to be accepted, the village community would get no lands, the small zamindars will get much less than they will, under the existing scheme, the religious and charitable endowments would be deprived of their present incomes which are guaranteed under the present Bill, the State would be cheated of its residuary title to land which would now vest in the State, and the zamindars will still lord it over the tenant who is unable to find the money.

The above are the only main objections that have been voiced till now. In framing the Bill as it is, the reader will find, the provincial government has not been swayed by any slogans and has not been confused with means. Looking to the circumstances that obtain in our country where land is scarce compared with population, and to the type of civilization that we hope to develop, it has not been daunted in producing a measure that best serves our needs simply because it does not bear the stamp of the socialist or communist approval. The oppressing landlord who has tyrannized without limit and the oppressed tenant who has sorrowed too long, both would have disappeared: in their place will arise a peasant who will be at once a proprietor and a wage-earner, a position of mixed interests that offers a challenge to all Marxist theories. The bhumidhar of our conception will provide an unshakeable base of democracy and will stand four square to all evil, disruptive winds that may blow from any quarter.

The old land system in the plains of Uttar Pradesh consisting of 96.8 per cent of the total land-holdings area in the State, viz. 4,54,42,000 acres, has been overhauled from the roots. Thus, all bonds of feudalism that tied one man to another, have been completely snapped. Exploitation has been ended at one stroke and nobody in the village has been dependent upon any other person for his land, home or hearth, wells or trees. There is no longer any zamindar or tenant, any *lambardar* or ryot left in the vast expanse of the countryside of Uttar Pradesh.

All intermediaries between the State and the actual cultivator in U.P. have been effectively eliminated as would appear from the

following table. The percentage of area leased out to area owned in U.P. was almost negligible. The following table contains data regarding leasing in the year 1953-54 throughout the country collected in a census of land-holdings and cultivation held by the Government of India:

TABLE 6.1

State	*Percentage of area leased out to area owned*
1. Andhra Pradesh	8.6
2. Telengana	13.6
3. Gujarat	8.3
4. Kerala	10.0
5. M.P. (1)	6.7
6. Madras	9.7
7. Maharashtra	17.9
8. Mysore*	20.5
9. Punjab	27.0
10. U.P. (3)	1.1
11. Rajasthan (2)	17.4

(1) Excluding Vindhya Pradesh Area.
(2) Data related to 22 selected Tehsils.
(3) Data related to 204 sample villages.
*In respect of holdings above 10 acres.

For years before the achievement of independence, Congress leaders had emphasized that the period of rural decay coincided with the entrenchment of the zamindari system during the period of British rule over India. The zamindars, in the opinion of all important leaders of the Indian independence movement, were a reactionary element obstructing the development of the Indian rural economy. Abolition of zamindari was advocated, therefore, as a first and necessary step to rural progress. The emphasis on a political and economic programme rooted in peasant ownership of the land, incidentally proved a factor in rallying mass support to the independence movement. The early introduction of the Zamindari Abolition Bill in the U.P. Legislature following independence, was, therefore, the normal conclusion of a programme of action which had been planned for a long time past.

In the broadest possible terms, therefore, the aim of land reform legislation touched on all important phase of the life of the com-

munity. In a predominantly agricultural country, especially where farming was a preferred way of life rather than simply an occupation carried on for material gain, measures for land reform and their affects were political and social as well as economic in character.

Much thought was given to political aspect of the land reform, since the drafters of the legislation were cognizant of the need to ensure political stability in the countryside. But strengthening the principle of private property where it was the weakest, that is, at the base of the social pyramid, the reforms created a huge class of strong opponents of the class-war ideology. By multiplying the number of independent landowning peasants there have come into being a middle-of-the-road, stable rural society and barrier against political extremism. It is fair to conclude that the agrarian reform has been the wind out of the political sails of the disrupters of peace and opponents of ordered progress.

On the social side, with forty types of tenure reduced into three, viz. bhumidhari, sirdari and asami,. the reform narrowed down, rather eliminated, the traditional difference between classes in the village. It does not require much imagination to appreciate the fact that when the landlords lost much of their affluence they also lost much of their influence. The landlords as a class were finished while, at the same time, the erstwhile tenants' status and prospects were raised. The tenant with almost no rights to defend and no power to invoke, no property to cherish and no ambition to pursue, bent beneath the fear of his landlord and the weight of a future without hope, has given place to the peasant with right and a status, with a share in the fortunes and government of his village.

The economic significance of the measure lay in the fact that while the large zamindars no longer fulfilled any economic function commensurate with the income derived from their estates if ever they did, the farmers have acquired one thing they want most of the world over, viz. a piece of land they could call their own. One does not know how to evaluate this factor, viz. this newly-gained incentive to improve the land, in economic terms, but if the famous English agriculturist, Arthur Young, was right in saying that "the magic of property (ownership of land) turns sand into gold", then, the new owners of land in Uttar Pradesh stand in a good way of bettering their economic status within, of course, the broad limitations imposed by the small size of their holdings.

4

Land Records and the Patwari

In the wake of, rather immediately prior to enforcement of ZALR Act on 1 July 1952 throughout the plains of Uttar Pradesh excepting the old princely domains of Rampur and Banaras and urban areas of the State, complaints that a large number of persons falling within the class of adhivasis, had either not been recorded in the revenue papers or, if recorded, had been or were being ejected by force or fraud, began to pour in the revenue offices at district headquarters as also in the Revenue Secretariat in Lucknow.

Two steps were immediately taken to remedy this state of affairs. By an order passed under Section 342, ZALR Act the period of six months allowed by the Act for a dispossessed asami or adhivasi to sue for recovery of his holding, was enhanced to one year. Secondly, a legislation known as the U.P. Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act 1952 was put on the Statute Book on 7 November 1952, which entitled a Sub-Divisional Officer or even a *tahsildar* so authorised by Government, to record the name of a person in revenue papers after conducting a summary enquiry on the spot. These two legislative measures served not only to check further ejectments but to restore their lands to hundreds of thousands of poor and resourceless persons without any ado at all.

Complaints of ejectment of the underdog, however, still persisted. It was the patwari who was the devil of the piece in this connection. The U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee has observed as follows about the patwari in 1948:

> Errors inadvertently or deliberately made by him in the village records affect powerfully the fortunes of the cultivators; a dishonest patwari, has, therefore considerable opportunities for extortion. Most of them have made good use of the opportunity; of the disputes fought in the revenue courts at a ruinous cost to the cultivator many would not have arisen at all but for the wrong entries in the revenue records. (Vide Report, p 117.)

The powers of the patwari, therefore, needed to be curtailed. The radical change in the revenue law that the ZALR Act had brought about, also called for a drastic revision of the *Land Records Manual*. Accordingly the revision of the manual was undertaken and finalised in the last quarter of the year 1952.

It may also be mentioned here that some tehsils were reorganised and enclaves in various districts existing for about a century past and causing a confusion in administration, were abolished.

Under the old system, the patwari was permitted to record on his own authority all cases of usufructuary mortgages, successions which in the judgement of the patwari were undisputed, names of persons cultivating on behalf of the recorded tenants or sub-tenants, new lettings of vacant land by land-holders, changes in rent, as also modifications in consequence of alluvion and dilluvion in cases of occupying land without title.

In certain cases the patwari was also required to record statements of tenants and land-holders in respect of changes to be recorded in his khasra and khatauni. He could thus determine whether a person was entitled to land or was a trespasser, whether a surrender was valid or not, whether an abandonment had taken place, and so on. In short, the patwari had vast powers of determining the status and rights of cultivators, which, if abused, gave rise to lengthy and costly litigation in revenue, civil and criminal courts.

Under the new system of maintaining land records all the powers mentioned above were withdrawn. The simple duty of the lekhpal (who replaced the patwari) was to ascertain merely the fact of possession on the spot and to report all changes of possession which came to his notice, to the higher authorities for necessary enquiries. In particular, he was prohibited from making any changes in the name of tenure-holders, either in the khatauni or in the khasra. If at the time of his *partal* he found any person other than the one recorded in the tenure-holders' column to be in actual occupation of the field, he could merely record his name in the "remarks" column of the khasra, but not the nature of the possession.

So, the patwaris who numbered more than 27,000 and constituted the most vital link in the revenue administration, launched a state-wide strike in February 1953. They demanded, first that the new

Land Record Manual be withdrawn, as it had deprived them of much of their authority. Secondly, that their salaries should start from Rs. 50 with Rs. 25 as dearness allowance instead of the current rate of Rs. 25 with Rs. 12 as dearness allowance per month. Finally, that they should be given a permanent status as government employees with a right to pension.

Without waiting for a month or so more, as the Revenue Minister, Charan Singh (who considered two of their demands out of three as reasonable) had advised them to do, they submitted their resignations *en masse* in January 1953, with effect from March 4 next believing that this step of theirs would bring revenue administration to a standstill and, as a consequence, Government itself to its knees. Leaving out 2700 of them who had not resigned and nearly 2500 of those who had immediately withdrawn their resignations, however, Government accepted the resignations of the rest, viz. 22,650 or so right away. Charan Singh's statement in this connection issued on 5 February, 1953 went on to say as follows:

> The State Patwaris' Association had for some time past been putting forth certain demands which, for various reasons, Government found itself unable to accept. However, I told two representative of theirs who saw me on 11th January last that now that a new order had been rung in, such demands as had any chance of acceptance were under the active, sympathetic consideration of Government and that they could expect a decision in the very near future. But that tactics of the kind they adopted in Basti District or general strikes such as the Association organised throughout the State on 9 January, would not pay.
>
> A new demand was, however, developing in the meanwhile, viz. that the new *Land Records Manual* which had stripped them of much of their authority, abuse whereof, as everybody who knows anything of our countryside will testify, was so wide-spread, and taken away privileges like that of two appeals and a revision even against an order of a transfer, be withdrawn. It is mainly this demand, as is apparent from the Association's resolution of 26 January that has led to the threat of *en masse* resignations.
>
> The patwaris could not bring themselves round to the view that the values and standards which they had imbibed under the old order, were now out of date and that the social and agrarian revolution that had been ushered in Uttar Pradesh, demanded

of them a new code of conduct. Fixed as their eyes are on power and privileges hitherto enjoyed, they hope to dictate terms to Government under the belief that, being 27,000 in numbers and performing as they do the vital task of maintenance of land records, they are indispensable. But for the Government to yield to intimidation would amount to a surrender of its functions. And for any body of public servants to resort to the methods the patwaris have—methods which are usually adopted in this country by political opponents of the Government in power—constituted the grossest form of indiscipline. Once a public servant develops this mentality, he ceases to be a fit instrument of efficient service. Orders are, therefore, being issued to the District Officers to accept the resignations right away. Government had never been slow in appreciating the useful work that the patwaris were rendering, but it will not hesitate to seize this opportunity which has offered itself, of writing on a clean slate in the new set-up.

Government's acceptance of the resignations received wide applause throughout the State from the peasantry as also others. It was greatly commended and unanimously approved by the Legislative Assembly in a debate held on the question on 20 March 1953.

Charan Singh, however, met with much opposition in the higher echelons of the Congress Party to his policy regarding the patwaris. Even Prime Minister Nehru was persuaded to write a letter to Pandit Pant on 17 April 1953 to reconsider the question—that "where we have to deal with a large number of people, it seems unwise to adopt a policy which prevents any kind of settlement" and that "to drive them to despair will not be a good thing and we should make every effort not to leave a trail of bitterness and frustration behind".

But Charan Singh would not flinch. He told his colleagues and his leaders that if Government did not waver, Government servants would not think of staging a strike or issuing threats to Government for the next ten years. His prophecy proved true for 13 years instead, that is, till 1966 when non-gazetted employees of the Secretariat and departmental offices at the State and divisional headquarters struck work during the period when Smt Sucheta Kripalani was at the helm of affairs in Uttar Pradesh and, at one time, succeeded in paralysing the administration for a period of nine

weeks at a stretch, viz. just before General Elections were due at the end of February 1967. For political reasons, his advice in this regard proved a lone voice and was not accepted, with the result that government servants all over the country took the cue from Uttar Pradesh and indiscipline in administration had since then become the rule rather than an exception throughout the country.

The patwaris having been dismissed, an institution of lekhpal was created to replace the old order—lekhpal who, as the reader has already seen, enjoyed fewer or lesser rights than the patwari did. Lekhpals took about nine months to recruit, train and occupy their stations. Out of the 13,000 lekhpals that were recruited, the Revenue Minister ordered specifically that a reservation of 18 per cent was to be made for the Scheduled Castes. Actually, however, owing to lack of qualified candidates, only 5 per cent could be recruited. Formerly, there was no Harijan at all in the cadre of patwaris. For the future the Revenue Minister issued an order that 36 per cent of the vacancies will periodically go to Harijans in order to make up the leaway.

The dissident patwaris had not expected the Government to accept their resignations. On 2 March 1954, nearly 750 writs under Article 225 of the Constitution were issued by the Allahabad High Court at the instance of ex-patwaris who had challenged the acceptance of their resignations and their subsequent replacement by lekhpals. Nothing came of this, however, and the reorganisation of village administration continued as planned.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties, particularly, the Praja Socialist Party took substantive action by organising the kisans to strengthen their opposition against the Government. With the result that there was a steady stream of complaints about faulty entries in land records. On its part, Government had come to realize that the foundation upon which implementation of Government policies relating to abolition of landlordism and land reform must rest, was the preparation of a basic record of tenancies. So, Charan Singh made an announcement in July 1954 that a State-wide drive for the correction of land records was to begin in mid-August—a seemingly impossible task since in many areas these records went back more than 100 years.

Land Records Correction Drive

From the beginning of the Second World War, viz. 1939 the

maintenance of land records was grievously neglected: the all-out War effort left little time for routine administration. The advent of independence brought its own problems: in particular, the various measures of land reform undertaken in quick succession demanded exclusive attention of the land records staff. The mass resignation of patwaris in 1953 caused a further set-back. The deteriorating condition of land records, therefore, demanded urgent attention: accordingly a concerted drive to correct the khataunis* which became the basic record of rights in the new set-up, ushered in by zamindari abolition, was undertaken in all the districts of the State barring the hill districts of the Kumaon division.

The correction drive was started about the middle of August 1954, along with the kharif partal and continued till November 1954. Before the drive was launched printed leaflets were widely distributed in the villages, inviting the peasantry to take advantage of this opportunity to get the records corrected free of cost and assemble on the appointed date and time to hear the entries in the khataunis to be read out by the lekhpal in the presence of the presidents and other members of the Land Management Committees. This publicity evoked considerable interest, and the response was eminently satisfactory.

For the purpose of the drive, each tahsil was divided into three sectors assigned to the SDO (Sub-Divisional Officer), the tahsildar and the naib tahsildar. Each of these officers was required to visit all the villages in his sector.

The lekhpals read out the khatauni, both Parts I and II, to the assembled tenure-holders at a suitable place in the village selected in consultation with the president of the Land Management Committee, and made a record of all entries which were challenged by the tenure-holders.

After these lists had been verified by the Supervisor *kanungos*, they were sent to the SDO, tahsildar or naib-tahsildar, as the case might be, in accordance with the division of work between these officers for orders.

On receiving the errata lists, the SDOs, tahsildars and naib-tahsildars were required to pass orders summarily, as far as possible, on the spot, except in cases relating to changes in the recorded rent or land revenue, class of tenure, term of cultivation and division

*Registers of *khatas* or land-holdings.

of holdings, which were to be decided in regular judicial proceedings.

With but minor exceptions, the work was well done. The SDOs, tahsildars and naib tahsildars did extensive touring to supervise the work of lekhpals and supervisor kanungos. This will be clear from the fact that about 34,86,000 wrong entries were discovered and corrected.

In the month of September 1954 and during the budget session of 1955, some half-a-dozen Congress MLAs made serious allegations of corruption against the lekhpals on the floor of the House. The Revenue Minister immediately issued an order to the Land Reforms Commissioner, as the departmental head was known, to ask the collectors to allow the MLAs who had a grouse, to choose five villages each in their constituencies by the method or random sampling land record entries of which the tahsildar will check in their presence. The LRC was to send a report to the Government as early as possible. The reports showed that the allegations had no basis in fact. The note which Charan Singh wrote to the Chief Minister, Dr Sampurnanand, in this connection and the reports he received from the department, are given below:

CM

We had, in the last quarter of 1952, revised the *Land Records Manual* so drastically that practically no powers were left to the patwari (now called lekhpal) to make entries which might adversely affect a cultivator: with his powers gone, chances of corruption were also reduced to the minimum. This was the major reason why the patwari resigned *en bloc*.

The strength of the lekhpals was reduced from 27,000 to 18,000, of which 13,000 were newly recruited. The collectors were told repeatedly to ensure that corruption did not creep again into the ranks of these subordinate employees. I was all along under the impression that the lekhpals although they were inexperienced, were on the whole more clean than their predecessors. I was, however, astonished when two MLAs from the Congress Party, one from Sitapur and the other from Gorakhpur made wild allegations against the lekhpals in general terms on the floor of the House in September last. I wrote letters to these members to be good enough to furnish me with the actual instances of corruption of lekhpals which had come to their

notice. The gentlemen from Sitapur promised to do so but never did : the gentlemen from Gorakhpur did not even think it necessary to acknowledge my letter.

Again, similar allegations were made in the Budget Session. After the debate was over I had, as CM might remember, convened a meeting of the Party just to acquaint myself with the reactions of the Party to the activities of the Revenue Department which affect the villages, or, 85 per cent of our people so vitally. The question of corruption amongst the lekhpals also cropped up, although very incidentally: the Party as a whole was satisfied that all possible steps to eradicate corruption had been taken and were at their wit's end to make any new suggestions. I however, offered to three worst critics, one from Basti and two from Gorakhpur to choose five villages in their constituencies by random sampling where they might check the entries of the lekhpals in the tahsildar's presence. A report from Basti has been received which is enclosed. I would request CM to kindly go through these papers. It is needless to add that this report should give us great satisfaction, indeed.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
25 May 1955

Copy of D.O. No. 1411/VII-9 (54-55 LRO, from the Collector, Basti, to the Land Reforms Commissioner, U.P., Lucknow, (dated 17 May 1955):

Please refer to your D.O. letter No. 655/LRC/ST dated 6 April 1955, regarding the *qabiz* entries and their verification by Shri Raja Ram Sharma, M.L.A.

In accordance with the random selection instruction, the following five villages were selected in the presence of Shri Raja Ram Sharma, M.L.A. Shri Sharma further expressed a desire to verify village Mahala particularly and his request was acceded and this village was also checked by him:

(1) Manjhari, (2) Soharwalia, (3) Bardan, (4) Belleeha, and (5) Ghulamijot.

The result of verification duly signed by Shri Sharma and the tahsildar is enclosed in original. "It is, indeed, a matter of genuine satisfaction that not a single wrong entry could be detected in any of the six villages where the verification was thus

carried out."

Copy of the report of tahsildar Khalilabad dated 11 May 1955 to DLRO:

Shri Sharma was taken to the above mentioned villages according to the programme fixed and he was given full opportunity for, and allowed complete freedom in making enquiries regarding qabiz entries made by the lekhpals in the remarks column of the khasras of these six villages. The enquiries made by Shri Sharma were exhaustive and verifications were made by field to field enquiry. The MLA could not find even a single mistake or incorrect entry in all these six villages. This fact he has admitted in his verification report.

As regards the complaints of Gorakhpur MLAs the D.O. No. 144 (F. 83) H., dated 23 May 1955, from Shri N.P. Chatterji, Collector, Gorakhpur to Shri J. Nigam, ICS, Land Reforms Commissioner, U.P., Nani Tal, said as follows:

Please refer to your D.O. No. R-656/LRC/ST, dated 18 May 1955. The following villages were selected by the random sampling method in the constituencies of Shri Dwarka Prasad Pandey and Shri Sukhdeo Parsad, MLAs for the verification of qabiz entries:

1. Bishanpur Bhadehar	1. Chauka Ahtamali
2. Ahirauli	2. Gharbhuria
3. Shyam Deorwa	3. Khairani
4. Baida	4. Amraha
5. Saunreji (tehsil Mehrajganj)	5. Madhopur (tahsil Pharenda)

2. Shri Sukhdeo Prasad, MLA, refused to undertake any checking in these villages. He said that did not agree with the method applied for the selection of these villages. He proposes to request the Revenue Minister to permit him to take up villages of his own choice.

3. Shri Dwarka Prasad Pandey has already done the checking in three villages but, since he did not find the results very encouraging, it is not known when he will complete the other two villages.

The reader would be interested to know what Wolf Ladejinsky, an agrarian expert of international fame, had to say in connection with land records of the various States.

"In many States" he said, "tenancies are on an oral basis, and a tenant cannot assert security of tenurial rights unless they are recorded. Without a written record any and all provisions relating to security of tenure cannot be enforced. In the Uttar Pradesh, a few million records were corrected or newly inscribed in the course of a special drive organised by the State Government in connection with the implementation of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act. The same cannot be said of a sizable part of the country, particularly of Andhra pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Kerala Madras, Mysore and Orissa. *Evidently, the Uttar Pradesh method, largely based on the determined leadership of Charan Singh, then Revenue Minister, was not to be duplicated in many other States.*" (Emphasis added)

*Louis J. Walinsky (Ed) *Agrarian Reforms – An Unfinished Business*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 387.

5

Demand by Landlords for Resumption of Land from Tenants: Charan Singh's Refusal

Landlords demanded from the Government that they be allowed to resume lands held by their tenants, "irrespective of the nature of the latter's tenure," up to a prescribed limit which should be set at three times the family holding. Resumption was to be on the grounds of personal cultivation only and limited to the area which the adult workers in a family could bring under cultivation. In Bombay and Punjab the State governments set this limit at fifty acres and in Hyderabad at five times an economic holding. Inasmuch, however, as there was a built-in contradiction between the right of resumption, on one hand, and security of tenure, on the other, a risk of large-scale ejectment of tenants was inherent in the above recommendation made in the First Plan (1951-56). How this 'risk' materialised in actual fact, will be clear, *inter alia*, from the example of the former States of Bombay and Hyderabad whose agrarian legislation had provided for resumption of land by the owners even before the First Plan was formulated or approved.

The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics brought out a report about the working of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Land Act, 1948. The Act was intended to confer security of tenure subject to the landlord's right to land for personal cultivation. According to the report the protection was, however, not effective in practice. Of the area which was tenant-cultivated in the first year of enquiry, i.e. 1948-49, only 58.1 per cent continued to be held by the same tenants at the end of the enquiry, i.e., 1952-53; 38.7 per cent was either resumed by the owner or the tenant was changed. In over 80 per cent of the cases, the landlords obtained voluntary surrender by the tenants.

An enquiry made by the State Government of Hyderabad indicated that during the period 1951-54 the number of protected tenants decreased by 57 per cent and the area held by them, by 59%

mainly due to illegal or so-called "voluntary surrender". Another enquiry was conducted into the social and economic effects of Jagir abolition and land reforms in ex-jagir areas of Hyderabad which observed as follows:

> The Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1950 gives security of tenure to protected tenants subject to a limited right of resumption by the landlords. Out of the originally created protected tenants in 1951, only 45 per cent still remain to enjoy their protected status in 54 per cent of the area held by them, while only 12 per cent have purchased their lands and become owner-cultivators. Only 25 per cent have been legally evicted. 22 per cent have been illegally dispossessed while 17 per cent have voluntarily surrendered.

During the First Five-Year Plan, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, PEPSU and Kutch were the States where the landlord's right to resume land was subject to an upper limit, but the tenant was not entitled to retain a minimum area of cultivation.

In other parts of the country either no action for protection of the tenants was at all taken or ejectment was stayed only temporarily.

The Planning Commission, therefore, proposed two safeguards in the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), viz. that:

(1) Where the land-owner has under personal cultivation land which exceeds a family holding but is less than the ceiling limit, he may have the right to resume land for personal cultivation, provided that his tenant is left with a family holding and the total area obtained by the owner together with the land already under his personal cultivation does not exceed the ceiling; and

(2) if the land-owner has less than a family holding under his personal cultivation he may be allowed to resume one-half of the tenant's holding or an area which, together with land under his personal cultivation, makes up a family holding whichever is less, provided that the tenant is left with not less than a basic holding.

Inasmuch as the concept of "personal cultivation", "ceiling limit",

"family holding" and "basic holding" was not easy to define, the legal provisions in this regard differed from State to State, and so their implementation. As a result the safeguards proposed in the Second Plan proved of little or no avail. For example, in Assam as owner could resume 33.3 acres and in Punjab, 30 acres, subject to the minimum area to be left with the tenant. In Andhra Pradesh the landlord could resume the entire area. In West Bengal if a landlord held 10 acres or less he was permitted to resume the entire area from his tenant but if he held more than 10 acres, he could resume 10 acres or two-thirds of the area owned by him, which ever was greater (subject in each case, to a maximum of 25 acres).

Absentee landlords living in distant towns proceeded to resume lands from their tenants and got them cultivated through hired labour or through crop-sharing. In some cases landlords sold out or partitioned the land which they personally cultivated and having thus brought their holdings below the permissible limit, proceeded to evict the tenants to resume further areas. Also, in an attempt to strike a fine balance between the rights of the landlord and the interest of the tenant, the law was rendered too complex for the poor tenant to understand. Nor was the necessary vigorous administrative support forthcoming to back up the tenants who were generally in too weak a position both socially and economically to insist on their rights.

The Planning Commission's Panel on Land Reforms gives an excellent example of legal loopholes and its adverse effect on the position of the tenants under the law. The panel states:

> Though a restriction was placed in many States on the extent of land which a landlord may resume by ejecting tenants, no provision was made for the resumable area as distinct from the non-resumable area. Thus, though the landlord's rights of resumption was limited in extent, he was able to exercise an undue influence over all tenants which added to his bargaining power and rendered the law ineffective. He could even extort money by threatening to resume land.

Complete figures for the country are not available but one may point out that in Maharashtra alone, in the decade following the first tenancy reforms in 1948, land owners resumed 17 million acres for personal cultivation and two out of every three 'protected'

tenants lost their lands. (*Report of the Committee on Tenancy Reform*, Planning Commission, March, 1966).

According to a foreign scholar who made a study of land reforms in India, the Congress policies or inefficiency of its government in this regard resulted an "an expropriation unheard of in the previous history of India".

This conclusion is amply brought out by a resurvey conducted in the seventies by the Registrar-General of Census Operations, Government of India, regarding the number and percentage of agricultural workers in India in March, 1971. The figures were found to stand as follows:

TABLE 5.1

Agriculture & allied activities	*March, 1961*		*April, 1971*	
	No. of workers	*Percentage to total number*	*No. of workers*	*Percentage to total number*
I. Agriculture (Proper)	1,18,286	71.45	1,29,161	71.61
(a) Cultivator	84,601	51.10	78,177	43.34
(b) Agricultural Labourers	27,918	16.87	47,489	26.33
(c) Other agricultural & allied activities	5,767	3.48	3,495	1.94
II Forestry & Logging	268	0.16	143	0.08
III Fishing	544	0.33	586	0.32
Total	1,19,098	71.94	1,29,880	72.1

Source: The National Accounts Statistics, 1970-71 to 1975-76, CSO, Government of India, January 1978, p. 126.

The above table shows that as a result of these ejectments or so-called "voluntary surrenders", the ratio of 16.87: 51.10 or 3:9 that roughly obtained in the country between the number of agricultural labourers and that of cultivators in 1961, changed into (26.33: 43.34 or) 3:5 ten years later, i.e. in 1971. The number of cultivators came down by 15 per cent and that of landless labourers went up by 56 per cent which means that millions upon millions of farmers particularly the marginal and small farmers, were ejected from their lands during the short period of a decade—farmers who had no alternative but to join the ranks of landless labourers.

The ejectment of the marginal and sub-marginal farmers continued in the seventies also, though at a slower pace. One should not

be surprised, therefore, if it is found that by the year 1981 the ratio of agricultural labourers to cultivators had changed to 30: 40 or 75: 100 (in place of 27: 100 in 1951).

On the other hand, statistics thrown up by the National Sample Survey (1961-62) and the All India Agricultural Census (1970-71) would show that, whereas 39 per cent of the holdings were less than one hectare each in 1961-62, this figure rose to 51 per cent in 1970-71 and the number of farms of more than 10 hectares each increased from 2 lakhs (with an average area of 17 hectares) in 1961-62 to 28 lakhs (with an average area of 18 hectares) in 1970-71. Further, while the large farms accounted for an area of 386 lakhs of hectares or 28.9 per cent of the total area in 1961-62 they covered 500 lakhs of hectares, that is, 30.8 per cent of the area in 1970-71. So that the large farmers or zamindars were successful in ejecting the small farmers or their own tenants from an area of 114 lakh hectares (=285 lakhs acres=456 lakh standard bighas during one decade, viz. the sixties). If the figures of ejectments made during the periods of 1947-81 and 1971-81 are available the area seized by the landlords or tenants-in-chief will be found to be much higher than 456 lakh acres.

Abolition of the landlord-tenant system and other land reforms carried out in the country since the dawn of political independence have, therefore, proved a curse rather than a blessing for our rural society."

It is, perhaps Charan Singh alone of all the Revenue Ministers in the country who refused to accept the advice of the Planning Commission altogether and did not agree to a single sub-tenant and even a person entered as a trespasser in the land records, not to speak of a tenant in U.P. being ejected. Owing to legislative and administrative measures undertaken during a course of five years since April, 1946 when the Congress Ministry (with Charan Singh as its Parliamentary Secretary for Revenue) had taken over, out of every 100 workers in cultivation in Uttar Pradesh (including unpaid family helpers), the proportion of workers who belonged to families of cultivating labourers to those who belonged to families of cultivators came down from (18:22 or) 22:100 in 1931 to (10:90 or) 11:100 in 1951, that is, just by a half. So far, however as "agricultural workers alone" in 1951 were concerned, the ratio between agricultural labourers and cultivators in the year stood

at 8.5:100. Out of 74.12 per cent of the workers on land 67.41 per cent were cultivators and only 6.71 per cent were labourers.

The reason for this satisfactory state of affairs in Uttar Pradesh consisted, first, in the fact that immediately after the approval of a resolution by the U.P. Legislative Assembly about acceptance of the principle of abolition of zamindari in the State, the Government issued orders on 1 September 1947 staying ejectment of all tenants and sub-tenants whatsoever from the lands in their possession. These executive orders were given legal sanction by making necessary amendments in the U.P. Tenancy Act, 1939. "Also the amending legislation, Act X of 1947, which came into force on 4 June 1947 provided *inter alia*, for reinstatement of tenants and sub-tenants in possession of their holding from which they had been ejected since 1 January 1940." Secondly, that the entire machinery of the Revenue Department got or was set immediately into motion on the merest report of harassment or attempt at ejectment of the meanest individual in the remotest corner of the State.

But, as the misfortune of the poor peasantry at the lowest rung of the ladder in Uttar Pradesh could have it, the ratio of 8:100 between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators that obtained in 1951 rose to 16:100 in 1961 and 35:100 in 1971. This is clear from Table 5.2 taken from the *Census Reports*:

TABLE 5.2

State	Year	
	1969	1979
1. Andhra Pradesh	0.76	1.18
2. Assam	0.07	0.18
3. Bihar	0.41	0.90
4. Gujarat	0 30	0.52
5. Haryana	0.13	0.33
6. Karnataka	0.28	0.67
7. Kerala	0.90	1.72
8. Madhya Pradesh	0.29	0.50
9. Maharashtra	0.51	0.83
10. Orissa	0.24	0.58
11. Punjab	0.24	0.47
12. Rajasthan	0.07	0.14
13. Tamil Nadu	0.47	0.97
14. Uttar Pradesh	0.16	0.35
15. West Bengal	0.41	0.83
ALL INDIA	0.33	0.61

The States showing substantial increase in the ratio of agricultural labourers to cultivators during the sixties were Assam, Karnataka, Orissa and Bihar in descending order. The ratio of agricultural labourers to cultivators was already very high in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in descending order in 1961.

So that if communism, whether of the moderate or extreme variety, has raised or is raising its head in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal or Bihar and discontent – even violence stalks some parts of the country—it is largely due to a breach between the profession and the practice of Congress leadership in regard to abolition of landlordism. Perhaps, there is no sphere where the gulf between official policy and performance was as wide as in the case of land reforms.

Charan Singh who was so solicitous of the interest of the poor peasantry, held the Revenue portfolio since June 1951 onwards and, as the reader has already noticed in the preceding chapter, land records in the State were efficiently maintained. What, then, lay behind the steep increase in the percentage of agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh as evidenced by the *Census Reports* of 1961 and 1971?

The reason for this increase lay in the fact that when Charan Singh resigned from the State Cabinet in March, 1959, the Revenue Portfolio was made over by the Chief Minister, Dr Sampurnanand to a colleague, viz. Thakur Hukam Singh, who, as the reader will find in later pages, was a great advocate of the right of the landlords to resume land from their tenants in the "sacred" name of personal cultivation. He had not only no love or sympathy for the poor and the under-privileged but entertained no anxious moments if the latter were anyhow ejected from the land under their plough. Nor did the Socialist Chief Minister Dr Sampurnanand himself believe in a system in which the peasant was the proprietor of the land under his plough (but in nationalisation or state ownership of land). As a corollary he had no sympathy with the adhivasis (or small cultivators, mostly sub-tenants or tenants-at-will who mostly belonged to backward classes) which meant that the underdog in agrarian structure of the State had no longer any well-wisher left in the Government circles at Lucknow. From April 1959 onwards he was ejected by force or fraud and collusion with the subordinate

officials of the Revenue Department. The latter got an opportunity to make illegal money during consolidation proceedings in which title to land could be questioned. With the result that the ratio of labourers to cultivators went up steeply from 8:100 to 16:100 within a short period of two years, viz. from April 1959 till March 1961.

It may be stated here that Thakur Hukam Singh continued to be the Revenue Minister till March 1967 and Dr Sampurnanand was succeeded by Shri C.B. Gupta as Chief Minister in December 1960, who continued till September 1963. Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani took over from him and continued till March 1967. None of these luminaries had any knowledge of economic conditions of the village or any sympathy with the underdog. In fact, as the reader will notice later, Shrimati Kripalani wanted to repeal certain radical provisions of the ZALR Act which favoured the underdog.

6

Struggle which Charan Singh had to Wage

The struggle which Charan Singh had to wage in favour of the weak and the helpless against his own colleagues in the State Cabinet and even against those who called themselves "socialists", is briefly narrated in the following pages:

As it has already been mentioned in the preceding pages, under the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, tenants of sir, as also tenants of the land of those intermediaries who were paying Rs. 250 or less as land revenue and their sub-tenants had been declared as adhivasis. They were to continue to pay to their landlords, viz. the ex-intermediaries or the tenants-in-chief, the same amount as they had been paying hitherto and, after the lapse of five years but within a time-limit notified by the Government, were entitled to acquire bhumidhari status on payment of 15 times the circle rate or the rent which their tenants-in-chief were liable to pay for the land in the adhivasis' possession. According to the original Act those of the adhivasis whose landlord was a disabled person at the time of letting out the land and also on 30 June 1952, were liable to ejectment, but only after a period of five years had lapsed, since the latter date. The Act as later amended against Charan Singh's wishes (being a mere Parliamentary Secretary as he was at the time), however, declared the adhivasis of disabled persons as liable to ejectment at will, that is, had rendered them asamis.

There was another important provision regarding adhivasis, viz. Section 237, under which those of the former intermediaries or tenants-in-chief, that is, bhumidhars and sirdars in the districts notified by the Government who did not possess any sir or self-cultivated lands, or the area of whose self-cultivated lands was less than eight acres, could respectively get their adhivasis, ejected to the extent of eight acres, or, to the extent by which their self-cultivated lands, if any, fell short of eight acres.

A demand, however, gradually developed though it emanated from a very limited section of the Congress Party that a notification

as envisaged in Section 237, should be issued without delay. Charan Singh's own proposal, however, was that all the adhivasis should be given an opportunity immediately to promote themselves to the status of a bhumidhar and no notification under Section 237 be at all issued.

In the early months of 1953, Congress had lost some by-elections to the Assembly. Three of these by-elections lay in Bahraich and were won by three ex-landlords or so-called Rajas. A member of the the Cabinet, Thakur Hukum Singh who came from this district (and was the Revenue Minister since August 1947 till June 1951) wrote a letter to Pandit Pant on 18/20 April 1953 saying that the main cause of Congress defeats consisted in Congress policies in regard to the adhivasis and the patwaris, prohibition of letting or sub-letting of lands in future and the scheme of Consolidation of Holdings. On reading this letter, one is left with an impression that the writer was in fact, unhappy with the entire policy underlying land reforms measures of the State Government. A month later Charan Singh, however, received a tell-tale letter dated 7 May 1953 from a defeated condidate himself, viz. Shri Bhagwan Din Mishra. Shri Mishra complained that tenants, mostly Brahmins and Thakurs, some of whom held an area of 200 to 4,000 bighas (one bigha being equal to 5/8 acre) each, were trying to throw out three sub-tenants whose ejectment had already been stayed under Government orders. That these sub-tenants and also those who were genuine tenants or sub-tenants, but whose names were not recorded in revenue records, were also displeased with Congress because their future was still uncertain and they faced a threat of forcible ejectment—in fact, some of them had already been ejected.

The Revenue Minister, Charan Singh, forwarded both these letters to the Chief Minister whereupon he convened an informal meeting of the Cabinet for 15 June 1953 in order to analyse the cause or causes of Congress defeats. Some of the Ministers gave their assessment orally. Dr Sampurnanand, however, submitted a written note at the meeting which is reproduced below:

CM

I have been thinking, as also all of us, about the serious defeats which the Congress has sustained in the recent series of by-elections. It would be an over-implication to believe that

absolutely the same causes are responsible for this phenomenon everywhere. There are special circumstances which have obviously influenced the results. The cases of Allahabad and Badaun easily come to one's mind in this connection. The behaviour of Muslims in general, which had become noticeable during the general elections, has become so marked that it cannot be ignored by anyone. Leaving aside the question of Muslims in general, it is an indisputable fact that ever since 1937 we have been trying to help the Ansari Community in every way. Not only have we shown special solicitude for their economic welfare but spent large sums of money over their education. In this effort, we went out of our way to anatgonize the body of Muslims represented by the Muslim League who accused us of trying to divide the Muslim community for our own political purposes. And yet the Ansaries almost in a body voted against the Congress candidate in Allahabad in favour of a person who has never had the reputation of being a pro-Muslim. This is a factor which will have increasing importance in future elections to the local bodies and the Legislature and we must pay the fullest attention to it. It would be a great dereliction of duty to refuse to discuss it frankly in all its bearings.

There are other aspects of the question which have a greater relevance in rural areas and are bound to have a great influence on the course of public affairs in the immediate as well as the distant future. We have launched a great experiment in supreme disregard of psychology whose laws are no more amenable to the wishes of political parties than were the waters of the sea to the ukase of King Canute. China and Russia have had schemes of Land reform, but they took the precaution to liquidate those whom they dispossessed. In Russia they were eliminated wholesale. In China the same deliberate decimation has not been carried out but they have been deprived of civic, and, to some extent, of civil rights also. This has made them a harmless, even if frustrated, section of the population. In India the zamindars have lost financially and in prestige and influence. Those of them who have to live in the villages, have, in many cases, to suffer the worst humiliation, but we have given them the vote, that is, the power of driving us out of office. There is absolutely no reason why, as a class, they should get reconciled to our regime. A fairly large number of the middle-class tenants

have also been affected by our policy of land reform and feel that they are in danger of losing much of their land and the income which the law, as it stood a few years ago, allowed them to enjoy. There cannot be much love lost between them and ourselves. It must be remembered that their numbers are large and they still wield an influence in the countryside, perhaps proportionately higher than their numbers might justify. We have antagonized the primary school teachers. The reasons why we cannot accept their demands are perfectly valid from our point of view, but as we know, the validity of an argument depends upon the premises and no one who does not accept our premises, as low-paid public servants, certainly, do not, will not accept our conclusions. We have broken their resistance for the present but not removed the frustration and the anger which it breeds - important, at present, but ready to flare up whenever an opportunity offers itself. The patwaris may not succeed in getting any respectable section of society to champion their cause openly but they are a fairly large body, educated according to village standards and united by social and economic bonds. They wield influence, specially on the members of the communities from which they come. Only recently Charan Singh is reported to have said at Ghaziabad that one of the objects he, in other words, the Government has in view, is to liquidate moneylenders. This means creating another class of opponents who also wield considerable influence. It comes to this that we have antagonized pratically every class which has so far possessed education, wealth, social status and, consequently, influence. Incidentally, it must not be forgotten that these people were, for obvious reasons, a powerful factor in the preservation of law and order.

There is another aspect of the question which must be considered even though it might be deemed reactionary even to refer to it. The wise administrator takes every element, in the subjective and objective situation, into consideration, however distasteful it might be to him. The classes to which I have referred above belong, in general, to the Brahmin, Rajput, Bhumidhar, Kayasth and Vaishya communities, namely the castes and subcastes usually grouped together under the title "higher castes". The measures which we have adopted, and apparently intend soon to adopt, have had the definite tendency of affecting ad-

versely 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.

Let us now see what our gains are, on the other side. Presumably, our public acts have benefited the landless and those who possessed very small holdings. The great majority of such people belong to what are broadly called the backward classes. Centuries of frustration and suppressed feelings of irritation keep them apart from the others. They have been activised by leadership of the kind symbolized by the Shoshit Sangh and instinctively distrust the great mass of Congress leadership. Whatever advantages we may confer upon them they are not likely, as a body, to come into our fold. There is every likelihood of the Allahabad experience with Ansaris being repeated with them. The kind of political leadership which can reach out to them easily, is that represented by groups like the PSP or the Communists.

This does not mean that the situation is hopeless. It only means that we have to come to a clear decision. To allow the situation to drift is not only to invite defeat in by-elections and consequent loss of influence in rural areas, but to let loose an unplanned revolution, which will blow up the whole social structure. A real clash between castes and classes will be a bloody fight and much of the work which we have done so far, will go up in smoke. I cannot say what the shape of things will be after the holocaust. We must, therefore, make up our minds to canalize the contending forces into evolutionary channels. The work of uplift of the backward classes cannot stop. They have to be helped to achieve cultural and intellectual equality with those who have so far enjoyed these advantages and, of course, ever legitimate opportunity should be allowed to them to improve their economic position. But, at the same time, the game of baiting the higher classes must be suspended. We must, somehow, win back their confidence. If the Soviets under Lenin could adopt the NEP, there is no reason why our statesmanship cannot rise equal to the task.

I am not in this note suggesting the steps that should be adop-

ted, but if my analysis of the situation is accepted as substantially correct and principles suggested at the end of the previous paragraph adopted, it should be possible for us to devise the necessary steps for implementing them. A government which with the best intentions adopts policies that make it loose its old friends without giving it new ones, cannot function for long.

Sd
(Sampurnanand)

As the reader must have noted, the burden of the above note was that, although it was the higher castes which had built up the Congress, land reform measures of the Congress Government, in particular, had served to alienate them and advance the interests only of the backward classes which, in Dr Sampurnanand's opinion, would in any case, drift to the rank of the Socialists and Communist parties, sooner or later. Such was the attitude of a senior Congress Minister with some repute for his Socialist leanings. Further, the reader will not fail to note that, in Dr Sampurnanand's opinion, it was Charan Singh who was the devil of the piece directly in three measures out of four which he attached or mentioned, and indirectly in the fourth also, viz. the one relating to withdrawal of strike by primary school teachers. For, they withdrew their strike when they realized that they would also meet the same fate as the patwaris whose resignations had been accepted *en masse*, had met.

In may or June 1953, it was decided by the State Government to extend the ZALR Act to the old Banaras State, subject to suitable modifications, with effect from 1 July next. Thakur Bans Narain Singh, a Congress MLA from this area, and one, Shri Ganesh Ram Yadav, who had been a good Congressman but stood up as a candidate against the Congress in the General Elections of 1952, and now proposed to rejoin the Congress, invited Charan Singh to a public meeting convened in the town of Bhadoi situated within the erstwhile Banaras State, with a view to celebrate the introduction of land reforms in this area on that date. The leadership of the District Congress Committee of Banaras (now known as Varanasi), however, as the reader must have already noted in preceding pages lay in the hands mostly of persons who were

opposed to conferment of any rights on the adhivasis and to prohibition of letting out of lands in future. So, they asked Babu Sampurnanand and Shri Kamlapathi Tripathi, a member of the Cabinet, to ensure that Charan Singh did not attend the meeting proposed to be held in Bhadoi on 1 July 1953 in connection with the enforcement of ZALR Act in the area—ostensibly on the ground that it was at the invitation of a non-Congressman that he was going to Bhadoi. Shri Kamlapathi Tripathi who belonged to Varanasi, wrote a letter to Charan Singh in this regard to which he made a suitable reply. Simultaneously with his reply to Shri Tripathi, he addressed a note to the Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Panth. The latter, however, asked him to carry out his Commitment and address the meeting which he did. A week or so later, the District Congress Committee passed a resolution condemning Charan Singh and asking the Pradesh Congress Committee to take disciplinary action against him.

To give another example of the attitude of the Congressmen of Varanasi towards him: beginning with Varanasi on 17 May 1953, Charan Singh was scheduled to address public meeting in all the Divisions to which representatives of Gram Panchayats, subordinate staff of the Revenue Department and Congress workers had been invited, the main object being to explain to them the duties and powers of Land Management Committee. The leading Congressmen of Varanasi inspired by the president of the District Congress Committee, Pandit Shyam Dhar Misra, did not, however, take any part or interest in the meeting held at the headquarters of their district on 17 May 1953.

In view of all that has been stated previously, regarding the adhivasis, the Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, asked Charan Singh to prepare a note on The Problem of Adhivasis. The latter prepared an exhaustive note as desired, and submitted it to Pantji on 7 August 1953. This long note carrying the caption, "The Problem of Adhivasis", with half of its portion consisting of some inessential paragraph and tables of statistics left out, is reproduced below along with a short forwarding note:

SECRET
CM
As promised, I have prepared a note on the problem of adhi-

vasis and the advisability or otherwise of issuing a notification under Section 237, ZALR Act. CM had suggested that a random survey may be held in some places just to have an idea of how many adhivasis will be affected if a notification is issued, the area of land held by them, the present means of livelihood of the bhumidhars and sirdars (ex-zamindars and ex-tenants-in-chief) who will be entitled to apply under the section, etc. To me such a survey does not seem to be an easy affair: nor will, perhaps, the necessary personnel be available for the purpose. Further, some figures are already given in the second volume of the *ZAC Report* which gives quite a fair idea of the dimensions of the problem.

I was inclined to send a copy of the note each to some of those members also of the Cabinet who appear to me to be in favour of the notification or who have not yet finally made-up their mind about it. But lest the note be inadvertently misplaced, I have given up the idea.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
7 August 1953

Many thanks, pl. sp.
G.
16.8

7

Note on the Problem of Adhivasis

Under the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act tenants of sir and occupants of the land of those intermediaries who pay Rs. 250 or less as land revenue and sub-tenants, have been declared as adhivasis. They will continue to pay to their landlords, viz. the ex-intermediaries or the tenants-in-chief, the same amounts as they had been paying hitherto and, after the lapse of five years but within a time limit notified by the Government, will be entitled to acquire bhumidhari status on payment of 15 times the circle rate or the rent which their tenants-in-chief were liable to pay for the land in the adhivasis' possession. According to the original Act those of the adhivasis whose landlord was a disabled person at the time of letting out the land and also on 30th June 1952, were liable to ejectment, but only after a period of five years had elapsed since the latter date. The Act as now amended, however, declares the adhivasis of disabled persons as liable to ejectment at will, that is, it has rendered them asamis.

There is another important provision in regard to adhivasis viz. section 237, under which those of the former intermediaries or tenants-in-chief, that is, bhumidhars and sirdars in the districts notified by the Government who do not possess any sir or self-cultivated lands, or the area of whose self-cultivated lands is less than eight acres, can get their adhivasis ejected to the extent of eight acres, or, to the extent by which their self-cultivated lands, if any, fall short of eight acres.

A demand is now being made, though it emanates from a very limited section of the Congress Party indeed, that a notification as envisaged in Section 237, should be issued. My own proposals, on the contrary, are that all the adhivasis should be given an opportunity here and now to promote themselves to bhumidharship and no notification under section 237 be at all issued.

The ZALR Act has brought about a tremendous revolution in the sphere of psychology and personal relations between man and

man: much can be said on this and other aspects of our land reforms and we can be justly proud of their far-reaching character. Roughly 40 per cent of the cultivated area is today held in bhumidhari tenure and 60 per cent in sirdari. Although the Act has not brought about any concrete economic change in the lives of the sirdars (for, they continue, and quite rightly, to pay the same rents now to the State as they were formerly paying to the zamindars), yet abolition of zamindari has meant a great social change for them and they can now walk with their heads erect. But, so far as the comparatively weaker and poorer section of our peasantry is concerned, there is absolutely no change—even no change in personal relations. The adhivasis not only pay the same rents, which are on the average, more than double of those payable by sirdars, and pay them to the same persons as before; they are still tenants and their future is uncertain. For them no zamindari has been abolished; they have no economic security. They have not much hope to cherish, for, the sword of Section 237 is still hanging over them as a class and nobody knows when and where it may fall. Our political opponents have taken full advantage of the situation. What our opponents think and say, would not have mattered, but what has alarmed me, is the knowledge that serious thought is being given to the proposal of issuing a notification under Section 237 even in our own circles.

Only the other day when I went to Bhadohi to address a meeting held to celebrate the abolition of zamindari in the erstwhile Banaras State, I was hard put to explain to the audience that it meant any change to them for the better. For, besides the area held by *Manzuridars* and other intermediaries in self-cultivation, that held by fixed rate (41 per cent) and occupancy tenants (41 per cent) who will all automatically acquire bhumidhari status, inasmuch as they had already been enjoying transferable rights in their holdings amounted to 82 per cent. If anything, there will be a diminution in the rights of these tenure-holders. And as long as Section 237 stood there I could not announce to those poor tenants who held 21 per cent of the entire land in subordinate tenure, that is, the adhivasis, that pucca rights of enjoyment had now been conferred on them and they need not be apprehensive of ejectment any longer.

The arguments in favour of a notification under Section 237 run somewhat as follows;

That such bhumidhars and sirdars should be given one opportunity of recovering and cultivating their land which was let out when letting was permitted by law, at least, to the area of as few as eight acres; that they have greater claim to retention; that the alleged sub-tenants were, in fact, their labourers or ploughmen and should not be allowed to retain the land which was given to them in lieu of wages, etc.

Now, to dispose of the last argument first; no figures are available but it would seem that not many persons are entered as sub-tenants of the land they held in lieu of wages for agricultural labour. Those who held land from intermediaries in lieu of any kind of service have been entered in part I of the khatauni and their number is not large. They have already been declared sirdars; so no question of their ejectment arises. Further, what is relevant and more important, if any body's "halwaha" is entered as a sub-tenant, it means that the tenant-in-chief or sirdars were actually carrying on cultivation and had roughly 90 per cent of the holding in their own physical possession. There is little meaning in taking away this small bit of land from a poor man for the purpose of giving it over to one who actually possesses not less than nine times as much as the former does.

As to the relative rights of the two persons to retain or get back the land; my reply is that land is a gift of Nature and he who is today making a proper use thereof, should be entitled to retain it in preference to him who did not exploit it while he had an opportunity to do so, but chose to exploit the labour of another fellowman, instead, by renting it out.

As regards the argument that the erstwhile intermediaries and tenants-in-chief, who did not cultivate any lands themselves before zamindari was abolished, should now be given an opportunity to recover their lands so as to make economic holdings: my submission is that inasmuch as a holder of even 20 or 25 acres (much less one possessing only 8 acres, 6.25 acres or less) could not live on rent even if he leased out his entire holding, such bhumidhars and sirdars (that is, ex-zamindars or tenants-in-chief) as have no self-cultivated lands of their own today, either owned a vast area so as to ensure them sufficient income in the form of rent, in which cases they will get considerable compensation, or, if they hold small areas only, had some other source of income which they considered less strenuous or more profitable than agriculture and to

which they took in preference to the latter. Shall we than give land to him who will either get enough money as compensation or who is already employed, that is, add another source of income or employment to one by throwing another, who should also be entitled to our solicitude in an equal measure, out of employment altogether? Further, inasmuch as, on the average, adhivasis' holds even less than one acre we will have to eject one to nine comparatively poorer persons for the sake of one person—for the sake of one who, we must remember, has also another string to his bow.

In counter-reply it has been said that rents payable by adhivasis particularly, in Banaras Division are very high, even Rupees fifty, eighty or one hundred per acre, thereby implying that the small lessors could maintain or have maintained themselves till now on rent alone. There might possible be a few such cases, but it could not be a general rule. I had an inquiry made from some of the District Magistrates of the Division about the incidence of adhivasis' rents per acre and also from that of Azamgarh. The figures which relate to 1359 *fasli* are given below:

Jaunpur	Rs. 13
Ghazipur	Rs. 9/8
Banaras	Rs. 19/9
Ballia	Rs. 10
Azamgarh	Rs. 8

We must remember that under the Tenancy Act of 1939 hereditary rights accrued to tenants in lands of zamindars, irrespective of whether they possessed any self-cultivated lands or not and whether they were able-bodied or disabled. Such rights accrued also in khudkasht lands which either did not partake of the character of sir, or, if they did, belonged to a proprietor who paid land revenue of more than Rs. 250 a year. The zamindars could not get these tenants ejected for the purpose of their own cultivation. It is true, however, that tenants of sir land of those zamindars who paid less than Rs. 250 as land revenue, did not acquire hereditary right. But "Sir" which is a Sanskrit word, means a "Plough" So, "Sir land" means the land under the land-owner's actual cultivation. Sir rights in land which is not actually cultivated, should, therefore, be regarded as fictitious and of no legal validity irrespective of the area of such land or revenue paid by the landowner. That is exactly what the ZALR Act has done, barring the lands of disabled

sir holders whose tenants have been rendered liable to ejectment at will.

If now adhivasis are sought to be ejected because the persons from whom they held the land possess less than a certain area of sir in self-cultivation or none at all, the same argument can be invoked in favour of ejectment of sirdars of those intermediaries who never had any sir or cultivated any lands at all, but now want to do so. If this position is accepted and a notification under Section 237 is issued, the ZALR Act will have to be over-hauled and the consequences will simply be disastrous.

As regards the claim of tenants-in-chief to ejectment of adhivasis, their case is still weaker. They had taken land from proprietors in order to till it themselves. Instead of doing so, they turned exploiters. There is not a single argument in favour of restoration of lands to able-bodied tenants who let out their holdings to the less fortunate members of the society, in order to extract higher rents than they themselves paid.

It is worth remembering in this connection that the ejectment of all adhivasis has remained stayed, except for some months and in some parts of the State, for the last seven years, that is, since the last Congress Ministry took over in 1946. It was stayed also throughout the period of the first Congress Ministry in 1937-39, and ejectment of sub-tenants in Avadh continued to be stayed throughout 1940-44. They have, therefore due to our policies followed almost consistently since 1938, come to entertain the hope that now they will not be ejected. Shall that hope be dashed to the ground at last?

Acharya Vinoba Bhave's movement has received blessings of the Congress Working Committee and of Congress Governments all over the country. It is aimed at giving land to those who are landless today. Whereas if a notification is issued it would amount to rendering landless those persons who hold land today. It will be an irony, indeed, and a strange commentary on our professions of sympathy for the underdog and for the ideals for which Acharya Ji stands.

Further, we enacted the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act barely eight months ago, merely to recognise the rights of those who fall within the category exclusively of adhivasi. A notification under Section 237 would mean taking away by the left hand what the right hand gave only a few weeks or months previously.

It will be a mockery of all that the Congress has stood for hitherto.

It is surprising to find that the Government policy on the adhivasis has come to be regarded by some friends as one of the causes of the seemingly growing unpopularity of the Congress as evidenced by successive defeats of our candidates in the by-elections to the Assembly held recently. As a matter of fact, however, this question of rights conferred by the ZALR Act on the sub-tenants was nowhere in issue. It could not possibly be raised in the city of Aligarh or Allahabad or the urban half of the Badaun constituency; in Deoria the slogan raised by our opponents was, on the contrary, intended to brand us as reactionaries inasmuch as land had not been equally divided amongst the peasants or given to the landless; in Bahraich our agrarian reforms have been listed as only one out of half a dozen causes of the defeat inasmuch as, it is alleged, tenants-in-chief had been alienated by grant of rights to sub-tenants (adhivasis) and the latter, because they were being baulked of the rights given to them under law by sheer physical force (as to why I need not mention here); in Sitapur according to all accounts it was the legislation on Consolidation of Holdings that was one of the issues and the question of adhivasis did not come in for any mention at all.

Granting that sirdars and bhumidhars who were denied the right to eject their adhivasis, voted against us, we should have for that very reason got several adhivasis' votes for every sirdar or bhumidhar vote that went against us. Also, it is forgotten that the sirdars and bhumidhars who have no adhivasis in their lands, number many times those who have. (For, the persons entered in Part I of the khatauni number 2,15,57,000, while those entered in Part II number only 41,21,003.) The question as to why these people did not vote for us, remains unanswered by critics of the ZALR Act.

May be, some adhivasis also voted against us in Deoria and Bahraich. But the question is whether we have much right to complain if they did so. It will bear repetition to say that they pay the same rents to the same old zamindars and tenants-in-chief as they did before, with the threat of ejectment still very alive. The bell of zamindari abolition has not tolled for them yet. Not only that: many of them are positively worse off for abolition of zamindari in

the State. Now that the right of the various classes of tenancy are being regularised on a permanent basis quite a good percentage of adhivasis even out of those whose names were recorded in revenue papers, let alone the unrecorded ones, have been ousted from their holdings by force. And those who will be rendered landless today will remain so for ever, for, letting has been prohibited, and rightly, in the future.

Little wonder than that they find no reason to be grateful to Congress Government or to enthuse over the ZALR Act.

Not only is there a demand for issue of a notification under Section 237, but the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act designed to secure correction of entries in favour of Adhivasis has come in for criticism in a manner as has made me look or feel like an accused in the dock. What has grieved me, however, is the fact that during the course of discussions on this and allied questions expression has been given to ideas entirely foreign to the atmesphere in which Congressmen have breathed and worked during the last three decades and a half. Particular classes and sections of society have been mentioned without realizing that we represent the people as a whole. It is forgotten that we are living in a fast-moving, dynamic age. Till now in Uttar Pradesh initiative, as far as the agrarian front—and this is the most important front—is concerned, has lain in our hands. This is conceded even by our inveterate foes in their private talks. As soon as this initiative passess into the hands of others, Congress would be a back number and cast on the lumber heap of history as so many organisations have been in the past.

The zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act was a revolutionary measure, but, at least in its initial stages, it did not require the Congress worker as such to do anything positive to ensure its implementation. The enactment of the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act, however, which was a step full of vast potentialities, required public workers' active cooperation to reap full benefit out of it. But Congressmen kept slumbering or fighting their perennial elections in some places, with the result that our opponents, who contacted the poorer peasantry, stole the march on them. Some of our first rankers, instead of taking steps to turn out such elements from the Congress as do not represent the needs and aspirations of the masses or lashing the local Congress workers into activity, have instead, turned, round and heaped their wrath on my head. I did not expect appre-

ciation, but by no stretch of imagination did I expect the condemnation that I had to face. Some of us, it would seem, are having second thoughts on our progressive measure including such a universally accepted one as the Consolidation of Holdings Act and would fain retract or retrace their steps, little realising that we should expect no quarter from our political enemies and that, if our non-official organisation becomes inactive and loses its fire as it has, in places, no revision of policies or standing still, much less no going back is going to save us from our doom.

One of the arguments often advanced in connection with L.R. (Supplementary) Act is that organised bands of landless people are going about ousting bhumidhars and sirdars from their lawful possession and thus a fillip or an encouragement has been given to lawlessness, as it were, as a consequence of my follies or policies. I had said in Naini Tal that nothing of the sort has happened or need be apprehended. It is now more than five weeks that the rains arrived, but we have not heard of any agrarian riots or murders from anywhere in the State.

As regards whether it is the top-dog who is more to blame in such agrarian disputes or the underdog and whether the enactment of the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act was or was not justified (I may state here that the Select Committee on this measure would have unanimously liked the Government to go much further), I only need draw attention to the following excerpt from the report of Shri Nasir Hussain, O.S.D., Land Reforms, dated 28 November 1952 who was deputed to make a study of the land tenure in the erstwhile Banaras State, with a view to apply the ZALR Act in the area:

(7) *Land held by tenants of Sir and rent-free grantees and sub-tenants recorded in classes 13, 14 and 15 of part II of Khatauni respectively.* The total area held in all the three classes was 5 ,126 acres in 1358 fasli with a rental of Rs 11,59,060/-. This area is 21 per cent of the total holdings area and the incident of rent works out to Rs 19/10/- per acre which is 3¼ time the average incidence of Rs 5/2/- for the cash-rented area of the tenants-in-chief. As compared with the total of 1355 fasli the area has considerably decreased. In 1355 fasli the area recorded in part II of the khatauni was 1,03,022 acres with a rental of Rs 20,69,998 and represented 41.6 per cent of the total holdings area with an incidence of rent of

Rs 20/- per acre. An abrupt decrease in the area appears to have occurred during the years after the merger (of the State in U.P.).

(It may be mentioned here in parenthesis that the only two demands which were made of Government by the organisers of the Kisan gathering which I addressed in Bhadoi on 1 July last, were that correction of entries as under the L.R. (Supplementary) Act and abatement of rent of the adhivasis should be ordered as in the rest of the State.)

The situation is not peculiar to the erstwhile Banaras State alone. In the two tehsils which originally constituted Banaras district the area held by persons recorded in part II of the khatauni in the 1352 fasli was 1,15,000 acres (vide *Statement 15 of ZAC Report, Volume II*). From this an area of (5,000 acres in possession of tenants of tenants of sir+4,000 acres in possession of occupants without consent=) 9,000 acres held from zamindars paying more than Rs 250 as land revenue may be deducted, as occupants of this area have become sirdars. So that 1,06,000 acres of land was recorded as belonging to adhivasis in 1352 F. In 1359 F. this area, according to a letter from the Additional District Magistrate which he has written in answer to a query about the average rent of adhivasis in the district, has been reduced to 88,000 acres.

I should think in view of these tell-tale figures further comment on as to which of the parties, viz. the bhumidhar and sirdar or the adhivasis has been the aggressor and taken the law into his hands, and as to whether a legislation like the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act was called for or not, is unnecessary.

The ZALR Bill as it was originally passed by the Cabinet in its meetings held in Nainital from 12 to 17 May, 1949, did not contain any clause on the lines of Section 237. The Bill gave a right to all adhivasis to acquire bhumidhari status after a period of five years reckoning from the date of enforcement of the legislation. In fact, the Drafting Committee was inclined to confer on the adhivasi the right of acquiring the bhumidhari status right away, but the then Chief Secretary, who was also a member of the Committee, pointed out certain administrative difficulties; that is why the acquisition of the right was postponed for some time.

It was as a result of a decision taken at a later meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 June following, in Lucknow that a clause was inserted to the effect that a bhumidhar or sirdar, in the areas that

may be notified, who held less than 6.25 acres, would make up the deficiency, in the first instance, by bringing vacant land under cultivation and, if no such land was available, then by ejecting his adhivasi or adhivasis. I strongly demurred, and an alternative suggestion that after a period of five years only such adhivasis as held land in excesses of 6.25 acres maybe liable to ejectment from the excess area, was also considered.

It was left for the Select Committee to take yet two other retrograde steps. The limit of 6.25 acres was raised to 8 acres and, instead of the landlord, it was the ejected adhivasi who was left to fend for himself and secure land from the Gaon Samaj as best he could.

As it turned out to be, this demand, viz. conferment of security of tenure on sub-tenants, was the only economic or agrarian demand made by the Provincial Shoshit Sangh in its conference held in Handia (Allahabad District) in the month of June 1949. Whatever maybe said about the desirability or otherwise of forming associations, particularly, with economic or political objects in view, confined to one or more castes based on birth—and by now C.M. knows my views on the question fully well—it connot be denied that, in voicing the demand, the Sangh was simply representing the interests of the weaker and poorer section of our peasantry.

As apart from economic consequences to the parties concerned, a notification under Section 237 will have tremendous political repercussions, which can be somewhat gauged by the agitation that was caused in Banaras in April and May last where, as a result of wrong interpretation of Section 234, two thousand ejectment suits were filed against adhivasis. The Praja Socialists got an opportunity and staged a demonstration.

It behoves us in the Congress interest and the country's interest that nobody who lawfully holds land, is driven away from it. Land, even howsoever little, gives the possessor a sense of security which nothing else does. For, although there may bad years, it never disillusions the owner completely. There is always a hope of plenty in the future which is not infrequently realized. Further, a man who possesses even half an acre of land has some stake and, therefore, stands for stability. Because a world separates the man who owns something from the man who owns nothing. Those who are landless today or will be rendered so tomorrow, will easily be persuaded to join the ranks of the disruptive, anti-social forces who are on the

look-out for such an opportunity.

As I have already once expressed it to C.M. the notification will be suicidal to the Congress, particularly, in the eastern parts of the State where it is already weak compared to other parts of Uttar Pradesh.

The note has become somewhat lengthy, but it is justified by the importance of the issue involved. Not only the fate of the millions that will be directly affected, turns on the decision; it will affect the attitude and behaviour of millions of others who maybe connected with these up-rooted families by ties of some kind or other. It will, to a great extent, decide the political pattern, at any rate, of the eastern districts.

I would, therefore, like Government to take an early decision on the matter. The present uncertainty is doing nobody any good. Section 237 should go altogether. Reasons in favour of its deletion are overwhelming. If this is not acceptable I would, as the next best alternative, advise that those bhumidhars and sirdars who do not possess any self-cultivated lands or possess an area than 6.25 acres (10 standard bighas) maybe allowed to eject such of their adhivasis only whose holdings of all kinds exceed 3.125 acres (5 standard bighas) to the extent of the excess area, but subject to the area, if any, that the bhumidhar and sirdar may be already holding, does not make more than 6.25 acres. Beyond this it will be impossible to go.

Charan Singh
(7 August 1953)

In order to allay certain misgivings which had arisen in the meanwhile Charan Singh addressed another note to the Chief Minister in the following December which, *inter alia*, contained the following paragraph:

> As regards the propriety of the proposal to grade up sub-tenant to to which has referred in his note of 6th December, I may submit that it is proposed to promote them to the status of sirdars only, provided they deposit five times their tenants-in-chief's rent to the letter's credit. Non-occupancy tenants of intermediaries' sir alone are proposed to be promoted to bhumidhari on payment of fifteen times the circle rate for land in their possession, for, in

their case, there is no tenants-in-chief between the intermediary and the actual tiller. If we make these men also sirdars, perhaps, Government will have to pay compensation to the intermediary both for proprietary rights and also for his cultivatory rights, viz. rights of sir.

Charan Singh
17 December 1953

On receipt of Charan Singh's note dated 7 August 1953 Pandit Pant suggested that a sample survey be made to ascertain whether the conclusions that he had arrived at, were reasonably correct. Charan Singh whose knowledge of facts and figures relating to his department and general grasp of the rural scene of Uttar Pradesh as it differed from one region to another, was unprecedented, told him that no survey was required. Pandit Pant, however, insisted and a survey was ordered.

The report of the survey held in 74 villages chosen by the method of random sampling in 37 tehsils of nine districts which contained comparatively the highest number of adhivasis in the State, confirmed the truth of Charan Singh's assumptions (vide Revenue Secretary's note dated 16 February 1954 reproduced below). The report which was received in Revenue Secretariate in February 1954 showed that only 16.8 per cent of all the bhumidhars and sirdars had let out any lands at all, and of these, 11.85 per cent, that is, only 2 per cent of the total, had let out all their lands and taken to some other profession. 82.4 per cent of these tenants-at-will had been occupying their land for more than five years and about 88 per cent had no means of livelihood other than cultivation.

Notes and Orders

Revenue Minister

In accordance with RM's orders a sample survey of subletting was made in the district of Farrukhabad, Banaras (excluding Bhadoi and Chakia tehsils), Jaunpur, Ballia, Basti, Azamgarh, Hardoi, Faizabad and Gonda. These districts were chosen because it appeared that subletting there was very widespread. This area contains 31,301 villages, out of which 74 were selected at random and inquiries were made.

2. According to *ZAC Report*, Vol. II the sub-tenants and,

tenants of sir, occupied an area of 792.0 thousand acres in these districts. According to sampling results (Table 2) the area occupied by them comes to 810.0 acres in that year. Thus there is a variation of only about 2 per cent in the actual figures and the sample survey's result. It shows that the sampling survey result is, in spite of its low base, quite accurate.

3. The following results are important:

(*a*) Out of bhumidhars and sirdars only 16.8 per cent have sublet their part or whole of the holding. Thus the problem of adhivasis etc. does not concern 83.2 per cent of the tenure-holders (Table 5).

(*b*) Among the adhivasis and asamis 51.4 per cent are those who are occupying their land for more than 10 years (Table 4). It would be hard to deprive them of their land now. Their landlords did not take advantage of the opportunity of ejecting them when they had the right to do so. Another 31 per cent are those who have been in occupation between 10 and 5 years. Thus recent adhivasis or asamis are only 17.6 per cent.

(*c*) Among the bhumidhars and sirdars whose land is with adhivasis and asamis 88.15 per cent hold other land, 2.37 per cent are in service and 0.62 per cent are occupied in trade. Thus 91.14 per cent are those who have occupations to support them. Only 8.86 per cent are those who are labourers, etc. and possess no land with them. This clearly shows the cry that people owning land are in acute trouble because they cannot eject their adhivasis, is more or less artificial and has been raised by or on behalf of a very small minority.

Sd
Zahurul Hasan
15 February 1954

On receipt of the Secretary's note above, the Revenue Minister wrote out another note on the subject on 2 March following, and urged again that the Adhivasis, instead of being ejected, be given the opportunity of acquiring sirdari or bhumidhari rights straight away.

CM
Had, when I submitted a long note to him on the problem of adhivasis in August last, desired that a survey by the method of

random sampling be made in order to better enable us to arrive at a decision. This has been done.

The survey has served to confirm the view that the vast majority of the zamindars and tenants-in-chief who have let out lands to others, could not possibly be living on their rental income, but are engaged in some occupation or other. More than 88 per cent of the bhumidhars and sirdars having adhivasis are carrying on agriculture, 3 per cent are engaged in trade and service, another 3 per cent as artisans, cottage industry workers, etc. and only 6 per cent as labourers. The 12 per cent who are carrying on non-agricultural vocations, must be possessing very little land indeed. Otherwise, they would not have given away their entire land to sub-tenants and taken to labour, service or other business themselves.

It is also clear that these poor cultivators—the adhivasis—have nothing else to fall back upon. 88.30 per cent of them are engaged in cultivation. If they ejected, they will be thrown on on the streets.

I need not advert to all the points that I had made in my previous note. It will suffice to state that assuming three persons entered in Part II of the khatauni as adhivasis, taken together, represent only one family, then, more than a million families, constituting a population of 50 lakhs, are involved. For, if a notification under section 237 for ejectment of adhivasis is issued in respect of one district, it will have to be extended to the entire State. On an average, one family possesses 2.6 acres of land only. But inasmuch as an average *khata* of an adhivasi held under one engagement is less than half an acre in area, we will be dispossessing several persons, even more than a dozen in some cases, for the sake of one bhumidhar or sirdar.

This notification, which will render millions of people landless, will be in sharp contradiction to the policy of our Government and also our political organisation, the Congress, which have extended their blessings to the Bhoodan Movement. Also, it will reverse the process set in motion by the Land Reforms (Supplementary) Act enacted only more than an year ago.

The political consequence of these mass ejectments can easily be imagined. The anti-social disruptive forces working in the State which are today gradually losing their hold in the countryside, will receive an unexpected accretion of strength. And I am

sure there will be such a hue and cry and its effects so disastrous that the notification will have soon to be withdrawn.

Abolition of zamindari has meant little or nothing to the millions of these adhivasis. They still pay the old rents to the same old zamindars and tenants-in-chief. The threat of ejectment still hangs over them. Their future is yet uncertain. This feeling of uncertainty has to be dispelled one way or the other, rather, the only way that it should be. If they are ejected, abolition of zamindari will prove a curse, and advent of Swaraj will mean nothing for them.

A decision has to be taken early in the interest of the scheme of consolidation of holdings also, which is going to be launched shortly. All small bits of land which an adhivasi may be holding from various persons, have to be consolidated into one chak or block, if we decide it is the adhivasi who will continue to have them, or be amalgamated with the holdings of the bhumidhar and sirdars, if we decide to issue a notification for ejectment of the adhivasis.

I need not waste CM's time further. But I take the liberty of quoting his own remarks made in the *Report on Rajasthan Jagirdari Abolition* (which I came across after I had written out my note of August last) when a proposal that lands in tenants' possession be divided between them and their landlords in order to provide more land for the latters' khudkasht, was entrusted to CM for his arbitration:

> It is clear that the breaking up of tenants' holdings for providing khudkasht to jagirdars will lead to grave economic consequences. Apart from the compulsion involved on tenants having a small holding, to part with a portion of their land, it will be wrong to make economic holdings uneconomic and uneconomic holdings more uneconomic. It will also not be possible for the jagirdars to consolidate small fragments which they may receive from tenants. Socially and psychologically the process of appropriation which will involve a displacement of tenants from their cherished land in large numbers as advocated by the jagirdars, will generate friction, bitterness and group rivarly, which any scheme of land reform must aim at avoiding.
>
> It is not a blank slate that we have to write upon. Reference has already been made to tenancy legislation enacted by some

of the integrating states by which fixity of tenure was conferred upon the tenants. The present trends of tenancy legislation in the country need also to be taken into account. As a result of zamindari abolition the cultivators are naturally looking forward to a further improvement of their position. If on the contrary they are now faced with ejectment, it will clearly be a retrograde step diametrically opposed to the spirit of land reforms. Pertinent mention may here be made of the Bhudan Movement started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and the slogan of land to the tiller.....

"In the circumstances I have come to the conclusion that there should be no compulsory eviction of cultivators for the sake of providing khudkasht to Jagirdars...."

I need only add that in Rajasthan there were two arguments or distinguishing features which the Bhoomias or jagirdars could summon in their support, but which the zamindars or tenant-in chief of Uttar Pradesh cannot. Many of the jagirdars had been serving in the Military or elsewhere and invested their savings in effecting improvements by constructing wells, bunds or tanks on the lands in their tenants possession. A survey 12 villages showed that approximately 11,000 wells out of 13,000 found on tenants' holdings had been constructed by or with the help of the jagirdars.

Here the case of adhivasis is much stronger.

Sd
Charan Singh
2 March 1954

The Chief Minister at last agreed with the Revenue Minister and ordered that the matter might be placed before the Cabinet (vide his note below, dated 15 March 1954):

Notes and Orders

I am thankful to RM for his lucid note. I have also read with interest the report of the Chief Statistician of the Agriculture Department. On account of inadequacy of resources the inquiry had to be confined to 0.24 per cent of the villages existing in the 9 districts most of which are situated in the eastern zone. I fully appreciate the force of the remarks made by RM. The

sample survey has at least given us some material and the results cannot be disregarded and dismissed summarily. Perhaps, they represent approximately the existing state of affairs. Only one among six bhumidhars and sirdars seems to have sublet all or a part of his holding. The average area of the land in the occupation of asamis and adhivasis would come to a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre each. Yet nearly 88 per cent among them live by agriculture. It is not easy to find an explanation. For the rest the pattern of occupations among them does not seem to differ very materially from the one concerning bhumidhars and sirdars. They are casual labourers, both agricultural and non-agricultural among the latter—their total being not very much less than that of adhivasis. It appears that nearly 17.6 per cent of adhivasis' and asamis' khatas are less than 5 years' duration. The matter is an important one and may be laid before the Cabinet.

Sd
G.B. Pant
15 March 1954

Babu Sampurnanand, Thakur Hukam Singh and Thakur Hargovind Singh were, however dead set against conferment of permanent rights on the adhivasis. So, they vehemently opposed the relevant provisions of the ZALR Amending Bill which Charan Singh had brought up for consideration in the Cabinet, perhaps, in the month of March 1954. A decision was, therefore, postponed. The question was raised by him for consideration a second time and also for the third time. But as Babu Sampurnanand happened to be absent on both these occasions, consideration of the Bill was postponed again and again. On the other hand, Charan Singh was anxious to see that the measure was put on the statute book as soon as possible for yet another reason, viz. unless a decision on the rights of the adhivasis had been taken no law on consolidation of holdings could be framed or finalised—law which the Revenue Minister considered very essential for raising agricultural productivity.

So, Charan Singh approached Pant Ji in the fourth week of June 1954 and, out of frustration, offered to give up the Revenue portfolio altogether. The Chief Minister immediately sent for the three ministers who had demurred. However, only two of them were

available. Pant Ji told them that he had, after much thought, arrived at the conclusion that what Charan Singh sought to achieve through his Bill or proposal, would serve public interest. Thereupon both the gentlemen readily agreed. Because of the delay that had occurred in finalisation of the measure, the Legislature had already adjourned. So, now that Cabinet's concurrence had been secured, he decided upon the issue of an Ordinance. The Ordinance provided that all sub-tenants will stand promoted to the status of a sirdar on payment of five times their tenants-in chief's rent to the latter's credit and all tenants of sir lands to the status of a bhumidhar on payment of fifteen times the circle rate to the account of the zamindar, that is the sir-holder, for land in their possession.

On learning that Government proposed to issue an Ordinance on the question of Adhivasis Shri Algu Rai Shastri, who was president of the PCC, wrote a letter to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant on 25 June 1954, that he should be given an opportunity of being heard. The issue of the Ordinance was, therefore, postponed pending discussion with Shri Algu Rai Shastri. It was only after Shri Shastri had okayed the Ordinance after a great deal of cajoling, that it could be promulgated. The reason behind Shri Shastri's objection was obvious: just like other prominent Congressmen from eastern districts he, too, was opposed to conferment of any rights on members of the backward and scheduled castes who constituted an overwhelming percentage of the adhivasis.

Charan Singh's attitude regarding the need of protection of the rights of the underdog in the agrarian structure of our society found confirmation in the highest echelon of the Congress leadership: this will be clear from the following extracts taken from a "Fortnightly Note" dated 5 August 1954 which Shri Jawaharlal Nehru addressed as Prime Minister to the Chief Ministers:

> 20. There is land problem and we have taken credit for having done much to put an end to the zamindari and jagirdari systems, even though they continue to some extent still in parts of India. But a doubt creeps into our minds about the progress of this land reform. Undoubtedly, we have done good and a certain type of major intermediary has gone. But, many intermediaries still remain. It has been our long-declared policy that all intermediaries should go and the peasant who tills the land himself,

should become the proprietor of his patch. We have not succeeded in that yet and we find that the laws we have framed, have left many loop-holes and there is a great deal of evasion. Indeed, these laws themselves permit much that we thought we were avoiding. In particular, it comes as a shock to me that a number of tenants are still being ejected. This is often done, he believed, by land being declared khudkasht or reserved for personal cultivation. Many States place no limit to the quantity of land which could be retained as khudkasht. The result of all this has been wholesale eviction of tenants. It is a fact that even now people hold many hundreds of acres of land, sometimes even a thousand acres or more. This result has not been what they had looked forward to.

21. Tenants who have been ejected came to him with their tale of woe. What could he tell them? What answer he had to give? All their achievements in other directions, all their plans for the future meant nothing to them if they were driven out of the land they tilled sometimes for scores of years. Instead of bettering their condition, our new land reforms have actually worsened it. Surely, this is something they cannot accept willingly.

22. The whole policy of land reforms, apart from removing the burden on the actual tiller, was to spread the income from land more evenly among the peasantry and thus giving them more purchasing power. In this way, the internal market would expand and the productive forces of the country would grow. We cannot go increasing our production unless we increase our consumption. We cannot increase our consumption unless there is the wherewithal to buy among large numbers of people. He remembered having talked with the Ford Foundation Experts who had come here to advise us about cottage and small industries. Some of these experts told him how exciting the prospect was of having such a vast market as India provided or should provide. Once this wheel of greater purchasing power, greater consumption and greater production gets going, there is no limit to it. This applies, of course, not only to land but even more to industry. It applies especially to small industries which should produce many of the articles needed by our villages.

The ordinance regarding the adhivasis already referred to above,

had to be given the form of a regular enactment. So it was incorporated in a Bill which contained provisions that sought to remedy certain shortcomings which two years' working of the ZARL Act had brought to light, and had already been introduced in the State Legislature and entrusted to a Select Committee in the preceding month of May. Making a motion in the Legislative Assembly for consideration of the Bill as recommended by the Select Committee on 13 September 1954 the Revenue Minister Charan Singh *inter alia* said as follows:

> Under the existing law adhivasis could acquire bhumidhari rights only after the expiry of five years from the enforcement of the Act in 1952, that is, only after 30 July 1957. Also, Government has reserved to itself the power of notifying areas of the State where the land-holder could have his adhivasis ejected so as to enable him to possess a holding of 8 acres. This latter provision is being deleted and the status of sirdari is being conferred on all adhivasis irrespective of the fact whether their landlords are bhumidhars or sirdars and without their having to pay anything for the acquisition of these rights. This is a very revolutionary proposal. In future there will be only bhumidhars and sirdars. Of course, Asamis being these who held land from disabled bhumidhars or sirdars—and their number will be very small—will always remain with us. This House should feel proud that it has fallen to its lot to enact this provision. By doing so it has justified its claim to be in the vanguard in the sphere of agrarian reforms in the country.

In order to ensure that the intention of the Government regarding conferment of permanent rights on adhivasis was carried out and that there were no so-called "voluntary surrenders" the Revenue Minister asked the Land Reforms Commissioner to issue a circular to the District Magistrates and Collectors of the State which he did on 18 October 1955 after detailed discussion with the Minister: The extracts from the circular are given below: *Confidential*

From:

The Land Reforms Commissioner
Uttar Pradesh, Section 2,
Lucknow.

To:

All District Officers in U.P.
(Except Tehri-Garhwal,
Garhwal and Almora)
Dated, Lucknow: 10 October 1985

No. 144

Sir,

Reports received from time to time from districts disclose some difficulties in the matter of collection of land revenue from ex-adhivasis who are now sirdars in view of the notification, dated 30 October 1954, under Section 240-A of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950. It should also be realized that something more than mere collection of land revenue is at stake. There might be collusion between the ex-landholders and the ex-adhivasis or the latter might have been coerced into admitting the claims of the former. It is thus clearly indicated that besides collection of land revenue it is also our duty to defeat collusion and to protect the weaker section of the society on which valuable rights have been conferred.

2. To begin with, the jamanandis relating to the ex-adhivasis should first be examined with reference to the khataunis of 1362 fasli and all jamabandi khatas in which the land-holder of the recorded adhivasi is found to be a widow or a minor, should be distinctively marked.

3. The next step will be to hand over the scrutinized jamabandis to the collection amin with the explicit direction that he will make no attempt to make any collections from khatas which have been marked off as being likely to belong to disabled landholders. In respect of the remaining khatas the amin will proceed to make collections in the usual way from those ex-adhivasis who do not repudiate their present status as sirdars. In other words, the amin will make collections only from those persons who do not deny their liability to pay, using such coercion (under proper sanction) as may be necessary and justified. In respect of those jamabandi khatas in which the recorded ex-adhivasi disclaims the status as a sirdar and, in consequence, refuses to pay land revenue, the amin will make no collections, but will merely enter a remark to the effect that the person denies concern with the holding.

4. In brief the position will be that no collections of land revenue will be made from those khatas which have been marked off as belonging prima facie to disabled land-holders and from those recorded ex-adhivasis who do not accept their status as sirdars until orders have been passed by a competent court as explained in para 6.

5. The next step will be for the collection Naib Tehsildar to visit all those villages in which there are any khatas in respect of which the amin has recorded that liability to pay land revenue is repudiated. The collection Naib Tehsildar will not attempt to make any collections from such khata-holders but will make an enquiry in each case. He will record the statement of the tenure-holder, ascertain from him the grounds on which he repudiates his liability and then find out from such evidence as may be available in the village who actually was in possession of the holding on 30 October 1954, and who is in possession on the date of the enquiry. Persons likely to give best evidence are the lekhpal, the Chairman and members of the Land Management Committee and the cultivators of the surrounding fields. The Collection Naib Tehsildar will then draw up his findings and submit them together with the memorandum of evidence in each case to the sub-divisional officer through the Tehsildar.

7. I may briefly explain the significance of the Naib Tehsildar's enquiry reports mentioned in para 5 above. It is an open secret that some "ex-land-holders" have been attempting to defeat the reforms introduced by Chapter IX A of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act. Some of them have prevailed upon the adhivasis to surrender their holdings before the reforms were introduced. Some attempted to take advantage of the "correction drive" to disown the recorded adhivasis and perhaps even now attempts are being made to persuade the recorded adhivasis to disclaim possession in many cases. Circumstanced as they are socially and economically, ex-adhivasis find it difficult to resist the attempts to deprive them of their new rights. It is the duty of Revenue Administration to counteract such attempts as much as possible. The material date for the notification under section 240 A of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act and a relevant fact in issue is whether or not the recorded adhivasi was in possession on that date. If he was in

possession on that date but, as a result of collusion or pressure, gave up possession thereafter or now disclaims it, he will be deemed to have surrendered his holding, which would vest in the Gaon Samaj and Rules 115C to 115H of the Zamindari Abolition Rules would become operative for the termination of the subsequent unauthorized possession. In such cases you should proceed on the basis of the Collection Naib Tehsildar's reports, file cross objections under section 240-G of U.P. Zamindari Abolion and Land Reforms Act in order to prevent the defeat of the valuable rights of the Goan Samaj.

11. I will also request you to explain the provision of this circular personally to all the revenue staff up to the level of collection Naib Tehsildars who in turn will explain it to the subordinate staff. Spare copies of this circular are enclosed which ought to be distributed up to the level of Collection Naib Tehsildars and signatures of all the recipients should be obtained in token of their having seen and understood it.

Yours faithfully,
Sd. J. Nigam,ICS

To reinforce this official circular Charan Singh persuaded the Pradesh Congress Committee to advise the District Congress Committee to ensure that the poor cultivators on whom permanent rights in their holdings had been bestowed, were not pressurized into "voluntary surrenders". Whether this advice was actually acted upon is, however, only a matter of guess: it all depended upon the perception of Congress leaders of the district concerned.

To further deter those who wanted to grasp or encroach upon the means of livelihood of the poor adhivasis he declared at two huge public meetings held in the countryside of Ghazipur and Jaunpur districts that the adhivasis will be acting within their rights if the attempts of the erstwhile exploiters to throw out were met by them with force—with a lathi in their hands but with one of their feet inside the boundary of their plot or plots. The declaration served to put some heart in the poor souls.

To revert, as has already been pointed out in the preceding pages the erstwhile zamindars and tenants-in-chief who enjoyed almost a monopoly of social and economic power in the countryside

were trying, mostly in mid and eastern parts of the State, to intimidate the weaker and poorer sections of the society whom the State Government had invested with permanent or possessory rights in the land under their plough, into surrender of their tiny holdings. Varanasi, the home district of Dr Sampurnanand (who was the Chief Minister at the time after Pant Ji's departure to Delhi on 31 December 1954) was the greatest sinner in this repect, viz. of "voluntary surrenders." This will be clear from the following note which Revenue Minister addressed to the Chief Minister on 22 October 1955:

CM

May like to glance through these applications. Two of them emanate from the Communist-sponsored Kisan Sabha and may, therefore, be exaggerated. But I will be failing in my duty if I do not give expression to my feeling that we have not been able to ensure enjoyment of their lawfulrights to the erstwhile sub-tenants, in particular, of that part of the Banaras district which once constituted the Banaras State. I had in a note submitted to the C.M.'s predecessor last November shown how the area of 1,03,000 acres held by the sub-tenants in (1 July 1947—30 June 1948) 1355 F. dwindled down to 50,000 acres in (1 July 1951-30 June 1952) 1359 F. This note had been seen by CM also. This sub-tenants' holdings in this area were given permanent rights as sirdars on 30 October 1954. Since that date more than 48,000 surrenders have secured from these poor tenants, I am clear in my mind that the vast majority of these surrenders have been obtained by coercion. Ordinarily, nobody would disclaim a right in land given to him by law. My impression is shared by the Collector who is doing his best to help these underdogs. I may also state here that it is only in this pocket of the State that the sub-tenants have been deprived, or, are being deprived of their rights on such a mass scale.

There are more than one reason responsible for this state of affairs. The attitudes of the SDO and of some of the police officers are certainly two of them. The Deputy Minister of Revenue who recently visited this area, also carries the the same impression of the SDO's approach to the problem. CM is aware of the view which the AICC and the Prime Minister hold about the problem of ejectment of tenants, to which they have given

expression in their circular.

Lest there be a misunderstanding, I have refrained from going to the area or addressing a meeting there or suggesting other steps. CM may kindly do as he thinks proper.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
22 October 1955

Three year later, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, forgetful of the fact that both the First and the Second Five-Year Plans approved by him and his Cabinet had provided for ejectment of tenants under the Zamindars' sacred "right of resumption," again reverted to "the significance and importance of prevention of ejectment of tenants" in his letter to the Chief Minister dated 5 September 1957, reproduced below. As statistics regarding the increasing proportion of agricultural labourers to cultivators given in the preceding pages would show, ejectments continued unabated during Pandit Nehru's own time and even in the seventies.

Confidential

No. 1713-PMA/57
New Delhi
5 September 1957

My dear Chief Minister,

Recently at the meeting of the AICC there were long discussions on the land problems. Many of you must have participated in them. I am not for the present referring to various aspects this problem, important as they are. But it seems to me that something of the most important significance and importance is to prevent ejectment of tenants. Information comes to me from time to time about this ejectment continuing in various States and sometimes this is on a fairly large scale. In fact, the very measures of land reforms that are indicated, sometimes lend to this type of ejectment.

I think that each State must deal with the matter urgently and effectively. If the law is lacking, then something should be done forthwith to rectify it. But apart from the law it is the administrative set-up that can deal with this matter effectively if it chooses to do so. My own impression is that District Magistrates and others are lax in this respect. I am sure they could do a

great deal if they were told of the vital importance of preventing ejectments.

The Congress President has drawn my particular attention to this matter. I feel as strongly as he does on this subject. I earnestly hope that you will take measures to stop all kinds of ejectments of tenants immediately.

Yours sincerely,
Sd
(Jawaharlal Nehru)

Dr Sampurnanand,
Chief Minister of U.P.
Lucknow

The Chief Minister redirected the above letter to the Revenue Minister on 10 September inquiring whether there have been any ejectments in Uttar Pradesh during the lost seven years and, if so, whether it would be possible to have figures, preferably those officially published. Charan Singh replied as follows:

CM
The only ejectments worth mention or enumeration in our State have taken place in Bhadohi, district Banaras. As CM might be remembering, I had brought this to the notice of his predecessor during the last quarter of 1954 and also to CM's own notice sometime in the beginning of 1955. But, in vew of certain factors beyond my control, I had to keep quite. If CM so desires, figures can be obtained.

Our law has been the most thorough. We have given security to all tenants including sub-tenants, non-occupancy tenants of of home farms (sir and khudkasht) and even those who were entered as *bila-tasfia lagan* and were trespassers in the eye of law. Shri Gulzari Lal Nanda, Minister for Planning, referred to the thorough-going nature of our measures in his speech and also in his note circulated to members of the AICC. He placed Uttar Pradesh in the first category in his note.

Ejectment of tenants to which reference is often made by the Prime Minister, the AICC or the Planning Commission, has taken place in certain States other than Uttar Pradesh. I will draw CM's attention to side-lined portion in Shri Gulzari Lal

Nanda's note. Tenants in other States have been ejected largely owing either to the landlords and tenants-in-chief or to slackness of administration. In our State we have recognised no right of resumption and the entire administrative machinery knows how keen the Government has been in translating its policies and intentions in the matter of land reforms, into actual practice.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
10 September 57

Dr Sampurnanand made the following reply to the Prime Minisiter:

D.O.No. A/534/57 Lucknow
1/4 October 1957

My dear Prime Minister

Sometimes ago you sent me a letter drawing attention to complaints which had been voiced at the last meeting of the AICC and elsewhere about the ejectment of tenants. You might remember that this question also came up at the last meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Development Council. As will be clear from the discussions held there, the question of ejectment of tenants does not arise in Uttar Pradesh as our Tenancy Law makes no provision for resumption by ex-intermediaries at any stage. As pointed out in the note on land reforms circulated at the last meeting of the AICC. Uttar Pradesh in one of the two States in India where "all tenants have been brought into direct contact with the state and given complete security". In 1954 to 1955 there were a few cases of so-called voluntary surrenders in Bhadohi, a part of the old Banaras State, now merged with Varanasi district. No such question has arisen since then.

Yours sincerely,
Sd
(Sampurnanand)

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru
Prime Minister
New Delhi

As an unwary reader will notice, the Chief Minister's assertion that 'there were a few cases of so-called surrender in Bhadohi in 1954 or 1955, was factually wrong.

8

Benefit of Land Reforms to Weaker or Backward Sections of Our Society in Particular

The Backward Classes' Conference which had no anti-Congress overtones and, though open to workers of all political parties, was, in fact, dominated by Congressmen, gradually came to occupy in a large measure, the economic and political horizon once occupied by the Shoshit Sangh—an organisation consisting mostly of embittered youths of the deprived classes. But the prejudice of the top-dogs or high-caste Hindus against those who occupied the lower rungs of our social ladder, had reached such a stage that when Charan Singh decided to attend a meeting of Backward Classes' Conference at the State level which was scheduled to be held in Gosainganj in the district of Faizabad in June 1956 Shri Muneeshwar Dutt Upadhyaya, the then President, PCC, issued a written order to him not to participate in the Conference. But he attended the Conference all the same and wrote to the President that he was prepared to face a disciplinary action if this step of his could be proved to be an act of indiscipline or, in any way, detrimental to public or Congress interest. Ultimately, Shri Upadhyaya thought discretion to be the better part of valour and did not press the notice he had issued.

Strangely enough, Charan Singh's stand on and comprehension of the agrarian problem found confirmation from three unimpeachable sources, viz. the *Census Report of 1951* and as the reader will find later two despatches by their correspondents to the *Indian Express* and the *Patriot*, New Delhi in 1981.

The Census Report of India 1951 confirms Charan Singh's stand in two ways: first, the following table shows that out of every 100 workers in cultivation in Uttar Pradesh (including unpaid family helpers), the ratio between workers who belonged to families of cultivators to those who belonged to families of cultivating labourers, changed from 82:18 in 1931 to 90:10 in 1951:

TABLE 8.1

	No. in lakhs		
	1931	*1951*	*Increase+ Decrease−*
Total number of workers in cultivation (including unpaid family helpers):			
(*i*) Cultivators	141	179	+38
(*ii*) Cultivating labourers	31	20	−11
	172	199	+27

Note: According to *Census of India, Paper 1 of 1952* (Final Population Tables), the ratio of labourers to cultivators in the country as a whole, in the year 1951 stood at 27:100 (the latter figure including 1.0 to 1.25 per cent of workers engaged in mining and quarrying).

Source: *The Census Report of India, 1951*, Vol. I, Part I—B, p. 210.

Now, this change in the ratio between the number of cultivators and cultivating labourers, embodied in the above table, needs an explanation. According to the report of the Superintendent of Census Operations of Uttar Pradesh which he submitted to the Registrar-General and ex-officio Census Commissioner of India in this connection the major explanation of diminution in the number of cultivating labourers in the State in 1951 as compared with 1931 lay in the fact that "many persons who were formerly treated only as labourers, even though they were cultivating the sir or khudkasht lands of zamindars have now succeeded, as a result of legislation and administrative measures, in getting themselves recorded as cultivators of the land in their cultivatory possession". He went on to refer to a "remarkable fall in the figure of cultivating labourers in the Central Plain Division" and said it was "due to the fact that owing to land reform legislation many of the former labourers had been converted into cultivators in the taluqdari districts". It may be added that the "legislative and administrative measures" to which the Superintendent of Census Operations Uttar Pradesh, referred, were taken in the five-year period immediately following the assumption of office by the Congress in 1946.

Secondly, the *Census Report (1951)* interprets the benefits the ZALR Act brought to the Harijans in concrete terms as follows. According to a Table, viz. No. 383, given in its Volume II, Part I-A

of the Report for Uttar Pradesh the livelihood pattern of Scheduled Castes as compared with that of the general population stood as follows:

TABLE 8.2

Livelihood Class	*Population*	
	General	*Scheduled Caste*
All Classes	1000	1000
All agricultural classes	742	785
I Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents	623	525
II Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents	51	84
III Cultivating labourers and their dependents	57	172
IV Non-cultivating owners of land; agricultural rent receivers; and their dependents	11	4
Non-agricultural classes (including dependents)	258	215

Source: *The Census Report of India, 1951*, Vol. II, Part I—A.

Land was deemed to be "owned" if it was held on any tenure which carried with it a right of occupancy in land that was a heritable though not necessarily a transferable right. Land held on any other tenure was deemed as "unowned" so that all the adhivasis fell under livelihood class II of tenant-cultivators.

Now, the total number of persons entered in the revenue records of U.P. for the fasli year, 1352 (ending 30 June 1947) as tenants of sir and khudkasht, sub-tenants including tenants under rent-free grantees and grantees at favourable rates of rent as also cultivators without proper consent, that is, all those who occupied land more or less at the pleasure and convenience of the land-owner and entered in Part II of khatauni, numbered 4.12 million and held 3.66 million acres of land (vide statement 6 of Vol. II of the *Zamindari Abolition Committee's Report, 1940*). Inasmuch however, as most of the above persons had been counted more than once and because they held more than one patch of land from different lessors or owners, the actual number of these cultivators was far less than the above figures would indicate—may be, two-fifths of their number, 41,21,400 recorded in the revenue papers.

Calculated on the basis of 20.5 per cent or so (instead of the earlier figure of 18.0 per cent determined on the basis of statistics thrown up by the Census of 1951) as the correct percentage of Harijans in the population of Uttar Pradesh arrived at after Government of India's decision later to include certain other sections of our society in the category of Scheduled Castes, the percentage of adhivasi holdings held by Harijans came to 29.0 per cent (and that of Harijan cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned to 15 per cent) of the total.

The figure of 4.12 million for cultivators of the unowned holdings, shown in the *ZAC Report, 1948*, however, relates only to the area to which the ZALR Act originally applied. To this figure must be added the number of such holdings lying in the erstwhile Princely States of Ram Pur and Banarns, Kaswar Raj Pargana, the Dudhi area, merged enclaves and other Government estates as also Almora and Garhwal districts and the Hill Patties of Nainital district of the Kumaon Division. The number of cultivators in these areas can safely be put at more than 0.5 million carrying the total to nearly 5.00 million. To this rally have also to be added the number of cultivators whose names were entered in the revenue records as a result of land records correction drives undertaken later on in years 1952-54.

Besides those enumerated in Table 6 (Part II of khatauni) on p. 8 of *ZAC Report*, Vol. II there were however, yet two other classes of cultivators, both Harijans and non-Harijans, whose lands fell within the definition of livelihood class II of the preceding table, viz. (*a*) non-occupancy tenants recorded in the revenue papers who numbered 2,29,000 and held an area of 2,35,000 acres in the year 1945-46 as also (*b*) those whose names were not recorded in 1950 to which the Census figures related but were invested with the right of adhivasis later on. Obviously, the holdings of these tenants which must be considerable in number, are outside the above figure of 4.12 million.

May be, some critics may trot up an argument that as revenue records would show, an adhivasi on an average, held only nine-tenths of an acre each, and, inasmuch as this area was insufficient to maintain a family, this reform or measure was practically no good. But this is not so and for two very good reasons, viz. firstly, in fact, every adhivasi so recorded held two or more holdings each,

giving an average of two acres or so per family. Secondly, as will appear from the example of Shri Shrikant Apte's farm of a quarter acre situated at Rander, three miles from Surat (in Gujarat) quoted below, which may be regarded as an extreme case though, one acre of good land intensively worked, should certainly be able to keep a family in food and clothes. A correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi in its issue dated 29 January 1957 wrote as follows:

> He cultivates his plot in such a way as to get all his necessities of life from it—food and clothes and makes an annual saving of Rs 400. He works on his land at an average of four hours a day with hand tools (no bullocks), fetches water on his head to irrigate it from the river a mile and a half away. The only manure he uses, is provided by his own excreta and the droppings of his two goats whose fodder is procured by circular pruning of the hedge round the farm. It takes six weeks to go round the hedge to get forage for the goats and by the time the circle is completed the hedge is ready for the next cycle of pruning.
>
> Shrikant Apte has worked his farm with complete success in this manner for the last five years. And as if not to be outpaced by the produce of the modern farm managers, using new-fangled techniques and synthetic fertilizers, he has contributed to raise prize-size vegetables at his farm. Ever seen a carrot 4 inches less than 3 feet long? If not, go to Apte's farm at Rander. Not only gargantuan carrots but you will also see mammoth radishes (weighing 5 lb each) and onions as big as ostrich eggs, weighing 1 lb each.
>
> Cotton is Apte's cash crop. He grows only 20 plants which yield him between 1½ and 1¾ maunds of cotton. His personal requirements are met by about 10 seers; the rest he sells, just as he sells the surplus produce of vegetables. That is how he makes his extra Rs 400 a year with which he runs a *Balmandir* and a library in the village.

Shrikant Apte works on his farm only for nine months in a year. Acharya Vinoba has asked him to propagate his technique, which Apte claims, is "possible for everybody". It has been described by Acharya Vinoba as "an introduction to the practical book of

Bhoodan."

Further, since 1956, the year to which the figures of Shri Apte's farm related there has been great technological progress in the field of agriculture; as the example of Japan and other countries would show, an acre today can produce double what it did 20 years ago.

An article by Niraj Roy entitled "In U.P. Dacoits' Den: Government Persecuting the Yadavas", published in the *Indian Express* in its issue of November 1981 reads as follows:

> The fact remains that for long the prosperous people in the region have been from the upper castes and big money has been with the Brahmins and Thakurs. The Yadavas,[1] who lagged behind, started acquiring small landholdings in the late sixties[2] in the wake of land reforms in the State.
>
> It is a measure of the subsequent prosperity of the Yadavas that some Brahmins in many areas of Mainpuri have sold their lands and migrated to other areas where their own brethren happen to be in large numbers.

Below is given an extract from an article by Salahuddin Usman published in the *Patriot*, New Delhi, dated 27 November 1981:

> At the time of zamindari abolition, land-owners in the area generally belonged to upper castes. Then we had "Thakur" or "Brahmin" dacoits, who had taken to gun and ravines after killing a rival claimant of land. Some time after the abolition of zamindari land passed into the hands of actual cultivating classes, the Yadavas and Kewatas, that gave birth to Yadav and Kewai gangs. The Thakurs were still there, but they took a back seat, with the loss of their estates and big landholdings. However, they did not cease to exist. There were minor dacoits amongst them like Santosha and Radhey who organized the Deoli killings.

One may or may not agree with all that the two correspondents

[1]The Yadavas form the most numerous community amongst the backward classes of UP other than the Scheduled Castes.

[2]"Sixties" is a slip for fifties.

have said in their despatches, but one thing is clear. As a result of the land reforms carried out by the State Government the backward classes are no longer prepared to play a secondary role in the society. Nobody can any longer address them as "Chhoti Zaat" or "low caste" as members of the so-called high castes used to do, particularly, in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh.

9

Consolidation of Holdings

Owing mainly to the increasing pressure on land, our laws of inheritance and transfer and the desire of elders of the village in the historic past, when man had not acquired such mastery over Nature as today and, therefore, was unable to find means of irrigation and other agricultural facilities, to prevent some farmers from having all good land and others all inferior land, or land adapted only to one kind of crop, our land holdings, small as they are, are divided into tiny plots scattered over the whole arable area of the village. The disadvantages of such a system are so great that agrarian economists have regarded consolidation—a concentration of scattered parcels of land belonging to the same owner in a single block, or at any rate, in a smaller number of parcels, as the very first step towards improvement of agriculture. Land consolidation results in increasing the productivity of all the three factors of production in agriculture—land, capital and labour.

The control of irrigation and drainage water would be more essay, leading to better utilisation of land. Fields are now so scattered that often it is not economical for a farmer to dig a well for a small plot and it is not always easy for several farmers to cooperate in digging and using the same well. Even where canal and tube-well irrigation facilities have been made available by the State, scatteredness of plots results in waste of water which has necessarily to be carried through long channels to reach the various plots belonging to an individual.

Consolidation would reduce the number of boundary lines and thus save land. Further, if land were all in one place, barriers such as fences, hedges or ditches, could be erected to obtain privacy and prevent trespassing by man and animal, thieving and gleaning. Control of pests, such as rodents, insects and locusts, and diseases would also be less difficult. Whatever the land produces, will thus be better tended and protected.

Disputes over boundary lines, right to irrigation and drainage, and those arising from mistakes in land records which are rendered possible by the multiplicity of small plots that may be held by one person, will have almost been entirely eliminated, thus making litigation and waste of money over litigation a thing of the past. Bullocks which are the main capital of the Indian farmer, would be better utilised, inasmuch as the time that is wasted today in driving them from one tiny plot to another, will have been saved.

Human labour, too, would be employed more efficiently. It is not only the time of the bullocks that is wasted in being driven from one plot to another, but that of the farmer as well. In Domariaganj, a tahsil of Basti District in Uttar Pradesh, there were thirty plots on an average possessed by a peasant family which had hardly an area of 3.5 acres. This means that the area of an average plot came to 500 square yards or so. When these thirty plots were concentrated into two or three bigger plots or blocks, the quantum of human labour that went to waste till today, and has now been saved, can only be imagined.

After consolidation the peasant would have to shift his entire agricultural equipment to his chak or holding where he will put up a building or buildings and enclosures for his cattle, stock the *bhoosa* and other feed-stuffs, stock the manure in a pit, reserve a place of land as threshing-floor and set up a simple contrivance (called *kolhu*) in order to extract juice from sugarcane and from where he will carry on all his agricultural operations on his land that now lies compact at his feet and within his ken. His land, his money or whatever capital he may be able to invest in the farm, his labour and that of his bullocks will be better utilized and exploited. He will be able to exercise greater supervision. Farming in these conditions will approximate to the homestead farming of England and other countries, and will give far greater yields.

In fact, consolidation of land-holdings, is a condition precedent to all and any development of the countryside. Abolition of the zamindari system, introduction of a simple, uniform land tenure throughout the state and solution of the problem of the adhivasis cleared the decks for this reform.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh framed a Consolidation of Holding Act in 1953, which came into force next year. Government got the necessary wholetime staff recruited and trained with-

out loss of time.

The staff consisting of five tiers—the lower one being under close supervision of the immediately higher—was provided which was required to reside in the village concerned or in the neighbourhood. Consolidation Committees which were sub-committees of the Gaon Panchayats, were appointed in every village. These committees were to be consulted by the consolidation staff at every step. There was also a District Advisory Committee for consolidation at the district level with the Collector as its head and, among others, the area's representative in the Legislative Assembly and Settlement Officer (Consolidation) as its members.

Sir Albert Mayer, Planning Advisor to the Government of Uttar Pradesh, in a letter to the Development Commissioner, U.P. dated 3 September 1955, summed up his impression about consolidation proceedings as follows:

> Having observed the consolidation effort at work in the field, it strikes me that a most important and almost revolutionary job is being done, and that, as observed in Unnao, the personnel is doing well, especially considering how many are new recruits.

To his misfortune and that of the peasantry of U.P., the scheme of consolidation, however, was also greatly resisted not only by members of the Socialist Party but also by some of Charan Singh's own colleagues who alleged that it was unpopular and brought a bad name to Congress Government. Within a week of his resignation in April 1956, therefore, the State Government headed by Dr Sampurnanand, accepted a proposal by his successor in the Revenue Department, Thakur Hukam Singh, that operation of the scheme be suspended. The decision had to be revoked within a month because of the outcry it raised amongst the peasantry and insistence by the National Planning Commission to revive the scheme. This is, however, only one example out of many which can serve as a commentary on the understanding of Charan Singh's colleagues of problems of the masses or their solicitude for them. Today, it is unanimously accepted that consolidation of holdings has been a great boon to the peasantry of the State.

Before passing on to another item it will be relevant to point out here that, of the various schemes and measures which the

Revenue Minister had to handle in performance of his public duties, consolidation of holdings was the one most succeptible to corruption. The varying quality of land held by the various owners and the attachment to their plots that farmers develop everywhere, were the two main causes of corruption. These two factors gave ample opportunity to the consolidation staff to make illegal gains. But, as was his wont, Charan Singh kept a strict vigil on this aspect of the scheme. This fact was acknowledged by the Opposition on the floor of the Legislative Assembly in the year, 1958.

The beneficial effect of consolidation of land-holdings on the economic condition of the peasantry is further borne out by the remarks of Wolf Ladejinsky, an agrarian expert of international fame, in his report submitted to the Ford Foundation which had financed IADP (Intensive Agricultural Development Programme) in one district each in the States of India. Aligarh was the district chosen in Uttar Pradesh:

> There is another factor which should work to the advantage of the program, an advantage from which all the cultivators of Aligarh stand to benefit. Our reference is to another aspect of agrarian reform, namely the vigorous and successful program of land consolidation in Aligarh. This work was initiated in the district in 1955. A traveller cannot escape its presence, and from what we have seen, we do not question the information that the work has been completed in 75 per cent of the villages. By the summer crop of 1963-64, the work is scheduled for completion. The impact of this program was quite apparent to us in villages where consolidation had been completed a couple of years ago. Its most significant result can be observed in the number of new surface wells farmers are putting in one on the consolidated land. In one village 28 new wells were sunk upon the completion of this program. They are costly affairs involving an outlay from Rs. 1200 to 2000 and, but for the problem of inadequate credit and inadequate supply and bricks and cement, Aligarh would be saturated with them in the years immediately ahead. At the moment, 200,000 of the 500,000 irrigated acres of Aligarh get their water from surface wells. To the cultivator this is his "felt-need", and this is the one type of irrigation that lies entirely within his control. The following

question and answer sum up, as nothing else does what water means to the cultivator, and particularly water from his own well. "Supposing" said we, "we give you Rs. 1500. Would you spend in on marrying off your daughter or digging a well ?" Said the farmer: "I would dig a well. With a well on my field I do not have to look for a groom for my daughter; he would seek her out."

10

Comparison with Kerala

The land reform measures in Uttar Pradesh actually implemented in the field by mid-fifties were more revolutionary and far-reaching in their character than what the Agrarian Relations Bill of 1957 sponsored by the Communist Ministry of Kerala envisaged. This will be clear from a note that the Revenue Secretariat of Uttar Pradesh had prepared, making a comparative study of the provisions of the Karala Bill and the ZALR Act. This note was put on an official file. Charan Singh wanted to write an article for the press on the basis of this note but could not do so for want of time. The note is given below:

A Comparative Study of Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill and the UPZALR Act, 1950

Rev (A) file No. 2174/57

Zamindari is not proposed to be abolished in Kerala. This is evidenced by the designation of the Bill itself which is entitled as Agrarian Relations Bill. The uncultivated land will still continue to be vested in zamindars and will not be handed over to the village community as it has been done in Uttar Pradesh. The tenants who are to pay the purchase price will still remain tenants. Many a peramanent tenant and most of under-tenants would thus be deprived of the benefits envisaged in the Bill.

2. In Kerala the tenants of public, religions or charitable trusts have not been given the right to purchase lands occupied by them. But in U.P. the position is not so. The tenants of the of the afore-mentioned institutions have also been given the benefit of land reforms. With a view to safeguarding the interest of such institutions the State Government granted them annuities over and above the compensation they were otherwise entited to, viz. at the same rates as the private landlords or zamindars.

3. The purchase-price in Kerala has been fixed at 16 times the

fair rent calculated at maximum rates. This is very high indeed, when compared with ten times the rent that is required for acquiring bhumidhari rights in UP.

4. The excess land surrendered to Government under Chapter III of the Kerala Bill is proposed to be assigned by the Land Board to persons who have no lands or have lands less in extent than the ceiling area. The persons to whom the land is so allotted, are to pay necessary price thereof to the said Board. In this connection the Board have to observe the order of preference mentioned in clause 70 of the Bill. The landless agricultural labourers stand fourth on the list. These provisions of the Kerala Bill go to show that even the landless labourers who belong to the weakest section of our society, are required to pay full price of the land being given over to them. In U.P. the landless agricultural labourers not only come second on the priority list but they are also not required to pay any premium for allotment of land to them under section 198 of the UPZALR Act, 1950. It is obvious that the landless persons in Kerala for whose benefit a ceiling is being imposed, would not be able to reap full benefit of the scheme.

5. No right of resumption has been given in UP whereas in Kerala zamindars are entitled to resume land from non-permanent tenants, i.e. tenants who did not hold the land continuously for five years in April 1957. Also, no fixity of tenure has been conferred on tenants who paid grain rent but held a particular plot or plots for less than 10 years continuously in April 1957.

6. Tribunals provided under the Agrarian Relations Bill are entitled to fix the rent of lands at the rate of 1/4th of the agricultural produce if irrigation is provided by a public or State source and the rate of 1/6th to 1/12th of the produce, if irrigation is provided by a private source. For dry lands, the rent will be fixed at 1/16th of produce. Now, these rates are far higher than those which the farmers in U.P. are liable to pay. In no cases are the rents in U.P. more than 1/20th of the agricultural produce commuted at the prevailing market rates. The rents in Uttar Pradesh were fixed in the thirties, i.e. more than twenty years ago when the country was passing through economic depression.

7. In U.P. subletting in any form is totally prohibited except by disabled persons. In Kerala also, subletting by cultivating

tenants appears to have been prohibited under clause 32 of the Bill, but on account of the fact that no restrictions have been imposed on grant of usufructuary mortgages by cultivating tenants as in U.P. the ban is likely to be set at naught and subletting would continue although in another garb. This would lead to re-emergence of the landlord-tenant system.

8. In Kerala only permanent tenants can transfer their rights in house-sites. Other tenants cannot legally do so, In U.P. heritable and transferable rights have been given to all persons in so far as houses constructed by them in village abadies are concerned.[1]

The U.P. land reform measures were, instead, so revolutionary that even members of Opposition, e.g. Shri Udal, MLA, of Varanasi, a communist, and Shri Jageshwar Yadav of Baberu, in the district of Banda, a socialist, invited Charan Singh to address public meetings in their constituencies on these measures.

The latter told these gentlemen categorically that his speeches will, in the final analysis, serve to weaken them politically and strengthen the Congress. Their reaction was that, whatever be the political loss or gain they might incur, the meetings will, at least, result in enlightenment of the suppressed masses and help them stand on their feet. Charan Singh did accept the invitation of Shri Jageshwar Yadav but could not fulfil the wish of Shri Udal partly because he was afraid lest it created an irrefutable misunderstanding in the minds of his colleagues of the Cabinet from Varanasi, viz. Dr Sampurnanand and Pandit Tripathi.

Although Charan Singh's policies underlying the land reform measures served directly to fulfil the mission which Congress workers had as vociferously avowed since the days of the British rule and thus strengthen the Congress in the affections of the people, yet the PCC and some of the District Congress Committees, for example, Banaras, Gonds, Bahraich, Barabanki, Lucknow, Bareilly and Hamirpur manned as they were by persons who had little or no sympathy with the underdog, did not utilise the oppor-

[1]As the reader has already noticed, the result of such a halting measure was that the ratio of agricultural labourers to cultivators in Kerala which stood at 92:100 in 1960 rose to 172:100 in 1970—the highest in the country at both points of time. Small and marginal farmers who were thrown out of their holdings, joined the ranks of agricultural labourers.

tunity offered by his campaings for educating the people in the measures that the State Government had taken for their relief. They were either indifferent or hostile and some of his colleagues threw brickbats at him rather than cover him with flowers or bouquets that he deserved.

Not only that some of the District Congress Committees and some leading Congressmen were apathetic to the land reforms that had been ushered in by their own Government: whenever he was invited by the leaders or representatives of the poor peasantry to public meetings for explaining the beneficial provisions of the Zamindari Abolition Law, whether it be in Aallahabad, Kanpur, Ghazipur or other places he was criticized by leading local Congress workers. They took the cue from his own colleagues in the Cabinet.

11

How Landlordism was Abolished in the Hills

Now, to come to Kumaon; one is not only sorry but pained to put on record that Pandit Pant of revered memory who had otherwise such a sympathetic heart for the poor and such an understanding of the difficulties and problems of the villagers, in particular the peasantry and, without whose support, the land reform measures of Uttar Pradesh could not have been put on the Statute Book at all, thorough-going and revolutionary as they were, did not favour conferment of permanent (sirdari) rights on tenants-at-will of Kumaon known as *sirtans* who constituted about 11 per cent of the entire peasantry of the area. At least half of those tenants belonged to the Scheduled Castes of the hills (known as *shilpkars*). Whatever the reasons may be, Pant Ji was not very anxious for introduction of land reforms in the region of Kumaon during his regime in Lucknow. It was only after his departure to Delhi (on 31 December 1954) that Charan Singh could introduce a Bill in the Assembly for abolition of landlordism in Kumaon.

At the time the above Bill was introduced in the Assembly (which could not be exactly ascertained today) Charan Singh could not go into the clauses thereof. As soon as he could snatch time he went into the Bill intimately and put his reactions in the form of a note addressed to the Revenue Secretary on 19 May 1956 as follows:

R.S.

On my way to Nainital (*via* Meerut) I went through the clauses of the Kumaon Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill which has already been placed on the table of the legislature. I was somewhat astonished to see the Statement of Objects and Reasons. It seems I signed this in a fit of absent-mindedness. The statement as it stands, is likely to create confusion and, in view of the attitude of the *Hissedars* and the intelligentsia of the

area, likely to add fuel to the fire. I would, therefore, like the second para of the Statement to be re-drafted as below:

2. The salient features of this Bill are:

(1) The rights of hissedars in respect of *khaikari* lands will be acquired on payment of compensation equivalent to 12 times their rental income. Private forests shall not be acquired and shall continue to belong to their owners as hitherto.

(2) Lands in actual possession of the hissedars and khaikars shall be deemed to be settled with them as bhumidhars, and those in actual possession of sirtans, as asamis. That is, the tenure-holders in Kumaon shall henceforward be known by the same terms as in the plains.

(3) A bhumidhar will be entitled to resume land to the extent of 2.5 *nalis*, which may be adjoining his house and held by an asami.

(4) An asami will be free, within a period of one year of the commencement of the relevant portion of the Act, to purchase the bhumidhari rights in the lands held by him, provided his bhumidhar agrees to sell such rights, on payment of 15 times the rent payable by the applicant. The purchaser will be liable to pay land revenue which his seller was paying.

(5) By a notification issued after the expiry of the above-said period of one year the State Government shall acquire, on payment of compensation equivalent to twelve times the rental, the rights of those bhumidhars, who do not suffer from any disability or are not serving in the armed forces of the Union in the lands which may still be held by the asamis, i.e. lands in which rights of bhumidhari have not been purchased by them. On issue of this notification the land held by the asamis shall be deemed to have been settled with them as sirdars. As in the plains these sirdars will be entitled to acquire bhumidhari rights on payment of ten times their rent. The land revenue of such bhumidhars will be equivalent to half of the rent which they were paying as asamis or sirdars.

(6) Provisions of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, regarding land management, succession etc. shall be applicable to the area after such adaptation or

modification, if any, as may be deemed necessary.

The Secretary may kindly have the statement reprinted and supply the members of the Legislature with a revised copy each. If Secretary differs, he may kindly contact me on phone tomorrow in the Circuit House at Meerut.

Sd
Charan Singh
19 May 1856

Pant Ji sent for Charan Singh thrice to Delhi obviously with a view to discuss the question of land reforms in Kumaon with him, but on two occasions he did not speak out his mind at all. It was only on the third occasion that he said the holdings in Kumaon were so small that it was not just or necessary to take away the rights of hissedars (as landowners, in the hills were called), and confer permanent rights on the sirtans. Charan Singh respectfully disagreed. He told Pant Ji that the arguments which applied to the case of adhivasis of the plains, applied equally to the case of sirtans of the hills and that acceptance of his point of view would bring bad name to him.

In the meanwhile the Bill that had already been introduced in the Assembly, lapsed because of the general elections of 1957, and another Bill had to be introduced thereafter. It will not be out of place to mention here that nowhere else in the country had any attempt been made by then to abolish zamindari or introduce land reforms in the hilly areas of the country. During the debate on the Revenue Minister's motion to refer the Bill to a Select Committee, however, Shri Jag Mohan Singh Negi who was a Deputy Minister at the time and came from district Garhwal in the hills as also Shri Narain Dutt Tiwari who was the leader of the PSP opposition in the Assembly, made vehement speeches against its radical provisions. In the Select Committee, Shri Narain Dutt Tiwari (at present, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh) came out with a suggestion, rather moved a regular motion, that the Bill be entrusted to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant for his arbitration. The reason behind this move was obvious. Charan Singh, however, refused on the ground that the Select Committee was a committee or a creature of U.P. Legislature and could not possibly accept the suggestion and thus delegate its functions to an outside authority even if it would. The Select Committee made its report in the terms that the

Revenue Minister desired. It will not be irrelevant to point out here that this attitude of his favour of the underdog in Kumaon greatly alienated Pandit Pant from him. And this alienation of Pandit Pant coupled with Pandit Nehru's displeasure with Charan Singh on the question of Cooperative Farming affected the Revenue Minister personally as also the future course of political events in the State adversely to public interest.

12

Cooperative Farming

The Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act laid down that, if they so desired, any ten or more members of a Gaon Samaj (which was a body corporate consisting of all adult residents of the village) holding between them bhumidhari or sirdari rights in thirty acres or more in the village) were entitled to constitute and operate a cooperative farm. After a cooperative farm had been registered, all land comprised in the uneconomic holdings in the village held by any bhumidhar, sirdar or an asami under them, shall be deemed to have been transferred to the cooperative farm.

This provision about establishment of a cooperative farm, however, remained a dead letter; the State Government was not serious about it and had put it on the Statute Book simply in order to satisfy the whims of Congress leadership at the national level. The All India Congress Working Committee, however, came up with a formal resolution for introduction of cooperative farming in the country at the Nagpur Session of the Congress held in the second week of January 1059.

The resolution read as follow:

> The future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming in which the land will be pooled for joint cultivation, the farmers continuing to retain their property rights and getting a share from the net produce in proportion to their land. Further, those who actually work on the land, whether they own the land or not, will get a share in proportion to the work put in by them on the joint farm.
>
> As a first step, prior to the institution of joint farming, service cooperative should be organised throughout the country. This stage shoul l be completed within a period of three years. Even within this period, wherever possible and generally agreed to by the farmers, joint cultivation may be started.
>
> Surplus land (obtained by imposition of a ceiling on large

farm) should vest in the panchayats and should be managed through the cooperatives.

Charan Singh who was a member of the All India Congress Committee and Revenue Minister of Uttar Pradesh, made out a very strong, logical case against cooperative farming. He pointed out that pooling of land and labour instead of leading to an increase in agricultural production, would rather lead to a decrease and that the scheme was impracticable and militated against our democratic way of life.

He had made an intensive study of *kolkhoz* or collective farm established in the USSR in the twenties and had come to the conclusion that it could not solve our problems better than any other land system. In 1946 he had written a book entitled *Abolition of Zamindari*[1] in which he advocated the above point of view. In 1956 also he had written a book entitled *Whither Cooperative Farming?* which carried a preface by Dr Sampurnanand, the then Chief Minister. In 1958 he wrote a more exhaustive volume entitled *Cooperative Farming X-rayed*[2] which was finalized before he left Lucknow for Nagpur Session of the AICC on 5 January 1959. This book was republished in a revised and expanded form entitled as *India's Poverty and its Solution.*[3] It contained the following passages on pp. 165-66:

> Recommending collective cattle farming, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan*, dated 15 February 1942:
> I firmly believe too that we shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming. Does it not stand to reason that it is far better for a hundred families in a village to cultivate their lands collectively and divide the income therefrom then to divide the land anyhow into a hundred portions? And what applies to land, applies equally to cattle.

As has been mentioned in preceding pages, however, it does not stand to reason that a large area jointly operated as one unit should produce more per acre than when it is divided into small portions

[1]Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1947.
[2]Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959.
[3]Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

and operated severally. Nor does it do so in practice.

When advocates of cooperative farming buttress their case by reference to Gandhiji's opinion, they should remember that he was a world teacher, and world teachers in every clime and country have believed in and preached a widening of one's affections so as to embrace the whole village, the country and, in fact, the entire world in their compass. *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*, meaning that the world is one family, is an old ideal enshrined in our religious lore. But political parties or administrators do not work or plan for a kingdom of God on earth. They work for what is practicable in the not too distant future.

Mahatmaji himself had warned that co-operative farming "would be possible only if people become friends of one another and as one family. When that happy event takes place, communal trouble would be a thing of the past . . . ." He, however, warned that co-operation must not be brought about by force or compulsion, it was not to be imposed from above; it should be based on strict non-violence and grow from below.

Whether the "happy event" or stage in their mutual relations of which Mahatmaji spoke, had arrived, was for the peasants themselves to decide, and not any external agency.

Further, Mahatma Gandhi suffered from no inhibitions or complexes. Nor did he claim a monopoly of wisdom. The remarks made by him in respect of joint farming were made if we may say so with respect—in a somewhat casual manner. Had he been able to devote some time to the problem and gather experience in the actual field, he would not have hesitated to own up his error. He never allowed prestige, rather false prestige to stand in his way.

Nor as men made of ordinary clay, do we, in all other matters conform or are able to conform to what Gandhiji said and preached, for example, he had advocated self-restraint as the only desirable means of population control, but the Planning Commission and the Government of India are enthusiastically propagating all the modern contrivances, which were a taboo to him.

The following extracts from the press reports of the proceedings of the AICC already referred to above, held in the second week of January 1959 would show the impact Charan Singh's speech created on the minds of Congress delegates as also the lack of political

courage even on the part of leading Congressmen to speak out their minds:

Extract from the CURRENT Bombay, Dated 14 January 1959
To the right a bit Opposition to the basic principles of the resolution was led by Mr Charan Singh, Revenue Minister, Uttar Pradesh, who warned that the introduction of cooperative farming would be the death-knell of democracy in India.

Charan Singh who acted as "Leader of the Opposition" at this Session bluntly told the delegates that cooperative farming would not succeed and that State-trading in food grains was totally impractical. He was applauded by delegates when he denounced the policy of excessive nationalisation. But when the resolution was put to vote hardly half a dozen hands were raised against it.

Mr Nehru carried the day. The delegates knew that the Prime Minister wanted them to vote for it and they voted.

A number of Congressmen whom I met, including top leaders and members of the Working Committee, were frankly sceptical about the whole resolution. They said that both cooperative farming and State trading in foodgrains were bound to fail.

Why did not they oppose the resolution, I asked.

The typical reply I got from a member of the Union Cabinet was:

We know our opposition is not liked by the Prime Minister. We to the right do not want to displease him.

Extract from the NATIONAL HERALD, 18 January 1859
Charan Singh Opposes Co-operative Farming:
State Trading Likely to Cause Discontent
Abhyankarnagar Jan 9: Charan Singh U.P.'s Minister for Revenue opposed the entire resolution on agrarian pattern with the exception of the provisions relating to setting up of service cooperatives and state farms on reclaimed lands during discussion on resolution in the subjects committee of the Congress today.

Mr Charan Singh said that he was not opposed to the breaking up of the larger land-holdings and their distribution among the landless. He wanted this to be done without the Government

coming directly into the picture. He, therefore, suggested that the Government should formulate a tax programme for bigger holdings in such a way that they would be required to reduce their area. If such a method was not adopted and the Government took responsibility to distribute land, there was bound to be dissatisfaction among people and opposition parties would exploit the situation, he said.

Mr Charan Singh disagreed with the basic reasoning behind such cooperatives that pooling of lands would contribute towards increased production. The way to increase agricultural production was to pool the resources and not land. He supported the idea of service cooperatives because they would not have to pool the resources.

Cooperative Farms

Mr Charan Singh said that cooperative farms would not succeed in India. They had not succeeded anywhere in the world, save in Israel, where the conditions were different. Even in China, cooperative farms proved a temporary phase and, ultimately, gave place to collective farms and communes.

He said that one fact must be realistically faced that in spite of all scientific advances, man's mind still moved in that narrow groove in which it was moving two thousand years ago. If the right of ownership was abolished immediately, the farmer would not join the cooperative at all; if the right remained, the farmers would run the cooperative for one or two seasons, but then would try to get out of it. If it was assumed that the cultivator was not such a selfish creature and would fully support the cooperative way of farming, he would become a "sanyasi" and would not remain a cultivator.

State Trading

Mr Charan Singh said that if the Government took over the wholesale trade in foodgrains, the logical step would be to take over the retail trade too. If retail trade was left with private traders the state machinery would give licences for retail traders which meant there would be scope for favouritism.

In undertaking wholesale and retail trade in foodgrains, the Government were undertaking a very big responsibility and there would be expansion of bureaucracy. Where were the godowns

to store the grains? he asked. He was afraid that State trading in foodgrains would cause widespread discontent in the country.

दैनिक हिन्दुस्तान से उद्धरण

10-1-59

कृषि पुनर्गठन संबंधी प्रस्ताव विषय समिति में स्वीकृत

उत्तर प्रदेश के मालमंत्री श्री चरणसिंह ने प्रस्ताव के विरोध में तर्कपूर्ण दलील देकर विषय समिति के सदस्यों का दिल और दिमाग तो जीत लिया, किन्तु जबान नहीं जीत सके।

श्री चरणसिंह के विचारों का सदस्यों तथा हजारों श्रोताओं ने बार-बार जोरों की तालियां बजाकर स्वागत किया। उनकी दलीलों का उत्तर देने के लिए चार मंत्रियों—केन्द्रीय मंत्री श्री अजित प्रसाद जैन और एस० एन० मिश्र तथा मध्य प्रदेश के मंत्री श्री मंगवाल और मद्रास के वित्त मंत्री श्री सुब्रह्मण्यम—ने प्रयत्न किया। किन्तु खेद के साथ कहना पड़ता है कि वे उनकी एक भी तर्कपूर्ण दलील का उत्तर नहीं दे सके। श्री अजित प्रसाद जैन को यह स्वीकार करना पड़ा कि श्री चरणसिंह की दलीलें भावपूर्ण नहीं, तर्कपूर्ण हैं।

नागपुर कांग्रेस : एक सिंहावलोकन

19-1-59

विषय समिति की बैठक में योजना-संबंधी प्रस्ताव पर बहस के समय हस्तक्षेप करते हुए नेहरू जी ने प्रस्ताव के आलोचकों का इतना अधिक मजाक उड़ाया और उन पर इतने क्रुद्ध हो गये कि विषय समिति के सदस्य तथा अधिवेशन के प्रतिनिधि इतने डरे कि उन्हें समूचे अधिवेशन में कांग्रेस कार्य समिति के प्रस्तावों की आलोचना करने की हिम्मत नहीं हुई। उत्तर प्रदेश के मंत्री चौ० चरणसिंह ही एकमात्र ऐसे व्यक्ति निकले, जिन्होंने नेहरू जी की उपस्थिति में भी प्रस्ताव का जबरदस्त विरोध किया और प्रभावशाली भाषण किया। कांग्रेस के इस अधिवेशन में नये व्यक्तियों में से यदि आप पूछें कि इस अधिवेशन में किसका भाषण सबसे अधिक जोरदार था, तो उनका उत्तर होगा, चौधरी चरणसिंह का।

Extract from the CURRENT Dated 14 January 1959
(Weekly Magazine published from Bombay)

Opposition to the basic principles of the resolution was led by Mr. Singh, Revenue Minister, Uttar Pradesh, who warned of democracy in India that the introduction of cooperative farming would be the death-knell of democracy in India.

Charan Singh who acted as "Leader of the Opposition" at this Section bluntly told the delegates that cooperative farming would not succeed and that State trading in foodgrains was totally impractical. He was applauded by delegates when he denounced the policy of excessive nationalisation. But when the resolution was put to vote hardly half a dozen hands were raised against it.

Mr. Nehru carried the day. The delegates knew that the Prime Minister wanted them to vote for it and they voted.

A number of Congressman whom I met, including top leaders and members of the Working Committee, were frankly sceptical about the whole resolution. They said that both cooperative farming and State trading in foodgrains were bound to fail.

Why did not they oppose the resolution, I asked.

The typical reply I got from a member of the Union Cabinet was: "We know our opposition is not liked by the Prime Minister. We do not want to displease him".

दैनिक नवभारत टाइम्स, दिनांक 22-1-59 से उद्धरण

चरणसिंह द्वारा कृषि प्रस्ताव का विरोध

इस प्रस्ताव पर हुए सारे ही विवाद में प्रस्ताव के विरोध में यदि कोई तगड़ा भाषण हुआ, तो वह उत्तर प्रदेश के माल मंत्री श्री चौ० चरणसिंह का था। उन्होंने सेवा-सहकारिता समितियों तथा परती जमीन, इस विषय से संबंधित प्रस्ताव के दो अंशों को छोड़कर, प्रस्ताव की हर बात का विरोध किया। उनके विरोध में न हिचकिचाहट थी और न संकोच। सबसे बड़ी बात तो यह थी कि प्रस्तुत विषय से इतने परिचित थे कि अपने पक्ष के समर्थन में उन्होंने जो तर्क प्रस्तुत किये वे इतने ठोस आंकड़ों पर आधारित थे कि उनके बाद प्रस्ताव के पक्ष में बोलने वाले वक्ताओं में से किसी ने भी उनकी प्रमाणिकताओं को चुनौती नहीं दी।

Any other leader of a political party in Nehru's place would have publicly congratulated Charan Singh then and there on the platform for his ability and performance, but Nehru fretted and fumed, instead. As it turned out, Charan Singh's forthright expression of his views on this important question proved to be the main reason behind acceptance of his resignation which he submitted in March 1959.

During the Prime Minister's visit to Lucknow on 2 March 1959, Charan Singh told him that the Chief Minister, Dr Sampurnanand,

was incapable of giving a clean and efficient administration to the State, that he did not know the problems facing the masses, particularly, those living in the villages or which subject or department fell within the jurisdiction of which Ministry and that nor did he at all frown on corruption or incompetence. Charan Singh followed up his talk with a 16-page letter full of facts and arguments, dated 13 March for ready reference in case the Prime Minister wanted to take up the matter with the Chief Minister. Nehru's reaction, however, was just the contrary to what Charan Singh had expected as will appear from the following remarks contained in the Prime Minister's reply dated 21 March:

> We function in a country which, with all its many virtues, is socially and economically backward, and we suffer the consequences of all this backwardness in whatever we might do . . . . Dr Sampurnanand has the failings of an intellectual, which come in his way sometimes. His very virtue in trying to keep apart from persons or groups has come in his way, I could easily go on writing about his or any other person's good points and failings. That does not help much. *We have to take persons as they are and judge situations as they are* (emphasis added).

In the course of a reply to the above letter Charan Singh wrote back *inter alia* as follows on 3 April 1959:

> Now, I hope to be pardoned if I make a brief reply to the arguments in your letter of 21 March for not doing anything in the matter of Uttar Pradesh Government and letting Dr Sampurnanand do as he pleases. It would appear that, according to you, while individuals do count, the real reason for inefficiency and lack of integrity in administration lies in the social and economic backwardness of the country. I beg to differ: in my opinion, the real reason lies in individuals, that is, whether members of Government are themselves efficient and their own conduct is above cavil and whether they are imbued with a sense of mission for uplift of the masses or not. Individuals are as much creators of circumstances as they are their creatures.
>
> It is true that some kind of indictment can be drawn up against the best of us, but it is not only some or ordinary kind of indictment that I have drawn up against Dr Sampurnanand. Such

indictment could not be drawn up against his predecessor or against the Chief Minister of Bombay and Madras. With one-fourth of this indictment any government in a democratic country, other than a Congress Government in India, would have been sent hurtling away into wilderness, with nobody to mourn its demise. That our country is socially and economically backward, cannot be an excuse for not setting good standards of public conduct or for condoning the grossest breach of what any country may expect from its representatives. . . .

Panditji, you will pardon me if I feel that there is a consideration which has nothing to do with merits but which stands in your way of doing the right thing in the U.P. I honestly believe—and there are valid arguments behind this belief—that joint cultivation is impracticable, will impair democracy, will decrease production and will lead to unemployment. Such are the views not only of myself but atleast of 90 per cent of Congress workers who have a peasant origin or know anything about the conditions in the countryside. But nobody has the courage to differ openly with. And this is the greatest ill from which the Congress Organisation suffers today . . . .

Charan Singh concluded his letter by saying that he felt that the dice was loaded against him owing to his views on certain questions and that time alone will tell whether he was in the wrong or in the right.

Nehru in his reply dated 3 April 1959 reacted to Charan Singh's remark above, as follows:

You refer, at the end of your letter, to a feeling that because of your views on certain questions, you have been labouring under a handicap. I take it you are referring to joint cooperative cultivation. I do not think this particular matter really affected any decision, though *it may be that unconsciously it created an impression* (emphasis added).

Now, nobody who was anybody in the Congress or who was conversant with public affairs of the country, could have possibly denied that Pandit Nehru had developed the "impression" in regard to Charan Singh of which he spoke in his letter above referred to, because of the latter's audacity in opposing the for-

mer's pet scheme of cooperative farming, tooth and nail, which, in Charan Singh's opinion, would have destroyed the agricultural economy of the country.

Shri Chalapathi Rao, a doyen of Indian journalism and the choice a Jawaharlal Nehru for editorship of the *National Herald*, Lucknow, the leading Congress organ of Uttar Pradesh, paid the following tribute to Charan Singh on acceptance of his resignation in its issue dated 23 April 1959:

Mr Charan Singh's Resignation

There is a tragedy both personal and organizational, in Mr Charan Singh's resignation. His exit is a loss to the U.P. administration, and Mr Sampurnanand has also lost an able, earnestminded and hard-working colleague with a reputation for integrity when such reputations are rare. There were several occasions when we differed strongly from Mr Charan Singh and criticised him severely, on matters of policy but his sincerity of purpose, his knowledge of the subjects he had to deal with, and his devotion to duty could not be questioned. In his last tenure of office, he was doing a widely appreciated job in probing corruption in Power and Irrigation, two departments with accumulated ill repute which are reportedly waiting to celebrate his resignation but which cannot escape searching scrutiny. This part of the story, however, is not complete, and Mr Charan Singh's present resignation must be treated as a continuation of the resignation he submitted in November 1957 on what, in his statement, he calls "issues of economy, integrity and efficiency in administration, high standards of public conduct and sincere efforts for the uplift of the people". These issues, it seems, are involved in the present resignation also, but they are to be dealt with at length in the statement he intends to make when the Assembly meets next. For the present, he has made what may be called interim charges which have to be answered by some responsible person if they are not to be accepted by the public. The broad charge is mal-administration of which the latest illustration is the way the power of the Rihand Dam was proposed to be allotted leaving practically little power for the people: the Government cannot afford to be dumb or surreptitious about the disposal of the Rihand Dam power in which there is great public interest.

It would also be pertinent to refer the reader here to the following remarks in connection with Shri Charan Singh's resignation which Shri K.M. Munshi (Ex-Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Ex-Minister of Agriculture, Government of India) made during the course of an address which he delivered as Chairman of Conference of the Swatantra Party held in Lucknow on 19 August 1959:

Charan Singh Affair

Shri Charan Singh, whom you all know well, one of the most efficient and honest Ministers I have known in the country, is one of the greatest experts on land reforms. He comes from a farmer's family. He has condemned cooperative farming. Naturally his head had to be brought on the charges for having opposed the Nagpur Resolution. For all those who oppose cooperative farming, are in the eyes of our welfare experts, "cheats," "unthinking" and "anti-democratic"—Yes, by the measures of anti-communistic totalitarianism.

What is the alternative, they ask, and like the Pilate, do not wait for an answer. To any person who is capable of thinking unobsessed by the technique of Communist planning, it would appear that, in a free economy like India's, economic freedom could be achieved only by strengthening the agricultural base, that freedom from foreign bread has to be the paramount condition of economic freedom; that sufficiency of food and raw materials can only provide a sure foundation for any industrial structure. But not to our near-Communist welfare experts (vide the *Pioneer*, Lucknow, dated 30 August 1959).

Since 1959, the people of India have seen four Prime Ministers and more than half-a-dozen Food and Agriculture Ministers of Congress variety at Delhi, provided by the Congress Party, and were treated to innumerable brave speeches and statements in this regard, but the country is as far away from cooperative farming and state trading in foodgrains as ever it was.

13

Imposition of Ceilings and Redistribution of Land

Charan Singh repealed the agricultural Income-tax Act which had been enacted in 1948 with a view largely to tax the income of rent-receivers or big landholders. After abolition of zamindari in 1952, the Act became ineffectual or superfluous so far as landlords were concerned and turned out to be a source of corruption and harassment to large farmers who actually cultivated their lands. Also the latter could keep the whole or part of their land idle and avoid payment of tax. This meant a reduction in national production as also a loss to the Government exchequer. Further, there being no official agency or other method by which the value of the production of each and every large farmer could be assessed, quite a good number of those who were otherwise liable to pay income-tax, could and did escape assessment quite often.

So, the question arose as to what was to be done about large farms in legal or actual possession of a person or persons who could not be classed as landlords. Dictates of social justice and India's economic conditions demanded that nobody was allowed to hold inordinate areas of land which was a gift of Nature, and not a product of man's industry or ingenuity.

In contrast to many a public man and administrator, however, Charan Singh had always been an advocate of the small farm. Although, in sheer theory, the size of the farm was irrelevant to production per acre, that is, a large farm should produce as much per acre as a small farm (not more, as there are no economies of scale in agriculture), yet he held that agriculture being a life process, in actual practice, under given conditions, yields per acre decline as the size of farm increases (in other words, as the application of human labour and supervision per acre decreases).

It was expected, therefore, that, being a friend of small man, he would make haste to impose a land ceiling in Uttar Pradesh and redistribute the surplus land thus made available among the landless or sub-marginal and marginal farmer of the State. But he did

not: on the contrary he opposed moves or proposals to this effect pressed by the Opposition on the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh in 1955.

The Congress daily of Lucknow, the *National Herald* criticized him on this stand of his in its issue dated 17 March 1955. The opening sentence of the editorial run as follows:

> As admirers of the State Government's record of agrarian reform, we fail to understand the opposition expressed by Charan Singh in U.P. Assembly on Monday, to the principle of redistribution of land.

The Revenue Minister replied to the *National Herald* the next day by way of a letter which was published in its issue dated 18 March 1955, and is reproduced below:

Lucknow
18 March 1955

Dear Editor,

I am thankful to you for having taken notice of my views on land redistribution in your Editorial columns of yesterday.

The question of land redistribution was raised by some of the members who spoke on a cut motion, rather casually. I, therefore, gave a brief reply but, brief as it was, the report published in the *National Herald* was still briefer and, therefore, incomplete. I had occasion to express my views in full when Mr Genda Singh had moved a substantive resolution on the subject in August 1954. I had on March 14, as on the previous occasion, said unequivocally that I had no objection to the principle of land redistribution. Not only that: I have all along believed since 1942 when I wrote a book on *Abolition of Zamindari* in prison that there is no room for big holdings in the conditions of our country. I have always unhesitatingly propagated that large holdings produce less and also provide less employment per acre than small holdings and that bigger the economic unit, whether collectively worked or privately owned and worked by hired labour, whether in the field of agriculture or of manufacturing industry, lesser the liberty and initiative of those working thereon. Therefore in our country where we have to wrestle with the basic problems of poverty and unemployment

and have launched upon a democratic way of life, large holdings shall have to disappear. Land in our country should, in my view, be held by peasant proprietors who should be encouraged to cooperate in all economic activities other than actual production. what I envisage, is a system of farmers' cooperatives where land and labour resources are not pooled. For, in that case the cooperative farm will degenerate into a mechanised kolkhoz or collective farm of the Russian type which, if attempted, though many of our economists and writers may or may not admit today, is bound to fail and prove injurious, at least, in the circumstances of our country.

Whenever the question of land redistribution has been raised in the Assembly my only contention has been that it is of no practical significance as far as Uttar Pradesh is concerned. As you, perhaps, seem to agree, predominantly agricultural countries are far poorer than industrially-advanced countries. Everywhere in the world the agricultural class has always been economically weak, i.e., weaker than the industrial, trading and other sections of the community. An eminent economist has, on the basis of statistics twenty-two countries, found that 20 per cent of total income was produced by 52 per cent of the total number of workers, and 80 per cent of the total income, by 48 per cent of the total number of workers. A simple calculation shows that "all other human activities are on an average approximately 4.35 times more productive than agricultural activity". That is why every Government in the world, which is alive to interests of its people, has during the last 80 years or so, been trying to wean away people from land to settle them in other occupations. With the result that, of the total population in the United Kingdom, only 6 per cent are employed in agriculture, in the USA 15, in Italy 44 and in Japan 46. On the other hand, the corresponding figures for China, Turkey, Rumania, Yugoslavia and India stand at 73, 72, 72, 70, and 70 respectively. The corresponding figure for the USSR stand at 57 and this in my opinion—although in saying so I am treading on a controversial ground—accounts for the low living standards of the USSR as compared with those of what we have come to call as western countries. These figures and the conclusion to which they lead, may be "pointless", but they serve to emphasize the fact that greater the percentage of population of a country which is dependent on agriculture, greater

its poverty. We would do well not to put or force more people on land than may be inevitable. As the census figures will show there has been progressive de-industrialisation of India during the British occupation due to decay and extinction of our rural arts and handicrafts; the number of those dependent on agriculture rose from 53 per cent in 1871 to 71 per cent in 1951. This tendency has to be checked if we can possibly help it. It is one of the considerations which have weighed with me and not an argument complete in itself which may negate the need for land-redistribution.

In India itself Uttar Pradesh stands at the top, or the bottom as you will. In our State according to the Census of 1951 leaving out 1.50 per cent of persons who have been living on agricultural rent hitherto. 73.15 per cent of the population actually works on land or is dependent directly on agriculture. Of these 73.15 per cent those who actually hold and cultivate land, constitute 67.45 per cent and agricultural labourers, 5.70 per cent. The cultivators in the rest of the country constitute 53.25 cent and agricultural labourers, almost 14 per cent. That is, in Uttar Pradesh the landless persons constitute 8.40 per cent of those who hold land whereas in the rest of the country they constitute 26.30 per cent.

The following Table shows the percentage of cultivators and the arable area per cultivating family for some of the western and eastern districts:

TABLE 12.1

District	*Percentage of cultivators*	*Cultivated area per cultivating family*
Bahraich	84.20	4.61
Gonda	80.69	4.15
Basti	84.02	3.48
Gorakhpur	77.99	3.34
Deoria	87.46	2.97
Azamgarh	76.28	3.34
Saharanpur	37.52	8.84
Muzaffarnagar	45.53	7.24
Meerut	43.26	5.99
Bulandshahar	56.95	5.60
Bijnor	47.65	7.89

It would appear that if the land in these districts is divided amongst the whole population the difference in the area per capita for the various districts will be found to be negligible. It cannot be disputed that the fact that the overwhelming percentage of population in the eastern districts is engaged in agriculture, is one of the reasons of poverty of this area. Deoria or Basti is not going to become a district of plenty if we take away excess land from the few of the big holdings that are there, and settle more persons on land. We have promoted lakhs of families of adhivasis who held tiny plots of two acres or so each to the status of sirdars simply because, in the absence of other avenues of employment, their ejectment would have led to social and political problems of the State. Were conditions different I would not have pleaded for conferment of permanent rights on those extremely uneconomic holders. The fact that there are about 7 lakhs families of landless persons in the State, should urge us on to establish rural industries rather than think of the seemingly easy method of redistribution of land. It was the problem of the excluded heirs that is regarded as one of the causes of German industrialization. It will be a strange implementation of the Congress programme of diversion of workers from land to other occupations that we first tie to land all those who do not possess land today and, thereafter, try to divert them to other occupations. I have used the word "tie" because there is a strange attraction in land: there is a call of the land just as there is a call of the sea. For, although there are bad years, the land never disillusions the holders completely, since hope for plenty in the future always remains.

However, the real question that falls for consideration in this connection is whether any substantial area of such excess or surplus land is really available for distribution in Uttar Pradesh. Table 12.2 has been lifted from page 199 of the *First Five-Year Plan*.

Now when we talk of land redistribution everybody assumes that excess land is to be taken away from only those holdings which are more than 30 acres in area. The exact number of holdings between 25 to 30 acres is not known, but, talking on the basis of averages, it can in no case be less than 35,000 leaving us with only, 80,000 holdings of more than 30 acres. Of these, 20,000 belong to Bundelkhand where two acres have always been regarded as equivalent to one acre in all matters connected with

TABLE 13.2

(All the figures are in thousands)

State	*Area covered*	*Total holdings area*	*No. of large holdings*	*Area of large holdings*	*Percentage of area*
U.P.	90%	41,316	114 (Over 25 acres	5,310	12.9
Bombay	Entire ryotwari area	26,239	216+562= 778	10,856	41.37
Madhya Pradesh	77%	29,350	359 (Over 20 acres)	17,310	59.4
Madras	82%	27,591	197 (Over 23 acres)	5,905	21.4
Pepsu	Entire area	—	788 (Over 20 acres)	2,842	44.7

agrarian legislation and taxation. Which means that there were only 70,000 holdings above 30 acres in Uttar Pradesh. These figures relate to the year 1351 F and it is the year 1362F which is running and now drawing to a close. Within this period, taking 20 to 25 years as the period by which a generation is usually separated from another, about 50 per cent of the holdings must have been sub-divided by now in pursuance of the laws of succession. So that today there can be, in no case, more than 35,000 holdings extant, more than 30 acres each. These figures, however, have been arrived at by the process of inference. In actual fact 2,941 holdings lying between 50 to 100 acres each, were assessed to Agricultural Income Tax on the basis of their incomes in the year 1360F. If land in excess of 30 acres of these holdings is taken away for distribution, only 7,46,000 acres will be available. Inasmuch as the adhivasis of these holdings were declared sirdars on 30 October 1954, the area that might have otherwise been available for redistribution, has been reduced by the area held by the erstwhile adhivasis. I do not want to burden this letter further with figures but there can be no manner of doubt that the area available for distribution can in no case be larger than 7.5 lakhs acres. The arable land in possession of the peasantry in Uttar Pradesh today is more than 4 crore acres.

Inasmuch as these large farmers are in actual possession and enjoyment of their holdings, the compensation that will have to be paid to them will be far higher per acre than what we paid to the intermediaries for acquiring their proprietary rights alone, the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Bill notwithstanding. The question that faces the Government in Uttar Pradesh is: Where will the compensation come from? The State is always resorting to deficit budgeting and the would-be settlers would not be able to pay. The second question is: To whom should the land be allotted—to uneconomical holders or the landless? The third question in this connection is: Whether this will relieve the agrarian situation in any material degree—whether with all the time, expense and bother that it will involve, the game is worth the candle? There are already 85 lakhs of peasant families in the State, half of them holding less than 5 acres each. Again, these considerations may be theoretically "pointless", but they cannot be brushed aside by administrators, while framing their policies, as being of no consequence at all.

Lastly, we have taken good care to see that those big holders who prove to be inefficient cultivators, are not allowed to get away with it or to keep this national asset lying idle. In the latter case the Government will intervene and settle the land on *asamis* for long periods on very moderate rent: in the former, the AIT (Agricultural Income Tax) which has been scaled up in proportion to the size of the holdings, will prove to be a great burden for the holder.

I have certainly heard of Vinoda Bhave. Not only that; this venerable sage has sent me word that, perhaps, of all persons "dressed in a little brief authority" he finds me alone nearest to himself in the matter of views about small-scale versus large-scale farming, mechanised versus bullock farming and cooperative or collective farming versus individualist farming. On these questions I have clung to my views passionately for the last 15 years in spite of occasional ridicule and misrepresentation—views which, thanks largely to Acharya Ji, are now finding increasing acceptance in the country. I agree with Acharya Ji entirely except that I would not appeal to small holders or to those who hold, say, less than 25 acres to gift away 1/6 of their holdings. Acharya Ji has already undertaken a tour of U.P. and I am giving away no secret when I say that more than 75 per cent of the land donated to the "Bhoodan Yogna" is unfit for cultivation.

I may also add that I do not attach more importance to the First Five-Year Plan. In fact, we in Uttar Pradesh have gone beyond what this Plan envisaged, or, perhaps, beyond what any other State has yet succeeded in achieving. In saying what I have on the subject I have been certainly voicing the policy of the Government on the subject today and those who know what is what, or, are conversant with public affairs, will hardly accuse me of being a reactionary, at least, in the matter of land reforms.

Yours sincerely
Sd
(Charan Singh)

The Editor,
National Herald, Lucknow.

Lucknow
9 April, 1955

Sir,

I have seen in your Readers' Forum only two letters on land re-distribution in criticism of my views on the subject—one by Sri P.K. Tandon, Joint Secretary, U.P. Kisan Sabha, and the other by Sri V.B. Singh, a member of the teaching staff of the Lucknow University. I do not think any more letters are coming.

In drawing their conclusions from agrarian statistics both these gentlemen have committed a mistake which many a writer and publicman before them have done, viz., that of equating the number of persons entered in the land records with the number of families or of holdings. Both Mr Tandon's statement that 81.2 per cent of the cultivating population held only 38.8 per cent of the cultivated area and Mr V.B. Singh's conclusion that 55.8 per cent of the cultivators in U.P. hold less than 2 acres each, can be traced to the Table No. 5, page 6, *Report of U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee*, Vol. II. According to this Table and the next there were 1,22,78,000 persons entered in Part I of the Khatauni in the year 1352 F or 1944-45 who held 4,13,00,000 acres of cultivated land amongst them. It is the assumption that each person out of these 1,22,78,000 represents one family that leads to the wrong inference that a vast percentage of the peasantry possess very little land as compared with a few people who own vast areas. In fact, in the area of our State to which this figure of 1,22,78,000 cultivators related there could not be more than 70 lakh cultivating families at the *outside* in 1352F. Which means that a majority of the families had two or even more members thereof, recorded as tenure-holders. The number of tenancy holdings alone four years later, viz., in 1356F, which covered only 32 per cent of cultivated area, stood, according to statistics collected by the Land Reforms Commissioner in connection with the ZAF drive, stood at more than 160 lakh.

Now, experience of rural life would tell us that it is comparatively the smaller peasants, that is, those holding 5 acres or less, who have more than one name recorded in the revenue papers and held land under more than one patta, lease or engagement, while the big cultivators usually possess only one holding.

Mr Tandon has conjured up a "mighty eviction offensive against the poorer section of the peasantry" by the "rich landlords" during the last few years in U.P. He is on a safe ground as he has given no facts and figures to prove his assertion. However, it is a hard fact known to every public servant, salaried or other, that zamindars have not been allowed to launch or develop any such offensive. Because on receipt of a merest complaint of illegal eviction or even a threat thereof Government has always set the entire machinery of the Revenue Department into motion with a view to securing the poor man in his rightful possession.

Mr Tandon has adduced the existence of 29 lakh wrong entries in land records a proof of the fact that the expropriation of poorer peasants by landlords has been going on merrily all these years on a large scale. As a matter of fact these wrong entries have been accumulating since 1942 as revenue officials were kept engaged in extraneous duties and special drives of one sort or another and did not find time enough to pay proper attention to maintenance of records. More than 80 per cent of these wrong entries, however, are undisputed and brought about by failure to record successions, etc. Only less than 20 per cent are disputed and even these do not show that it is the rich landlord who is the invariable grabber in each case; most of them indicate disputes, rather, between cultivators of the same status. Further, these 20 per cent of 29 lakh wrong entries embrace less than one per cent of the total cultivated area and, when corrected, will serve to put the rightful man into his due.

As regards occupation of waste lands by landlords, well, it is true that there have been many complaints on this score. But with the framing of rule 115 under the ZALR Act and enactment of Section 212A by the Second Amendment Act such lands can easily be recovered by the Land Management Committees. Quite a long period of time for such recovery has been provided and the Committees are now gradually getting into stride. In evidence of my assertion I may point out that according to the information available in the Secretariat the Committees of 24 districts had distributed 13,895 acres to landless persons by 30 June 1954. We have not yet made an inquiry as to how much of the encroached land has been recovered, or, how many proceedings with that end in view are pending.

Mr Tandon further alleges that owing to falling prices and

natural calamities land has been transferred from the poorer section to the richer landlords on a big scale. I must be excused if I say that in making this statement Mr Tandon has almost wholly drawn upon his imagination. Till zamindari was abolished on 30 June 1952, eighty-two per cent of the land was held by zamindars in their own cultivation as sir or khudkasht. The tenants could not transfer their lands under the law and nobody was prepared to purchase sir and khudkasht land from the zamindars because, inasmuch as the zamindar became an ex-proprietary tenant of the transferee simultaneously with the passing of his title, the transferee could not get actual possession. Not only this; the zamindars' right to transfer their proprietary rights even in lands held by tenants had been greatly restricted, for which I will refer Mr Tandon to Section 23 (1) of ZALR Act.

It is only bhumidhars who hold about 37.50 per cent of the cultivated area today who can transfer their lands. The total area transferred by them during one year after abolition of zamindari, according to the latest figures available, viz, from 1 October 1952 to 30 September 1953, comes only to 93,859 acres as follows:

TABLE 13.3

Name of Division	*Sale under Order of Court*		*By Private Transfer*	
	No of cases	*Area in acres*	*No of transactions*	*Area in acres*
1. Meerut	10	55	6,192	23,908
2. Agra	102	668	3,585	30,071
3. Rohilkhand	106	5,416	2,216	9,166
4. Allahabad	191	1,582	2,106	9,579
5. Jhansi	—	—	509	2,739
6. Banaras	2	3	763	3,683
7. Gorakhpur	8	103	915	2,829
8. Lucknow	5	39	112	2,354
9. Faizabad	15	24	214	1,567
	439	7,891	16,612	85,968

Even this area of 93,859 acres could not have passed on to rich landlords, for nobody can, under the present law, purchase either in his own name or that of his wife or minor children so much land as will make his entire holding bigger than 30 acres. One will note with satisfaction that in the central and eastern districts, where the cultivators are comparatively poorer, there have been very few transfers, indeed. There could not be a greater refutation of Mr Tandon's contention.

As regards fictitious divisions among friends and relatives of rich landlords, Mr Tandon forgets that I had quoted the figures of big holdings above 50 acres which had been assessed to AIT, and the AIT Act through its Sections 4-A, 8, 9 and 10 ensures that a big holder will not be allowed to get away with spurious transactions seeking to split up the holding.

Finally, out of the 1,14,655 persons who held more than 25 acres each in 1352F and whom, perhaps, Mr Tandon imagines all to be rich landlords, only 32,555 were zamindars and the rest, 82,100 were tenants. So that a mighty eviction offensive and occupation of common lands by, and transfers on a big scale in favour of, rich landlords—factors which in Mr Tandon's opinion served to add so much land to the grabbers as to cancel the division of their holdings brought about by laws of succession—could, in fact, be true, if at all, only of 32,555 persons out of 1,14,655.

Now, as to the land that will be available for distribution: on looking into the various tables or statements that are given in *ZAC Report*, Vol. II, one will find that out of 1,14,655 big holders 32,555, who were zamindars, held an area of 16,69,474 acres, or, roughly 51 acres each, and the rest, viz. 82,100, who were tenants, held 36,41,098 acres, or, roughly 44.5 acres each. Of the 32,555 proprietary holdings whose break-up is given in the Report, 72 per cent fall within the 25-50 acre group. Out of these, 19 per cent holdings possessing an area of 12 per cent are situated in Bundelkhand. Inasmuch as tenancy holdings are on an average 12.75 per cent less in area than the proprietary ones we may assume that the holdings in the lower 25-50 acre group, both proprietary and non-proprietary taken together, situated in Bundelkhand, will come at best to 21 per cent, that is 24078 holding approximately. An area of 2 acres in Bundelkhand being equivalent to 1 acre in the rest of the State, we are left

only with 90,600 holdings of more than 25 standard acres each in the entire State. Further, out of these also, the number of holdings above 50 acres lying in Bundelkhand will have to be halved in order to arrive at the correct acreage that may be available for re-distribution. A reference to Statement 12 of the *Report* will show that in Bundelkhand such bigger holdings in the proprietary group constituted 7.5 per cent of the total. Tenancy holdings being smaller in area and constituting 71 per cent of all big holdings in the State, we can safely put the figure of holdings of more than 50 acres each in Bundelkhand, at 6.25 per cent of the total. Deducting 3.125 per cent of 1,14,655 or 3583 holdings from the total of 90,600 that we are left with, we reach a figure of 87,000 holdings with an aggregate area of 43,52,000 standard acres which has been arrived at by deducting 6,64,000 acres on account of 24,000 holdings of 25-50 acre group and 2,95,000 acres on account of 3,600 holdings in the higher group in Bundelkhand. Of this area, too, about one-sixth was let out to sub-tenants and non-occupancy tenants who acquired permanent rights. So that the area actually under the plough of these big holders came only to 36,27,000 acres. Reserving 25 acres to each we are left with a surplus of 14,52,000 acres roughly. This was in the year 1352 F. So that, inasmuch as more than half of these 87,000 holdings in 1352F must have by now been sub-divided owing to the law of succession. I did not make an understatement if I put the area of land available for distribution today at 7.5 lakhs after reserving 30 acres each to the large holders.

On page 137 a table is given from the *Census Report of 1951* showing the variations in the proportion of the agricultural population as a whole and of the various agricultural classes in Uttar Pradesh. Figures of 1931 and 1941 have not been given because the occupation only of workers' had then been recorded, and not that of the dependents:

This Table coupled with the fact that big holdings, both proprietary and tenancy, which must have stood in the neighbourhood of 20,000 in 1945, were reduced eight years later, according to AIT figures, to about 9,000, proves conclusively that, at least, in Uttar Pradesh land has not gravitated as time has passed, into fewer and still fewer hands nor have the peasants been divested of their holdings or made to swell the ranks of the

TABLE 13.4

Principal Means of Livelihood	*1901*	*1911*	*1921*	*1951*
Cultivators	48.53	59.80	64.18	67.41
Agricultural labourers	9.03	9.48	8.68	5.71
Rent-receivers	7.11	1.80	1.76	1.06
Total agricultural population	64.67	71.08	74.62	74.18

"wage-slaves" of Marxian economics that so many gentlemen would love to imagine.

I had suggested in my letter that small holdings produce more per acre than large holdings. I know that this view of mine is an anathema to the followers of the economic and political thought to which Mr Tandon and also, if I have guessed right from his contributions to the press, Mr V.B. Singh subscribe. The latter says that, while comparing production of the two kinds of farms, I have, perhaps, confused between lbs (sterling) and lbs (avoirdupos). Let Mr V.B. Singh consult any reliable international publication on agricultural production of the various countries and he will find that Japan China, Germany, Denmark, Belgium and other countries where small holdings are the rule, produce more not only of commercial crops like cotton and groundnut per acre but also of foodstuffs like wheat, barley, maize, etc. than countries like the USA, USSR and Australia where large holdings, howsoever operated, are the rule. Further, even if small farmers, as Mr V.B. Singh concedes, are able to increase their revenues, not by production of more food per acre, but because of poultry farming and commercial crops, there is no reason why small farms should not be preferred to large farms, particularly, when we have such a huge population to support and so little land to go round.

Advocates of large-scale farming seem to believe that just as in manufacturing industry, concentration of property will lead to greater production per unit of capital invested, in agriculture also. But the progress in the science of agriculture has shown that the laws of industrial production do not hold good for

agricultural production. The reason is obvious. "The manufacturing process", an economist has pointed out, "is a mechanical process producing articles to pattern in succession from the same machine. The agricultural process, on the other hand is a biological process and its products are the result of not a man-driven mechanism, but of their own inherent qualities of growth." Mere use of machinery or concentration of property will, therefore not increase production in agriculture. It is abundant water, application of manure—preferably organic, use of modern chemical discoveries, improved varieties of seeds, measures for control of pests and diseases and the efficiency of the farmer that affect actual production per acre, and not how land is ploughed, whether by a tractor in large blocks or by animal labour in small plots. Even if we concede that big farms can use better technical method or more easily procure agricultural necessities like water, manure, improved seeds and insecticides, the same can also be achieved by cooperative action on the part of small peasants where they can enjoy all the technical advantages of a large undertaking while still retaining the freedom of private property and, with it, the freedom of action. It is this kind of farmers' Cooperatives rather than Cooperative Farming that I had said in my letter, will solve our problems best. This system will ensure individual care and attention which plant life needs as badly as human and animal life and which a peasant family can provide free of wages.

Mr Tandon cannot deny that in his true opinion peasant is a worst sort of capitalist. For, Lenin had declared that "small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale." Why then, one may ask, does Mr Tandon advocate a course which will lead to multiplication of the capitalist bourgeoisie? Next, in pursuance of his is not going to concede that small-scale farming produces more wealth or provides more employment per acre. Why, then one may ask again, does he advocate division of large farms into small bits? A wary reader will note that Mr Tandon has adroitly reserved a way of retreat from his present stand by inserting the words "at present" in my argument and then expressing his agreement with it as follows "Mr Charan Singh himself admits that the production of food in big land holdings *at present* is lower than in small farms."

This gives only an inkling of Mr Tandon's mind, but Mr V.B. Singh is more candid. He will distribute two acres each to the landless, for, such redistribution, as he says, is likely to help develop cooperative farming where, if necessary, labour and stock resources alone will be pooled in the first instance and ultimately land also, which he seeks to redistribute today. The truth is they are pining for collective farms of the Russian model and talking of redistribution to please the peasant. Once they secure his goodwill somehow and are able to ride to power on his back, they plan to force him into mechanized "kolhozy" where he will be reduced into a labourer— a "land-worker". It is not for the first time that, as readers must have come across a press report in the *National Herald* of 8 April 1955, a "shock brigade" of 30,000 city-trained specialists is being sent into the countryside of Russia who have been "recommended" as chairmen of collective farms in order to "ensure the guidance of agriculture". They had drafted 25,000 industrial workers in 1930 also to organize the "kolhozy" and to become their first presidents.

The Communists have learnt their lesson after a bitter experience of decades in Europe where the Marxian theories of State Farming, or, for the matter of that, large-scale farming of whatever type, when put squarely to him, could not win the peasant to the Socialist fold. They have since decided to approach the peasant only with the tongues in their cheeks.

Mr V.B. Singh has, strangely enough for an economist, a great dread of statistics. Statistics seem to be or turn out to be perfidious only when writers, howsoever able otherwise, press them into the service of pre-conceived slogans. Were we to place no reliance on statistics, the basis for all planning will have disappeared: in fact it will not be possible for any body of men to draw up any scheme in any department of life or administration.

To give only two instances of how statistics are misinterpreted and these from Mr V.B. Singh's letter itself; the last column of the statement taken by me from page 199 of the *First Five-Year Plan* was entitled "Percentage of Area" obviously carrying the meaning of "percentage of the area of big holdings to the entire cultivated area of the State concerned". But, Mr V.B. Singh, by adding the words "available for re-distribution" within brackets against "percentage of area", has given it an entirely different

and misleading connotation. Again, the size of large holdings given in the statement has been assumed by him as the ceiling fixed for the State, God alone knows how and why? Such interpretation could not but lead to wrong conclusions.

I had nowhere said, as Mr V.B. Singh alleges, that re-distribution of land will increase the number of uneconomic holdings. For, I believe, if re-distribution has at all to be made, either land will have to be given to those who possess uneconomic holdings today, or, if it is settled on the landless, it will have to be done in holdings of an economic size.

I have no wish to pursue the controversy further. The principle of land redistribution had been adopted in July last at Ajmer by the political organization to which members of the U.P. Government have the honour to belong. Our only contention is that, circumstanced as we in Uttar Pradesh are, the problem is of little or no practical significance. Rather, we have to go all out for small-scale industrialization of our countryside and rivet the attention of well-wishers of the State and canalize the energy of all public servants to this consummation. Land and its problems have had, and are having enough of it.

Yours sincerely
Sd
(Charan Singh)

The Editor
"National Herald"
Lucknow.

The policy of granting a right to zamindars to resume lands from their tenants simultaneously with or followed by imposition of ceilings on large holdings and redistribution of surplus land, betrays a confusion of mind on the part of Congress leadership. In order that glaring disparities in possession of land might be eliminated there was an alternative method available to that of redistribution directly by the State, particularly, in regions or States where large areas or surplus land were not available. All that was required, was to impose a heavy graduated tax on the area actually under personal cultivation of the owners (so that inefficient or too large farms would have had to sell up) and to fix a ceiling on future acqusitions at a low level, say, 12.5 acres for an adult including the spouse and the minor offsprings, if any.

With the result that land surplus to what a person might efficiently cultivate, will have been distributed automatically, that is, without the State coming into the picture at all. The State would not have had to pay any compensation (rather, it would have got a substantial amount as tax), nor would it have had to incur any administrative responsibility that cutting down of large farms and the distribution of surplus land necessarily involved. Any feeling of bitterness, justified or unjustified, in the minds of the large farmers that they were being discriminated against as compared with owners of large urban property[1] would have been avoided and the State saved the burden of financing the would-be settlers. Nor will have any feeling of uncertainty been created in the minds of those middle-class cultivators who may not be affected by the ceiling today (for, the ceiling, at whatever level we fix it, will appear as arbitrary and there is no guarantee—these landowners or cultivators will argue to themselves—that it will not be brought down to lower limit tomorrow), or a feeling of discontent among those landless labourers and sub-basic holders who may or would necessarily be left out of the scheme of redistribution. Last, but not least, the redistribution would have been effected without having "unleashed a class conflict" as the State Communist Party, Uttar Pradesh, in its meeting of 20-21 April 1959, held at Lucknow gleefully said, the Nagpur Resolution of the Indian National Congress passed January 1959, had done.

It may not be out of place to mention here that the above method of cutting down large farms or other large property, viz. by heavy taxation has been recommended by the eminent economist, Gunner Myrdal, also as a better course of narrowing down economic disparities than any other.

How much land would actually be available in a State for distribution depended upon the area of the land which workers engaged in cultivation or a cultivating family held on an average, and the number of large holdings that were still extant. The likely surplus area, the size of the average holdings, as also the dimension of the demand for land, differed widely from State to State. The following

[1] In the non-agricultural sector, only a tax was payable on incomes of more than Rs 3,600 or Rs 4,200 a year at the time. On the other hand, in the rural or agricultural sector, nobody who derived an income in excess of these figures was to be allowed to exist or function.

TABLE 13.5

Data Re-Holdings and Households Based on a Survey of 20 per cent Sample of Households Made during Census Operations of 1961

S. No.	*State*	*No. of cultivating households*	*No. of households having 10 acres or more*	*No. of households having 30 acres & above (in hundreds)*	*Per cent of Cols. 4/3*	*Per cent of Cols. 5/3*	*Per cent of Agricultural labourers to cultivators on 1 April 1960*
1.	Punjab	3,33,998	1,67,234	294	50.07	8.8	24
2.	Rajasthan	5,24,937	2,38,994	740	45.53	14.1	7
3.	Maharashtra	7,48,470	3,09,830	768	41.40	1.3	51
4.	Gujarat	3,77,897	1,53,352	362	40.58	9.6	30
5.	Madhya Pradesh	8,54,956	3,01,187	487	35.23	5.7	29
6.	Mysore	5,00,916	1,58,348	344	31.61	6.9	28
7.	Andhra Pradesh	7,79,235	1,78,190	352	22.87	4.5	76
8.	Uttar Pradesh	18,96,144	2,28,303	205	12.57	1.08	16
9.	Orissa	4,83,505	59,460	60	12.30	1.2	24
10.	Bihar	11,57,345	1,30,155	169	11.24	1.5	41
11.	Madras	6,50,805	64,646	74	9.93	1.1	47
12.	Assam	3,00,124	27,504	15	9.16	0.5	7
13.	West Bengal	6,11,539	51,348	19	8.40	0.3	41
14.	Jammu & Kashmir	98,187	5,345	2	5.44	0.17	3
15.	Kerala	2,02,218	4,302	4	2.13	0.19	90

Note: Statistics relating to Punjab refer to a period when Haryana was included in it. Statistics regarding the number of agricultural labourers every 100 cultivators have been taken from the Census of 1961.

table will give an idea of all the three:

It is clear that only the first seven States were in a position to make substantial area available which required or justified distribution of land through the agency of the State Government. After the above seven States and beginning with Uttar Pradesh there is steep fall in the number of large holdings comprising an area of more than 10 and 30 acres each.

Charan Singh, therefore, replaced the agricultural Income Tax Act by the Large Land-holdings Tax which came into effect on July 1957. Land-holdings up to 30 acres were declared exempt from payment of this tax. This legislation proved a boon both to the cultivators, because farmed or worked as it was, it contained no loopholes which could lead to corruption or harassment of the farmers as also to the Government inasmuch as a dishonest farmer could not conceal his income as calculated under this Act. Also, as the Act imposed a graduated tax whose rate went on rising along with the size of the holding, it became an instrument of social justice. For, it was in the interest of a large holder to sell away a part and thus reduce the area of his farm (to 30 acres) so that he could utilize or exploit it more efficiently. As a result, according to revenue records, after the large land-holdings Act had remained in force only for two years, the number of large holdings having an area of more than thirty acres each, dwindled to 8,000 in the vast expanse of U.P. countryside with 1,00,000 villages in the plains and 12,000 in the hills.

The legislation tended to serve long-term public interest in yet another sense, viz. it exempted groves from taxation so that it encouraged the farmers to put more and more land under trees. The Act was, however, declared illegal by the Allahabad High Court in 1960 when Charan Singh was out of office. Nobody, however, cared to file an appeal to the Supreme Court, or, if necessary to get the Act amended. And, despite his desire, the Revenue Department was nor entrusted to him even when he came back to office at the end of 1960.

After Charan Singh had resigned from the Cabinet in 1959 an Imposition of Ceilings Act was enacted by the Congress Government which came into force on 3 January 1960. This Act was intended to take the place of the Large Land-holdings Act, but contained several built-in defects which were designed to help the land-

owning classes frustrate its aim of distributing surplus land among the landless.

The ceiling limits were far too big. Former landlords got away with large holdings, the size ranging between 16 and 51.2 hectares. They enlarged their permissible holdings by taking full advantage of the exemptions granted under the law. Groves, land used for industrial purposes; cattle sheds, composit-pits, threshing-floor, areas belonging to residential houses, dairy and poultry farms, and land belonging to cooperative societies, former rulers of Princely States, charitable trusts, wakfs and endowments and educational institutions run by registered societies were exempted from the operation of the Ceiling Act. With the result that the Ceiling Act was so successfully circumvented by the landowning classes that only 84,8000 hectures were declared surplus. Of this area, the government could take possession of 72,400 hectares only. Most of the land belonging to the village community was grabbed by landowning Thakurs and Brahmins with the help of officials of the revenue department and the land management committees.

"The first serious attempt to allot available surplus land to the landless was made in January 1970, ten years after the first ceiling Act was passed. Lists of landless kisans and farmers having less than 1.25 hectares were prepared. Of the 558,000 hectares of allotable Gaon Sabha land 289,600 hectares were redistributed. Ninety per cent of the benificiaries were Harijans. But most of the land allotted to them on paper does not belong to them. They dare not till it because of the terror let loose by Thakurs and Brahmins."[1]

Thus, the ceiling legislation served little or no public purpose (as it did not, in any other State either). This will be still clearer from the following summary of conclusions embodied in the report of a survey made by the State Government itself in 1970-71:

U.P. Ceiling Law Mostly Inoperative

Express News Service

LUCKNOW, June 1. The Imposition of Ceiling on Land-Holdings Act, enacted eleven years ago, is an inoperative law in most

[1]Vide an article, "U.P. Harijans Deprived of Benefits of Land Reforms" by S.C. Kala, published in the *Times of India*, New Delhi, dated 13 September 1973.

parts of the State, according to the survey made by an agency of the State Government.

The survey, apart from pointing out large-scale and almost wholesale evasion of ceiling laws by big landholders of the State, has also revealed that the land records of big landholders, as maintained by the revenue authorities, had no relation to the realities of the situation. It said that "there appears to be a whole vicious circle operating so far as the documentation of records of rights of village land, vis-a-vis the utilisation of the cultivable land, is concerned, unless drastic and very bold steps are taken, this deep-rooted evil cannot be eradicated.

Barely three lakh acres of land was estimated to be surplus as a result of the imposition of land ceilings in 1960, of the land thus becoming surplus, barely 13 per cent could be distributed on a permanent basis till last year. When this survey was completed, bulk of the surplus land was either still in dispute or in the process of being distributed to the landless.

The large landholders had also transferred big chunks of land to limited liability concerns, cooperative farming societies and educational and charitable trusts to evade the provisions of the Ceiling Act.

The inquiry report said that big landlords obviously had the means to "offer illegal gratification to lekhpals for completion of land records to their advantages", and that they had found glaring examples of this kind. Even though the lekhpal's work is supervised by an army of functionaries, the report pointed out that "there were hardly any changes made by the supervisory staff, perhaps, because it was a very cumbersome and time-consuming process to scrutinise and verify the records."

The inquiry team found that one landholder in an eastern district who held about 5,000 acres in 1960 still continued to be in actual possession and cultivating it by forming fictitious trusts, societies and by making false transfers. This landholder had transferred land to his large army of servants, though he continued to be in actual possession and cultivation of the land. To ensure that the employees in whose names the land had been transferred, did not assert any claim, the report said, the landholders had secured bonds of Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 25,000 from each one of them. These bonds were being renewed annually by the landowner.

Inquiries further revealed that many persons to whom the land, which otherwise would have become surplus after the ceilings, had apparently been transferred, resided in far-off places like Patna, Calcutta, Bombay, Varanasi or elsewhere. Whether these persons actually existed or these names were fake, the report said, could be established only by a thorough inquiry.

—The *Indian Express*
3 June 1971

Even as it was, that is, howsoever unnecessary and ineffective an Imposition of Ceiling Act was in Uttar Pradesh in the opinion of Charan Singh as compared with heavy taxation on large holdings he wrote an article in its defence on 1 January 1966 (although he was not either a Minister of Revenue or a Minister of Agriculture at the time) replying to a big landholder Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh's letter criticising the Act on grounds of principle, which was published in the *National Herald*, Lucknow, the previous day, 31 December 1965. Charan Singh's letter is reproduced below:

Charan Singh

34, Mall Avenue
Lucknow
1 January 1966

Sir,

This is with reference to Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh's letter published in your columns under the heading of "Food Front" yesterday. Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh is a practical farmer possessing deep knowledge of agricultural problems and is always heard with great respect in the legislature. While leaving his assessment of the Congress Government's performance on the food front and the reasons therefor for consideration or reply by more competent persons, I would like to express my differences with him only on the question of ceiling on landholdings in U.P.

Under the law in force in this State, all existing holdings have been, or will be, cut down to an area ranging from 40 to 80 acres and nobody in the future can acquire an area which added to what he may already be holding, will make his land more than 12.5 acres. Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh says that this law is an impediment in the way of agriculturists achieving the standard of life open to others in the community, leads to flight of talent and capital from agriculture and, inasmuch as

there are no ceilings on incomes in other professions, has resulted in down-grading of agriculture as a profession. Unless the law is repealed, he contends, there is no hope of "modernizing Indian agriculture".

But there is no comparison between land and non-landed property. Land is a property or commodity which a farmer did not create or help create, as an owner of a non-agricultural property does. Also, in our conditions, land is a limiting factor while capital or non-agricultural property, like everywhere else, is not. Further, it is not as easy or practicable to impose a ceiling on non-agricultural incomes as on land.

As for standard of life, non-imposition, rather removal of ceilings will certainly open the way of agriculturists to acquisition of higher levels, but the question is—of how many and with what result to the economy of the State as a whole? The number of persons who were affected by the ceiling legislation of 1960, was negligible, that is, less than one in one thousand. As for the ceiling imposed on future acquisitions, it is forgotten that the average land-holding of a cultivating family in our State comes to a bare piece of 4.0 acres or so. Lifting of this ceiling will mean that the land will gradually come to be concentrated in the hands of a few and most of the existing farmers will be reduced to labourers, or, their holdings reduced to still more uneconomic sizes. This will lead to further widening of disparities in the incomes of our people, which are already too wide, and will endanger democracy.

As for the effect of ceilings on production, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh is certainly in respectable company in thinking that "large-scale agriculture" and "modern agriculture" are synonymous terms. It is this unfounded belief in the higher echelons of our policy-makers and political leadership, however, which, *inter alia*, has led to formulation of wrong policies and bedevilled agricultural production in the country.

Large farms do not mean large production per acre. Agricultural crops taking the same time to mature and the same space to grow, whether sown in a small piece of land or a large one, size of a farm has, in theory, no relevance to production per acre. As for technologies: briefly stated, there are only three groups of agricultural technologies, viz. those springing from the work of (1) biologists, such as scientifically-bred varieties of

plants and animals including various types of hybrids, vaccines for prevention or cure of livestock and poultry diseases, etc. (2) chemists, such as fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides as also weed-killers and supplements to livestock rations, and (3) physicists or engineers, such as tractors and other farm machinery, silos, and storage facilities etc.

Now none of these technologies require a large farm for their application and can be used on small farms as efficiently as on large farms.

But, in actual practice, small farms, mainly because of increased labour and supervision by the owner, are known to produce more per acre than large farms. I do not want to burden this letter with statistics, and will content myself with pointing out that European farms which are, on an average, far smaller than the USA and USSR, produce more than the latter. Japan, where the average farm is hardly of 3.5 acres, offers another outstanding example. Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh and those who think like him, would, perhaps, be interested to know that Japan has imposed a ceiling on future acquisitions of land at 7.5 acres, that is, three times the average size of a family holding just as the Congress Government in Uttar Pradesh has done.

Perhaps, it would further be relevant to point out that imposition of a ceiling on land does not mean an imposition of ceiling on income. Provided, resource facilities are available and he knows his art and puts in the necessary labour, our farmer can make an income more than four times of what he does today.

Ultimately, the salvation of the farmers (as also the solution of the poverty of the country as a whole) lies in the reduction of their numbers and their voluntary diversion to non-agricultural occupations yielding higher incomes. The main cause of our poverty consists in the huge under-employment in our villages, in other words, in the fact that, because of the too small size of our landholdings, our agriculture is greatly labour-surplus and not labour-deficient as some of us would seem to imagine or their exhortations to educated youngmen in the villages not to leave their farms and to e ucated youngmen in the towns to go back to the villages, would lead one to believe. The way to eradication of our poverty and to "improvement in the standards of life of our farmers", on which the heart of every well-wisher of the country like Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh is set, is illustrated by the example,

for instance, of the U.K. where during the last century, the percentage of farmers in the population has been gradually brought down to 5 with consequent increase in the area of their holdings to more than 80 acres each and by that the USA where, during the last 15 years only, the number of farmers has come down from 13 to 7 per cent and the average land-holding had consequently gone up from 215 to 300 acres.

This diversion, however, will be brought about only after our farmers have succeeded in increasing their production to the extent that it is surplus to their needs and after they have developed the proper mental attitudes. In the sphere of land legislation, there are only two steps which can help this diversion, viz. prohibition of subletting by those who possess a sound mind and a sound body and, the second, enactment of the rule of primogeniture. One of them has already been taken in Uttar Pradesh. Perhaps the time is not yet ripe for the other, involuntary or forced sales of their land by hard-pressed peasants with no limits set to the ambitions of a purchaser, will only aggravate our problems and expedients like fixation of minimum agricultural prices which, in our conditions, have not worked and will not work, only serve to glue the feet of the farmers to their land.

I may add that, through this letter, I have briefly put my views on the subject before your readers for what they are worth, but have no wish to enter into any further controversy.

Yours
sincerely
(Charan Singh)

The Editor,
"National Herald"
Lucknow.

14

Increase in Land Taxation Opposed by Charan Singh

The Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1952, had laid down that the land-revenue payable by the sirdars and bhumidhars will remain unaltered for the next 40 years. Ten years later, however, viz., in 1962, the then Chief Minister, Shri C.B. Gupta sought to increase it by 50%. Charan Singh opposed the move vehemently and provided the intellectual opposition to it in a long confidential note or memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, dated 29 September 1962, which is placed below. The matter went up to the Planning Commission and Congress Leadership in New Delhi; ultimately the proposal was dropped.

In order to finance the Third Five-Year Plan, the State Government has introduced a Land-Holdings Tax Bill which seeks, in effect, to raise the land revenue payable by cultivators today by 50 per cent. There are, however, following five very good reasons why the State Government should not proceed with this measure.

(*a*) The economic condition of the peasantry does not justify any increase in its financial burden;

(*b*) The land in Uttar Pradesh is already fully taxed and the villager or the agriculturist is not lagging behind in his tax effort;

(*c*) The tax is unnecessary, for the necessary funds can be found, and the desired results obtained in other ways;

(*d*) The Bill will prove to be politically a most damaging measure for Congress; and

(*e*) Any increase in land revenue will run counter to an assurance solemnly given to the masses and incorporated in the ZALR Act, 1952 to the effect that revenue demand of the State will not be increased for the next forty years.

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF PEASANTRY

Below is given a statement prepared by the Economic Intelligence and Statistics Department of Uttar Pradesh, showing the total income of the State and *per capita* incomes, separately of the rural and urban sectors ever since 1948-49:

TABLE 14.1

Statement Showing Estimates of per Capita Income of India and that of Uttar Pradesh at 1948-49 Price

Year	*Per Capita Income of India*	*Per Capita Income of U.P.*			*Percentage of Urban to Rural per Capita Income of U.P.*
		Total	*Rural*	*Urban*	
	Rs	*Rs*	*Rs*	*Rs*	
1948-49	249.6	238.37	188.97	547.17	289.6
1949-50	250.6	250.25	194.20	601.71	309.8
1950-51	247.5	252.35	190.93	639.45	334.9
1951-52	250.3	244.86	183.63	632.64	344.5
1952-53	255.7	248.49	185.12	656.41	354.6
1953-54	266.2	244.68	183.65	639.30	348.1
1954-55	267.8	261.04	192.70	705.58	366.2
1955-56	267.8	259.10	187.35	727.87	388.5
1956-57	275.6	251.95	192.65	645.93	335.3
1957-58	267.4	241.58	179.55	656.06	365.4
1958-59	280.2	251.45	190.53	660.67	346.8
1959-60	279.0	248.83	189.41	650.03	343.2
1960-61	292.5*	262.54	202.61	669.28	230.3

*Preliminary.

It will be observed that, leaving out the last year, 1960-61, in which we had exceptionally good weather, rural incomes have varied between Rs 179.55 and Rs 194.20. In as many as 5 years out of 11, they slumped below the base figure of 118.97. The urban incomes during the same period have varied between Rs 601.71 and Rs 727.87. "In no year, did they fall below the base figure of Rs 547.17". Including figures for 1960-61, the *per capita* rural income, averaged over a period of 12 years, will be found to stand at Rs 189.36, and the urban income at Rs 657.08. So that, in the rural sector, there has been, after 1948-49, no increase in the *per*

capita income: whatever increase there has been in the total income, has been almost completely absorbed in the population increase. Whereas the *per capita* income in the urban sector shows a net increase of 20.0 per cent. The disparity between the two incomes, instead of being abridged, has widened:

TABLE 14.2

Period	*Rural*	*Urban*	*Disparity between Two Income*	
			Rural	*Urban*
1948-49	188.97	547.17	100	285
1960-61	202.61	669.28	100	330
Average of 12 years: 1949-61	189.36	657.08	100	347

We had, after Independence, begun our planning and developmental activities with the talk of improving the income of the villager and the comparatively poorer, on our lips, and, at the end of two Five-Year Plans, succeeded only in improving the income of the town-dweller and the comparatively richer. Obviously, there is some thing or some things which are wrong somewhere.

A belief is held in certain quarters that inasmuch as agricultural prices are so high, the agriculturists "never had it so good". This belief is, however, based on two misconceptions:

(*i*) That every agriculturist has a surplus to sell. Whereas, in fact, at least, one half of our farmers, with low yields on the petty landholdings that they possess, have practically little or nothing to sell in the market. Their product hardly suffices for their bare nutritional needs.

(*ii*) That prices of agricultural products are comparatively higher than those of non-agricultural goods—higher than they used to be. But as the following table, prepared by the Economic Intelligence and Statistics Department of the State, would show, agricultural prices since 1948 have definitely fallen while non-agricultural prices have registersed a considerable increase.

If current or 1961 prices are considered—and that is really what matters to a citizen—the *per capita* incomes (at 1948-49 prices) in the rural sector, which have remained static, stand reduced by 5.3 per cent, and those of the producers of non-agricultural goods

TABLE 14.3

Statement Showing Agriculture Wholesale Price Indices, non-Agricultural Retail Price Indices and Agricultural Parity Indices in U.P.

Year	*Agricultural Wholesale Price Index 1948=100*	*Non-Agricultural Retail Price Index 1948=100*	*Agricultural Parity Index Col. 2×100 / Col. 3 1948=100*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*
1952	98.0	101.0	97.2
1953	95.9	95.9	100.0
1954	80.9	95.8	84.3
1955	64.8	91.6	70.7
1956	82.8	98.8	83.7
1957	90.2	103.3	88.1
1958	103.0	103.5	99.4
1959	101.4	107.5	95.5
1960	97.0	115.0	84.3
1961	94.7	119.7	79.1

stand appreciated by 19.7 per cent. *It comes to this that, while the non-agriculturist "today has to pay 5.3 per cent less for the same goods than in 1948-49 the agriculturist has to pay 26.4 per cent more."*

Owing (partly to far-reaching debt legislation enacted by the Congress government in 1939, but largely) to increase in agricultural prices since 1942-43, rural indebtedness had disappeared to a large extent even before Congress took over the reins of government again in 1946. Since 1950, however, very large areas of the State both in the east and the west, have, almost in succession and till date, been hit by one natural disaster or another. In consequence, taking the State as a whole, not only has there been no economic progress in the rural sector: it would appear that, at least, in certain parts of the State, there has been a retrogression. A far larger number of agriculturist, all over the State, including both cultivators and labourers in the term, are indebted today than in the second quinquennium of the forties, viz. 1946-50.

Besides natural calamities, however, there may be—in fact, there are—other, perhaps, even more important reasons for the present economic situation in the State or for its failure to come up, but it is unnecessary to refer to them here.

A case study of the Ghosi Community Development Block was made by the Planning Research and Action Institute U.P. in 1958. This area which forms part Azamgarh district, was one amongst those chosen very first in the State, i.e. in 1952, for intensive development work. The study is entitled Community Development and and Economic Development was published by the United Nations organisation in 1960. Field investigations were made to find out the burden of indebtedness in the 3 years ending 1957-58. The results are summarised in the following table:

TABLE 14.4
Loans Taken and Repaid per Indebted Household of Cultivators

Period and Loan	*Block Cultivator*		
	Small	*Medium*	*Large*
1955-56			
Loan taken	81	109	145
Loan repaid	55	70	111
1956-57			
Loan taken	84	99	205
Loan repaid	46	67	84
1957-58			
Loan taken	100	159	274
Loan repaid	42	61	66

There can be no clearer proof of deteriorating economic conditions of the peasantry in the district. As time passed, debt piled up against all kinds of cultivators in spite of developmental activities in the villages.

In the same year, viz. 1958, a study of economic conditions of Basti district as a whole was conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research. The study is entitled *Rehabilitation and Development of Basti District*, and was published by the Asia Publishing House, Bombay, in 1959. It was found that almost 71 per cent of the families did not consume any milk, and only 15 per cent had enough protein in their diet "Nearly 85 per cent of the total consumption expenditure was taken up by food. Which means that only 15 per cent was left for clothing, house repairs, education, medicine, Government dues like land revenue and irrigation charges, marriage and so many other inevitable or

miscellaneous needs of a household. According to the study, only 15 per cent of the families lived on or above the all India average income level. The following Table illustrates the economic condition of Basti in comparison with Uttar Pradesh and India as a whole:

TABLE 14.5

Per Capita Annual Income of Basti, Uttar Pradesh and India in 1955-56

(in Rupees)

Region	*National Income per Capita*	*Income from Agriculture and allied Pursuits per Member of*		*Per Capita income of Population Depending on Production Other than Cultivation*
		Total population	*Population depending on land*	
Basti	165	104	116	363
U.P.	265	112	152	419
India	272	131	187	434

Figures for Basti are at 1955-56 prices, while those for Uttar Pradesh and India are at at 1948-49 prices.

"The income derived from agriculture" denotes the study, "may be considered to be of greater significance than the total income, since 90 per cent of the total population depends on land for livelihood" (p. 8). The study, which makes a very distressing reading, draws the sorry conclusion: "With an increasing population and limited resources, the standard of living of the people is lower than what it was in 1921". (pp. 1-2).

The yearly land revenue demand for Azamgarh and Basti stands respectively at Rs 55,87,000 and Rs 63,68,000. We must think many times before asking the peasantry of these two districts to bear fresh burdens.

With progress of time, land-holdings in Uttar Pradesh, vast majority whereof were already small, are becoming smaller and smaller still, in consequence, leading to more and more under-employment both amongst cultivators and agricultural labourers. Increase of under-employment must necessarily lead to economic hardship. Government of India held two inquiries into the economic condition of agricultural labourers all over the country, the first in 1950-51 and the second in 1956-57. The second inquiry shows that the condition of agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh (as in three or four other states also) had greatly deteriorated in the meanwhile:

TABLE 14.6

Average Annual Income of Agricultural Labour Households in 1950-51 and 1956-57

States	*Income*		*Percentage Variation*
	1950-51	*1956-57*	
Orissa	340	319	6.2
Madras	371	375	—
Andhra Pradesh	381	426	—
Mysore	383	486	—
Madhya Pradesh	391	336	14.1
Bombay	415	450	—
Kerala	486	437	10.0
Bihar	535	420	21.5
Uttar Pradesh	551	373	32.3
Rajasthan	605	336	44.5
West Bengal	608	657	—
Assam	609	775	—
Punjab	686	731	—

Source: *Agricultural Labour in India, Report on the Second Inquiry*, Vol. I. Publication No. 53, published by the Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, pp 138-39.

In 1950-51, the consumption expenditure of an agricultural labour household in Uttar Pradesh, according to the first inquiry, stood at Rs 543. That is, the expenditure was fully balanced by the income. In 1956-57, however, the expenditure rose to Rs 615. The gap is being filled up, as the report points out, by liquidation of assets and incurring of loans.

Those who have any doubts about the validity of conclusions drawn by the Second Inquiry, may be referred to a news-item published in the *Pioneer*, dated 16 September 1962:

> The technical committee which examined the report of the second agricultural labour inquiry committee, was of the opinion that during the last decade the standard of living of agricultural labourers had, at best, remained stationary. In some states, it had shown some improvement while in others it had definitely deteriorated.

Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh undoubtedly fell in the second category.

To come back to the immediate point under discussion: in a country where, as in India, there is freedom of contract, the economic condition of an employee is, to a great extent, an indicator of the condition of his employer. If the economic condition of the employee, viz. the agricultural labourer, is proved to have worsened, despite his emancipation from the bonds of zamindari or feudalism in the meanwhile, the economic condition of his employer, the cultivator, cannot be said to have improved.

"As will be seen from the analysis of income by sources," says the Second Inquiry Report, "in the case of Uttar Pradesh, the fall was accounted for by a sharp fall in income from agricultural labour" (p 139).

TABLE 14.7

(in Rupees)

Year	*Cultivation of Land*	*Agricultural Labour*	*Non-Agricultural Labour*	*Others*	*Total*
1950-51	61.71	379.64	56.20	53.45	551
1956-56	34.88	249.64	37.07	50.07	373
Fall	26.83	130.00	19.13	2.54	178

The average daily wage rate of adult men for agricultural operations in the State had fallen from 118 np in 1950-51 to 92 np in 1956-57.

The main explanation of the sharp fall in income from agricultural labour in Uttar Pradesh, lies in the fact that because of the fall in the size of the operating farm, the cultivator and his family are now better able to look after their farm unaided by outside labour or with less outside labour than before.

Our eastern districts particularly suffer from economic want and privation. Their plight today is partly traceable to the fact that labourers as also *smaller cultivators* in the area, who formerly sought and found employment, in their lakhs and lakhs, in Burma, Assam, Calcutta and Bombay are no longer welcome in these places, rather are being turned out. With this subsidiary source of their income gradually drying up, they are facing economic hardship to an increasing degree.

At the same time, it cannot be disputed that improvement is "noticeable" in the rural sector. Farmers have taken to new con-

sumer items—"education for their children, medicine for the sick, better clothing, a bed and a mattress to sleep upon, aluminum or stainless steel pots and pans instead of earthen pots, and bicycles for transport" as also tea-sets, electric torches, watches, pucca houses and radios. But, lest we draw fallacious conclusions from this "improvement", two facts have to kept in mind:

(*i*) The improvement is very slight, indeed and confined hardly to 10 per cent of the rural population. Besides, comparatively substantial farmers, this layer of 10 per cent consists mostly of those who, themselves or through members of their family, derive a large part of their income from non-agricultural resources, for example, government service, legal practice, contracts from government or local bodies, permits for buses, licences for sale of controlled articles, brick-kilns, etc.

(*ii*) *Expenditure on the consumer items mentioned above largely represents only an altered pattern of living, not an improvement in the standard of living.* For example, consumption of milk and milk products in rural areas is decreasing and tea is slowly taking their place, but nobody can seriously argue that this is a desirable development, or means an improvement in the living standards. Tea is far cheaper than milk which is usually now being sold in large cities. While every other kind of livestock in the State or the country is increasing in numbers, horses and ponies which abounded in the rural parts sometime ago, are disappearing fast. During the last decade alone, the number of these animals in the State went down by 21.9 per cent. If the vacuum has been filled up by bicycles, this does not bespeak an increase in rural incomes. During only last ten years, expenditure on ornaments, which is a weakness of ladies, has gone down greatly. Today, people, who can afford it, would like to spend money on education of their children, or pucca house rather than on gold or silver ornaments for their women, which, owing to a welcome change in social values, are no longer regarded as a symbol of status. As for pucca houses built since Independence, they are visible only in some cash crop areas, but, including the old ones, they do not constitute even five per cent of the total number of houses in rural areas of the State.

Dr S.S. Gupta, who carried out a survey of the changing consumption pattern of agricultural labourers in the villages of district Aligarh, says in an article which he contributed to the *AICC Economic Review*, dated 16 January 1960:

The above discussion of the changing expenditure pattern clearly indicates that agricultural labourers, "*like other sections of the village population*", are anxious to include new items in their budget and give up a few of the older ones. This tendency to adopt a change is to be appreciated because it opens the avenues of improvement. *However, the sadder aspect of the new visible trends is that they do not aim at raising the standard of living though they increase the expenditure.*" For example, starting liquor or using shoes which are not manufactured for the present Indian villages, or giving up milk and milk products and starting tea instead of it, or giving up the use of more durable cloth in preference to fine but less durable cloth, or becoming wasteful on social ceremonies like marriages—all these new adoptions show that there is a definite necessity of advising and controlling the labourers' expenditure "*so that they may be able to better their lot.*"

The impression about improvement in living conditions in rural areas is not based on any concrete survey of economic facts. Safe conclusions can be drawn only from figures of per acre income. In 1954-55, the Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission carried out a Farm Management Survey in 32 villages of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts of Uttar Pradesh. The figures according to the Cost Accounting method ars as follows:

TABLE 14.8

Per-Acre Values of Input, Receipts, Net Profit or Loss, Family Labour Income and Farm Business Income

Size-group	*Per Acre Values in Rupees*				
	Input	*Output*	*Net Profit (+) or loss (−)*	*Family labour income*	*Farm business income*
Below 5	344.14	313.51	−30.63	50.25	68.55
„ 10	252.74	300.56	+47.82	119.87	133.29
„ 15	183.93	253.84	+49.91	91.81	102.21
„ 20	171.97	238.90	+66.93	111.84	120.92
and above	151.34	252.12	+100.78	124.11	132.33
AVERAGE	203.97	264.11	+60.14	111.06	121.97

The input is a total of the values of the following factors:

Bullock Labour	Rs 93.70
Human Labour	Rs 58.50
Family	Rs 37.00
Hired	Rs 21.50
Seed	Rs 13.4
Fertilizers & Manures	Rs 7.1
Upkeep of Implements	Rs 7.2
Land Revenue and Cess	Rs 5.6
Irrigation charges	Rs 7.6
Interest on Working Capital	Rs 10.8
TOTAL	Rs 203.9

"Family Labour Income" consists of net profit or loss plus the imputed wages for the labour of the farmer and his family. The report points out that it is the "Farm Business Income", however, which is the real measure of the total earning of a farmer and consists of the "Family Labour Income" plus the unpaid interest on owned capital (and unpaid rent on owned land).

According to the Survey, which was carried out by a very competent team, the average net income of the peasants in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts is found to stand at Rs 121.97 per acre. It has to be remembered that these two districts constitute an agricultural tract, which is rightly considered as one of the best in the State, and that 48.2 per cent of the cultivated area in the villages, where the Survey was carried out, is occupied by cash crop, viz., sugarcane as against 8.0 per cent or so which is the average for the State. For the most part of the State, the net income per acre will be found to stand at about Rs 80 or so.

Supporters of the Land Tax Bill, therefore, who think that the net income per acre come to Rs 225 or Rs 250 are living in a world far removed from realities of life in the countryside of Uttar Pradesh.

The very fact of placing the ceiling at a minimum area of 40 acres, while enacting the Imposition of Ceilings Act in 1960, showed that in the view of the State Government, at least, 40 acres were required to constitute "three family" holdings that could fetch a net income of Rs 3,600 per annum. This worked out—and rightly—at an average net income of Rs 90 per acre for the entire

State.

It will be observed that, if the labour of the farmer and his family is taken into account or paid for (even at the village rates of permanent hired labour and not at the rates of industrial or non-agricultural wages obtaining in towns), farming on a holding of less than 5 acres in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts is definitely a deficit undertaking. And 75 to 80 per cent of our farmers fall under this category.

As regards income from animal husbandry, we may again turn to the above Report of the Farm Management Survey. After giving a statement of combined figures for output and input from both crops and milch cattle, the Report remarks:

> The profit, family labour income and farm business income on a combined basis are lower than those obtained from crops alone in all the size-groups in both the samples (viz., Cost Accounting and Survey). This is due to the fact that losses have been incurred in the production of milk in all the size-groups of holdings. "*Even when family labour is not charged, milk production shows a loss on all the holdings.*

There are 102 lakh cultivating families in Uttar Pradesh today, with an average holding of 4.2 arable acres. *Putting it at the highest possible figure*" a family's gross income from agriculture would come to Rs 1,110 and net income of Rs 512 per annum. But any figure of average income in the agricultural sector can be misleading for two reasons:

(*i*) Two-thirds of the cultivators are not able to earn even this amount, for they hold less than 4.2 acres each.

(*ii*) Agriculture being a biological process, it suffers from natural hazards as no non-agricultural occupation does. Over large parts, the State of Uttar Pradesh is subjected to floods, drought or some other kind of blight almost annually, bringing down the average income considerably for millions and millions of the agriculturists.

The poor economic condition of our peasantry reflected in the low figure of net income per acre, referred to above, is confirmed by a survey of six villages in six districts of Uttar Pradesh carried out by an eminent economist of the Lucknow University, Dr Baljit Singh, himself or under his close supervision. The following Table prepared on the basis of the survey is taken from his book

Next Step in Village (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961).

TABLE 14.9

Frequency Distribution of the Sample Households by Annual Expenditure per Household

Village	*Rs 1800 or more*	*Rs 600-1800 or more*	*Rs 600 or less*	*Total*
Lawar (Meerut)	12	60	40	112
Barhan (Agra)	3	117	102	222
Chaumuhan (Mathura)	5	74	43	122
Itaunja (Lucknow)	6	57	60	123
Chaukhra (Basti)	5	60	90	155
Dubai (Deoria)	9	57	46	112
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	40	425	381	846

Dr Baljit Singh sums up the results as follows:

> Forty-five per cent of the total village population subsists on a family expenditure of less than Rs 50 per month. They may be regarded as living below the poverty line. Another half of the total poulation has roughly a monthly expenditure of Rs 50 to Rs 150 and these may be able to meet their needs at the minimum human subsistence standards and may be regarded to be living with a certain modicum of comforts.

Those who have doubts about the correctness of the reading of the economic situation in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh portrayed in these pages, would be instantly silenced only if they could just walk into some of the houses, particularly in the villages of eastern districts of the State, and see the extent of possessions of the people and their living conditions for themselves. There are many a family which do not get two square meals every day that passes!

A proposal to impose a fresh direct tax on the agriculturists also involves a blatant contradiction in our policies. Since Independence, we have been extending all sorts of subsidies to the agriculturists, big and small, on the premise that an average agriculturist is not in a position to pay or pay fully for the resource facilities or other benefits that he seeks or should be made available to him. For example, today Government grants subsidies on construction of

minor irrigation works like masonry wells, purchase of implements or particular kinds of fertilizers, and of insecticides or provision of other plant protection measures, etc. Now, either our policy or advancing grants has been ill-conceived all along, or the present proposal has not been given sufficient thought and should be abandoned. In the opinion of all those who can claim to know the village and peasant intimately, the latter is the case: the proposal to increase land revenue needs reconsideration.

The capacity of the peasantry to bear fresh financial burden can be assessed from yet another angle, viz. there is a definite deterioration in the health or physical standards of our people. During the British days, the rules, of recruitment to the Army laid down that the person selected shall have attained a minimum height of 5′ 6″, a chest of 32″-34″ and a weight of 125 lbs. It is learnt that there are very few youngmen in Uttar Pradesh today who fulfil these requirements; so the Army Headquarters had to relax the above minimum qualifications by 2″ in height, 1″ in chest and 5 to 10 lbs in weight. Whether any such relaxation has been made in the case of other States also, is more than I can say.

We have succeeded in controlling the epidemics with the result that death rates since Independence have considerably decreased and expectation of life at birth considerably increased. The deterioration in physical standards can, therefore, be explained only on one assumption, viz. lack of nourishing food. It would seem that, despite implementation of two Five-Year Plans, consumption of nourishing food in Uttar Pradesh per capita has gone down. It is obvious that either we have not been able to produce our nutrition at the rate at which the population of the State has increased, or, owing to a change in social values, we have economised on food and diverted the savings to luxuries or articles of ostentation. The latter can be true, at best, only of a fraction of the population.

LAND IN U.P. ALREADY FULLY TAXED AND THE VILLAGER OR THE AGRICULTURIST IS NOT LAGGING BEHIND IN HIS TAX EPORTS

It is true that the incidence of *per capita* taxation in Uttar Pradesh as compared with many other States is substantially low, but, as the following statement based on the data contained in the budgets

of various States as supplied by our Finance Secretariat, would show, the reason for this law incidence does not lie in the fact that land revenue per acre in the State is low. With the imposition of ceilings, agricultural income tax is no longer leviable or realized. Still, a column is given in the statement showing the rate of both land revenue and income tax combined, per acre, in the year 1959-60.

It will be seen that the rate of land revenue in Uttar Pradesh is the highest—higher than the State which comes next, viz. West Bengal by more than 25.0 per cent. The combined incidence of

TABLE 14.10

Comparative Incidence of Land Taxation in Various States 1959-60

States	**Land under cultivation (in crore acres) 1956-57*	*Land revenue (in crore rupees)*	*Incidence of land revenue (Rs per acre)*	*Agricultural income tax (in crore rupees)*	*Total tax on land i.e. revenue* 'A11' or col. 3* col. 5 (in crore rupees)*	*Incidence of total tax (Rs per acre)*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
Northern Zone						
1. Punjab	1.94	4.44	2.29	——	——	——
2. Rajasthan	3.64	7.94	2.18	0.03	7.97	2.19
Central Zone						
3. Madhya Pradesh	4.13	9.72	2.35	0.01	9.73	2.35
4. Uttar Pradesh	4.47	20.91	4.68	0.88	21.79	4.87
Eastern Zone						
5. Assam	0.86	2.53	2.94	2.57	5.10	5.93
6. Bihar	2.34	8.31	3.55	0.26	8.57	3.66
7. Orissa	1.73	2.24	1.30	0.03	2.27	1.31
8. West Bengal	1.46	5.05	3.73	0.73	5.77	3.95
Western Zone						
9. Bombay	7.25	11.5	1.60	——	——	——
10. Mysore	2.81	4.30	1.54	0.88	5.18	1.84
Southern Zone						
11. Andhra	3.31	11.30	3.41	0.01	11.31	3.41
12. Kerala	6.52	1.30	2.50	1.98	3.28	6.30
13. Madras	1.75	4.90	2.80	1.54	6.44	3.68

*Area under the cultivation (including current fallows and land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves) for 1955-57 as available from *Agricultural Situation in India*, September 1959.

revenue and income tax too, is higher only in the two small States of Assam and Kerala which possess tea and coconut plantations. It will be noted, however, that land bearing ordinary agricultural crops cannot be expected to produce the same income and, therefore, yield the same tax to the state as land bearing tea and coconut.

In the adjoining State of Punjab, (*a*) the irrigation rates are far lower, (*b*) the area of the average landholding per cultivating family far larger, (*c*) productivity per acre higher, and (*d*) the incidence of land revenue less than 50 per cent, than in our State. Despite all this, the Punjab Government has effected an increase only of 25 per cent in the land revenue and that, too, only so far as large holdings, perhaps of above 10 acres, are concerned.

There are, in the main, two kinds of farmers in Uttar Pradesh, viz. bhumidhars and sirdars. They hold respectively 1,56,17,000 and 2,98,71,000 acres of land today (i.e. according to revenue records of 1960-61). Bhumidhars are the ex-zamindars who had been given this nomenclature in respect of land under their actual cultivation. They are liable to pay the same old rate of land revenue, that is, Rs. 3,00 or so per acre, which they used to pay to Government before zamindari was abolished. They hold some 66 lakh acres or somewhat more than 14 per cent of total cultivated area today and enjoy transferable rights in their lands. Sirdars are the ex-tenants who are liable to pay the same old rent (now called revenue) that they used to pay to their zamindars. On average this rent today comes to Rs. 5.75 per acre. These tenants were given an option to acquire bhumidhari rights viz. the rights of transfer and the right to get their rents reduced by 50 per cent, provided they paid up ten times their rental to the credit of Government. These deposits were consolidated into what was called the Zamindari Abolition Fund. It was intended to compensate the zamindars and meet the expenses incidental to Zamindari Abolition out of this fund. Such bhumidhars hold some 90 lakh acres or about 20 per cent of the total area under cultivation, and pay an average rent of 2.2 per acre.

It will be observed that reduction in the rent of the tenant was simply equivalent to interest at the rate of 5 per cent per annum on the amount he paid to Government—a rate lower than what Government charges on taqavi or loans advanced to agriculturists. Thus, the Government did not suffer in any way at all by launch-

ing the scheme.

Had the above lump sums, equivalent to ten times their rental, which totalled Rs 39,67,87,000 by the end of the year 1961, not been deposited by these tenants in Government treasury for good, and had they, like their fellows who hold the remaining 66 per cent of the land today, chosen to stay as sirdars, as well they could, the yearly revenue demand of the state would have stood increased by Rs $\frac{39,67,87,00}{10\times2}$=Rs 1,98,39,350. This amount was paid or should be deemed to have been paid in advance. A simple calculation would show that land revenue per acre in the State would, thus, come to Rs 5.12—"a figure far higher than any that obtains anywhere else in the country and 41.5. per cent higher than the next State of West Bengal."

That the way to balance the U.P. Budget does not lie in increasing the land revenue, is further confirmed by the following statement. (Taxes shared by the Centre with the states have been ignored.):

TABLE 14.11

State	*Total State taxes according to 1959-60 accounts (in crore rupees*	*Land revenue (in crore rupees)*	*Percentage of land revenue to State taxes*	*Net area sown (in 1956-57) per capita of population in 1951 (in crores)*
1. Andhra	39.99	11.30	28.50	0.90
2. Assam	13.33	2.53	18.98	0.57
3. Bihar	30.04	8.31	27.66	0.49
4. Kerala	17.00	1.30	7.65	0.33
5. Madhya Pradesh	24.78	9.72	**39.22**	**1.47**
6. Madras	36.95	4.90	13.29	0.48
7. Bombay	73.90	11.50	15.56	1.39
8. Mysore	23.00	4.30	18.69	1.28
9. Orissa	7.53	2.24	29.75	0.95
10. Punjab	23.95	4.44	18.53	1.12
11. Rajasthan	17.72	7.94	**44.80**	**1.92**
12. Uttar Pradesh	53.17	20.91	39.33	**0.66**
13. West Bengal	44.52	5.05	11.32	0.49

If no tenant had acquired "bhumidhari" rights, land revenue for Uttar Pradesh in 1959-60 would have, as seen earlier, stood at

Rs 2289 lakhs, pushing its percentage in total taxes to 41.50. It will be noticed that there are only two States, viz. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where land revenue makes about the same contribution to total State taxes as Uttar Pradesh. "*But as is apparent from the last column of the statement, both these States possess far larger net cultivated areas (sown) per capita than Uttar Pradesh.*"

Land revenue is a most regressive type of tax (or rent) that is known—a tax which has no relation to the surplus income that a man may earn, but is based on mere ownership of (or possessory rights over) land and thus falls more heavily on comparatively poorer sections of the (farming) community. But, unless non-agricultural resources of our people are first developed, it cannot just be abolished today. But if we cannot abolish it, we should, at least, take care not to enhance it, for enhancement of this tax means a further increase in the inequality of tax burdens as between the various sections of our people. Also, inasmuch as an increase in land revenue will cut into the poor farmer's expenditure on bare needs, it will reduce his efficiency still further and, thus, prove injurious to economic growth.

Those who would love to compare this tax with income tax, because both are direct, are mistaken in three ways, viz:

(*1*) Land revenue is payable even by a farmer who owns a mere *biswa* of land, whereas income-tax is payable only by a person who earns more than Rs 3,500, or Rs 3,600 per annum.

(*2*) If a shop or factory closes down, the owner ceases to be liable to any income tax from that very day, while the agrarian law is so relentless in this respect that land revenue is realizable even from lands which may be lying fallow or uncultivated for a period ranging up to five years. Such fallow or uncultivated lands in Uttar Pradesh on which land revenue is all the same payable, on an average, come to 31 lakh acres every year.

(*3*) In case of income tax, the rich are not only able to avoid the tax through legal "loop-holes", but further to evade it through administrative deficiencies. The income on which tax was avoided, is unknown, but the Central Board of Revenue of India estimates the income on which tax was

> evaded, at least, at 30 per cent of the income assessed, and the revenue lost, at well over one-half. On the contrary, there is no avoidance and no evasion—and there can be none—in the agricultural sector. Every piece of land today, as a result of several drives that we have undertaken after Zamindari Abolition, is entered in revenue papers.

Proponents of the Land Taxation Bill are often heard to advance the argument that, inasmuch as "nearly 54 per cent of the total domestic income of the State is derived from agriculture", it has to be proportionately taxed." It is forgotten, however, that it is not the total income of a class or sector that is, or should be taxed, but the income of an individual, rather the surplus that he is expected to possess after meeting his bare needs and, if possible, reasonable comforts. Individuals engaged in agriculture who severally earn only a bare pittance but, because of their vast numbers, viz. 74.0 per cent, jointly contribute 54.0 per cent to the total income, cannot, by any stretch of imagination be expected or asked to contribute 54.0 per cent of the total State taxes. For, they have little surplus. On the contrary, those who are enaged in manufacturing industry, commerce, transport and other services, have a far greater surplus individually, and can, therefore, in all justice, be asked to contribute both severally and collectively, a far larger percentage to the State taxes than the percentage of their income as a class to the total State income, may apparently warrant.

While addressing a meeting of Congress workers of the Kanpur City, North Assembly constituency at the BNSD College hall on 16 September the Chief Minister is reported to have said that "it would be unjust to throw the entire burden of financing the Plan on the town-dweller. If the hard-pressed clerk or factory worker was asked to bear the burden of heavy taxation, the villager should not be exempted from the burden. In the city, he said, the low-salaried classes spent the major portion of their earnings on getting things which villagers obtained from the field. No section of the people could shift their share of the burden of implementing the plan." (*National Herald*, Lucknow, dated 16 September 1962)

It is now for examination whether the entire burden of financing the Plan was being thrown on the town-dweller, and the villager had been or was being exempted from it. Below is given a statement showing the amount, according to the audited accounts of

1960-61, that each tax brought to the State exchequer:

TABLE 14.12

	(In thousands)
1. Large Land Holdings Tax	Rs 8687
2. Land Revenue	Rs 22,8182*
3. State Excise Duties	Rs 7,5779
4. Taxes on Motor Vehicles	Rs 3,2156
5. General Sales Tax	Rs 11,6989
6. Cess and Purchase Tax on Sugarcane	Rs 4,2623
7. Stamps and Registration Fee	Rs 4,9196
8. Entertainment & Betting Tax	Rs 1,39,85
9. Electricity Duty	Rs 63,55
10. Tax on Sale of Motor Spirit	Rs 4622
TOTAL	Rs 58,0574

*Including Rs 1,98,39,000 yearly which has been paid up by the bhumidhars in advance (in the form of interest on their deposits, which accrues to Government).

Of these taxes, the first two, constituting 40.80 per cent of the total are wholly borne by the agriculturist, and the last three, constituting 4.64 per cent, almost wholly by the non-agriculturist. Of the remaining five, General Sales Tax, Motor Vehicles Tax and Cess and Purchase Tax on sugarcane have not to be paid by the trader and the motor or factory owner, but are shifted to the consumer and the user. All these taxes, constituting 54.56 per cent, are borne both by the town-dweller and the villager jointly. The villagers and the town-dwellers respectively constitute 87.15 and 12.85 per cent of the total population. Assuming that these five taxes of the last category are paid by the villager and the town-dweller in a ratio of their income, viz. 1 to 3.47, 65.84 per cent of their burden (which comes to 35.92 per cent of the total State taxes) will be found to be borne by the rural sector and the rest by the urban sector as a whole. "*So that the villager or the agriculturist contributes 40.8+35.92=) 76.72 per cent or more than ¾ of the entire State taxes.*" It will bear repetition to state here that the villager who earns an income which is barely 29 per cent of the income of the town-dweller, has little or no surplus.

As for the utilization of the State funds although it may not be anybody's intention to do so, yet the State funds are so utilized that town-dwellers enjoy all the amenities a man can wish for, e.g.

electric light, roads and railways postal and telegraphic conveniences, educational opportunities up to the highest standard, modern medical facilities, recreation and entertainment, etc. which are not so readily or at all available to the villagers. In the light of these facts it should be clear to all of us whether it is the "clerk and the factory worker" in the town who is "hard-pressed" and has a cause for grievance, or the average "kisan" in the village.

NO NEED TO IMPOSE ANY NEW TAX

It is not necessary to levy the proposed land-holdings tax at all, for:

(*a*) a good deal of the desired results can be achieved without raising or investing additional resources; and
(*b*) the resources required are already at hand.

One rupee honestly and efficiently utilized will go longer than two rupees inefficiently spent. But integrity and efficiency are exactly the two desiderata—the two qualities that are wanting in our administration today. According to the *Audit Report for 1961-62*, 60, 411 objections in the audit books, valuing at Rs 53.79 crores, relating to the period ending March 1961, were outstanding on 1 July 1961. Certificates of utilization have not been furnished to the audit office for grants in-aid, aggregating to an amount of Rs 12.54 crores. The treasury has sustained a loan of Rs 2.35 crores due to embezzlements, infructuous and avoidable expenditure and non-recovery of dues.

Perhaps, no other comment on our performance is necessary. We do not frown upon the slack, the inefficient and the corrupt to the required degree. With the determination to punish the guilty and an eye of watchfulness over the vast bureaucratic machinery spread all over the State, lacking on our part, perhaps, we have little or no right to ask the people to tighten their belts still further.

The notion that expenditure on a big scale is necessary to produce big results, is unfounded. Schemes can be devised which will cost little, but yield more. For example, Abolition of Zamindari released forces in the form of restoration of the peasantry's self-respect and of incentives for hard work that have greatly contributed to increased production, and yet did not cost us anything.

Similarly, enactment of the Land Utilization Act, and the scheme of resettlement (not colonization) in the region of Tarai led to reclamation of millions and millions of acres of land, with little or no cost to Government. Consolidation of Holdings is yet another big step of the kind which has already produced remarkable results, and can produce still better results only if we take full advantage of its potentialities. No only that these three measures did not cost anything to the State; they brought net financial gains in terms of positive receipts.

Only if we will bring to bear the requisite approach, schemes after schemes, more or less on the above pattern, will unfold themselves to us. Big and spectacular schemes will have to yield place to small schemes which will cost little, but produce enduring results. For example, we could have, for the same amount that we invested in canals, tubewells and reservoirs during the two Five-Year Plans, provided irrigation facilities roughly for twice the area, had we constructed masonry wells fitted with Persian wheels and paid more attention to drainage, instead. On the contrary we allowed existing wells, tanks and other sources to go into disuse, with the result that the area irrigated from these sources, during the fifties, declined by more than 4.0 lakh acres. Before we launched upon the Plans, the Irrigation Department used to earn a net income of Rs 1.75 crores per annum; in 1960-61, it incurred a net loss of an equivalent amount!

In this connection, that is, how we should new the economy or husband the resources of a poor country or State, we will, perhaps, do well to look back and take a leaf or two out of Gandhiji's teachings and writings.

Outlays are essential to output, but the requisite quality of the human material is even more important. Unless our people come to have the appropriate social and economic attitudes, investments or expenditure, however huge, will go down the drain; at least, it will not bring the same results as it will in any other country or even in the neighbouring state of Punjab. Our people suffer from a fatalistic outlook, and we have done nothing to educate them out of it. Perhaps, we have not yet even made any serious attempt to diagnose our malaise—the reasons why Uttar Pradesh finds itself in the slough it does. A vast educational effort and drive to transform the psychology of our masses, in which will be combined all the available official and non-official agencies, will have to be

launched.

Unless the rural masses are aroused, the entire attitude of our administrative machinery is rural-oriented and the public servants are inspired with a sense of a mission, nothing much can be done—no economic development worth the name is going to take place—heavy taxation and huge expenditure notwithstanding.

As for the financial resources that are, or may still be required, there are so many ways open:

(*i*) The Planning Commission as a body and also severally assured us that they will do their best to see that there was no cut so far as Central assistance was concerned. They could not, however, give us this in solemn writing, particularly because of the absence of the Union Minister of Finance. Of course, they rightly expected us to put in sincere efforts to raise matching amounts. They made it clear they did not insist on any particular tax or care how we went about our business of finding the necessary funds. But if we could not still fulfil our part of the target, they definitely undertook to come to our aid.

(*ii*) The Senior Administrative Officers' Conference held in Lucknow on 23-25 July was of the view that an economy of Rs. 5 crores at the rate of 2.5 per cent in the budget of Rs. 191 crores, could easily be effected. In his letter dated 26 July addressed to me, the Chief Minister opined, however, that any such economy would "restrict employment". Now, this is hardly a correct approach. Firstly, we should be clear in our minds that no number of multiplication of paid Government jobs is going to make even a dent in our problem of unemployment. Secondly, "about one-third of the huge staff that Government has employed, which is about three times the size in 1945-46, has not a full day's work today". Thirdly, quite a good deal of economy can be effected without retrenching the existing personnel. Fourthly, we may take a blanket decision, as far as possible, not recruit outsiders any more, but to confine our recruitment in future to the personnel already employed, but which we consider redundant. Fifthly, if still necessary, we should not hesitate to apply the axe. Public interest should override the interest of a few thousand individuals.

In his letter already referred to, the Chief Minister was pleased to say that "he was not one of those who stand for false economy, for, false economy is more harmful in a developing country than inessential expenditure". Nobody wants false economy but, it

seems, there is no room for genuine economy either in our administration. For, were it so, the Chief Minister would have certainly enforced it by now! On the contrary, one would not be far wrong if one draws the conclusion that, inasmuch as he was prepared to tolerate "inessential expenditure", the Chief Minister does not think economy is really any good, or will yield results.

"Bureaucracy everywhere is prone to be extravagant. It is the duty of representatives of the people to curb this propensity. As irony would have it, however, in Uttar Pradesh, contrary is the case. While our officers are suggesting economy, we, the members of Government are bent on fresh taxation."

It must be put on record that, with snail's rate that the economy of Uttar Pradesh in developing, the maintenance expenditure of the Plans will simply prove a dead weight on the masses. "It is estimated," says the Third Five-Year Plan of Uttar Pradesh, "that the developmental expenditure of the Second Plan will generate a maintenance expenditure of approximately Rs. 70.68 crores in the Third Plan. The non-plant budget for 1960-61, the last year of the Second Plan, was for Rs. 117.58 crores. Not only most of this expenditure will need to be repeated in the years to come, but also a reasonable allowance will have to be made for its increase" (p. 43). The first two Plans of the State amounted to Rs. 394 crores. The third is of the order of Rs. 500 crores. At the present rate, the developmental expenditure of the Third Plan is likely to generate a maintenance expenditure of another Rs. 90 crores which gives a total of (Rs. 90 crores+ Rs 70.68 crores) Rs 160.68 crores or an average of Rs 32.136 crores per annum during the period of the Third Plan. "Whereas the total income of the State from all sources in 1960-61 (excluding subventions and subsidies from the Government of India) amounted only to Rs 1,34,16,00,000." Out of a budget of Rs 191 crores for 1962-63, an amount of Rs 110 crores or 57.5 per cent will be spent on salaries, allowances and honoraria, contingencies, debt services and pensionary charges alone. An amount of Rs 7.8 crores has been set apart for construction and repair of buildings. It is on the cards that the coming State governments will not be able to make both ends meet "unless aid from the Centre on a liberal scale is assured ad infinitum". Instead of remembering us with gratitude, the posterity will curse us for our lack of foresight.

(*iii*) Our tax assessing procedures have to be tightened. Taxa-

tion even at the existing rates is likely to yield several crores more, only if all legal loopholes are plugged and administrative deficiencies removed with a ruthless hand.

(*iv*) Not only have the tax assessing agencies to be streamlined, but tax collecting machinery also has to be made more efficient. It may be a matter of guess how much tax is avoided and evaded, but it cannot be disputed that an amount of about Rs 17.5 to 20.0 crores of arrears of taxes and loans outstanding against the comparatively better-off section of our society that is realizable today—is lying unrealized or uncollected. Out of this colossal sum, there are two big items, collection of which should ordinarily present no difficulty, viz, an amount of about Rs 7.5 crores (excluding one crore which is the subject-matter of writs) that is due as cane cess and purchase tax from sugar factory-owners alone, and an amount of Rs 4.0 crores of sales tax (out of 6.5 crores) which include a sum of Rs 85 lakhs of money outstanding against *kacheha arhatiyas* who have already realized it, perhaps, against law from the producer-seller of agricultural produce, that is, the *kisan*. These well-to-do defaulters see no strong reason why they should hasten the payments. "Arrears of sales tax carry no interest, and those of cess and purchase tax on sugarcane carry an interest only of Rs 6.0 per cent per annum." The banks charge a far higher rate, and investments in all lines bring higher returns.

So that, owing to the failure of a Government to correctly assess or promptly collect a tax, instead of reaching the State coffers, it becomes a source of additional gain to a dishonest dealer or a defaulting assessee.

The arrears of Cane Cess and Purchase Tax outstanding against the factories amount to just 200 per cent of the average yearly assessment. Yet, while cultivators are regularly sent to *hawalat* or civil prison and their land sold off without compunction, even if the arrears of land revenue against them might be nominal, there is not a single factory-owner in the State who has yet been put behind the bars or his factory put to auction. We hesitate to take action against these big men because they have succeeded in creating an impression that, were we to take coercive measures against them, they might close down the factories and public interest might suffer. It is difficult to agree with this conclusion. Were the factories actually unable to pay the taxes or running at a loss, the proprietors would close them the next day, Government

exhortations or appeals to their good sense notwithstanding. On the other hand, they would pay their dues immediately, did they know that Government would come down upon them with a severe hand. Government can itself purchase the factories in lieu of the dues, or, at least, appoint authorized controllers. Our experience of the controllers has been quite satisfactory. In fact, factory-owners would not allow things to reach this stage at all but if they did, both the Government and the peasantry will stand to gain.

I am afraid, however, that nothing will come of my suggestions under this head or out of this source either. For, in his letter dated 26 July already referred to, the Chief Minister laid down a principle that "more effective tax collection can seldom be an alternative to new taxes where large revenue has to be raised for tackling unemployment". To put it mildly, however, "*non-realization of a Government dues from big people will bring bad name to a Government anywhere.*"

(*v*) For reasons, mainly of non-availability of constructional material and unimaginative planning, we are, in no year, able to spend the money that the budget provides. Says the *Audit Report for 1952*, "The accounts of the State have disclosed a revenue surplus for every year of the Second Five-Year Plan although deficits were anticipated in each year while presenting the Budget" (p. 4). There are other amounts which escape the ken of the Audit but are left unutilized. In the last month of every financial year, hectic attempts are made to reach the targets of expenditure (not of physical achievement). A part of these amounts which cannot be spent by any means, are transferred to private ledgers and other deposits. Thus, crores are saved or left unspent every year, the reasons being what they may. If, therefore, as advised by Sir T.T. Krishnamachari, we plan our resources only for a year or two, it will be found that our Plan this year is not likely to suffer for want of the land-holdings tax.

(*vi*) The Irrigation Department has already abandoned schemes worth Rs 7 crores, may be a still larger amount, as greatly uneconomic or impracticable. A close scrutiny of schemes in other departments is also likely to reveal similar schemes which are of little or no material and immediate benefit to the people, and can, therefore, be easily given up. The argument that our State is backward in so many respects, and the money so released can usefully be directed to other channels, is not very convincing.

If the argument is valid, inasmuch as we are lagging behind advanced countries of the West so greatly and in so many directions, a plan even of five times the dimensions of the present Third Plan of the State, would seem modest. Why then did we not put our sights at Rs 2,500 crores instead of Rs 500 crores only ? Simply because of the incapacity of our human and material resources. Therefore, if we find it difficult to raise fresh financial resources, it will be a wise policy to utilize or fall back upon money otherwise saved or released, rather than divert it to new projects and schemes. There are so many desirable things lying undone, but our desires or capacity will be governed by our means—our ability *inter alia* to find the necessary amount of capital.

(*vii*) I had suggested in a note submitted to the Chief Minister on 23 July that, if necessary, we may even scrap prohibition which is in force only in 11 districts out of 51 for the last 15 years or so. As Congressmen we are all in favour of complete prohibition, but it cannot be enforced through the power of law alone. No administration can reasonably be expected to control consumption of an article which can be manufactured practically in every home in the countryside unless there is a strong public opinion or moral climate in its favour. We have definitely not succeeded in creating this climate. On the contrary, if we will just look around, we will find that, even at Lucknow, the headquarters of the State Government, we have only helped create an atmosphere adverse to prohibition. The result is that our prohibition law is being observed only in breach, and a law that cannot or is not being complied with, serves only to create disrespect for all law in people's mind. Use of articles dangerous to health, in prohibited areas, like spirits and tinctures as well as corruption in the ranks of the police and the Enforcement Staff, is on the increase. On the other hand, abandonment of the present policy will bring us an amount of Rs 3.5 crores or so. Income from excise forms a large proportion of the revenue of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and West Bengal which have not found it practicable to introduce prohibition till date.

(*viii*) We may intensify the small savings drive and make it a live movement. If still necessary, we may go in for another loan either from the country-wide market, or, for local or regional schemes, from the people likely to be immediately benefited as they did in Madhya Pradesh for the Chambal Project.

(*ix*) Supposing that the economic condition of the agriculturists has improved a great deal during the last 15 years, and a part of their increased income has to be tapped for development of the State, in my humble opinion, it will be a far wiser policy to impose a new indirect tax that we may think of, or to increase the rates of existing ones. Unless there is purchasing power in the pockets of the masses, industries will not come into being, and transport and commerce will not prosper. Nor will other non-agricultural services develop in Uttar Pradesh. If an agriculturist has a surplus rupee in his pocket, he will purchase a non-agricultural good or service for it—which will set up a chain reaction and will ultimately result in greater development of non-agricultural resources and, consequently, larger income to the State than if the rupee was directly netted by the Government in the form of increased land revenue.

POLITICALLY A MOST DAMAGING MEASURE

It was only last year that the State Government withdrew the the rebate of 3 annas in a rupee on irrigation charges that it had granted to the peasantry in 1955. This withdrawal means two things: (1) an amount of Rs 1.75 crores has been added to the financial burden of the peasantry every year, and (2) the irrigation rates in Uttar Pradesh are now just double of those prevailing just beyond the western border, that is, in the adjoining State of Punjab.

The cultivators in Uttar Pradesh form the largest percentage of any State in India, viz. 67.45 and constitute 77 per cent of the rural electorate, and not only 50 per cent as the sponsors of the Bill imagine. We should think a thousand times, therefore, before we take a step which touches the pockets of these millions upon millions of people who find, to their despair, that during the last 15 years their condition has made no material progress. The proposed increase in the land taxation will affect the mind of the peasantry unfavourably towards the Congress organization in as large a degree as the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act had affected it favourably. Arguments here may not appear convincing to friends who hold the opposite view, but it cannot be disputed that the measure will affect the political fortunes of the Congress beyond repair. Only if we will see the writing on the wall! It is a different thing if the Congress fades away in course of time

or suffers defeat at the polls owing to its accumulated mistakes or wrong policies, of which it may not be so conscious, "but the enactment of this measure amounts to committing a political *harakiri* or taking jump in a blazing pit with eyes wide open.

BREACH OF FAITH WITH THE MASSES

During the ZAF (Zamindari Abolition Fund) campaign of 1949-51, preceding enforcement of the ZALR Act on 30 June 1952 "literally hundreds of meetings in every district or more than 10,000 in the entire State, had been organized and addressed by Congressmen, from the Chief Minister down to Mandal workers." The tenants were exhorted to become bhumidhars on the assurance that their rents would stand reduced to half for forty years. This assurance was entered in the statute. A publicity campaign was organized from the State headquarters, and hundreds of articles in the Press written both on the State and district level. All possible facilities and inducements were offered by Government to the tenants to turn bhumidhars, and all officials from the Divisional Commissioner down to the patwari mobilized to further the campaign.

It is now proposed to go back upon this assurance on the ground that times have changed and our need of resources for financing the plan is urgent. Perhaps, a greater blunder could not possibly be committed. Solemn assurances given by any political party to the masses cannot be so lightly set aside. Usually, in democracies, assurances given by one Government, particularly those upon which the people have already acted, continue to be honoured by successive governments even if they are manned by different political party or parties. Otherwise, there will be confusion and the people will not know where they stand vis-a-vis laws framed and assurances given by a particular government. "Here, as it happens, the same political party which gave the assurance, is in power, and the same men who went about the countryside delivering speeches, still at its helm."

Apart from a moral undertaking, the acquisition of bhumidhari rights partook of the nature of contract. As for that section of the bhumidhars who are ex-zamindars, it was, in a way, a part of compensation for their proprietary rights that they were extended this assurance—the assurance that they will continue to hold

lands in their cultivatory possession at the time, at the old rate of revenue, that is, Rs 3 or so per acre, for the next forty years (as a reference Table 13.10 will show, that even this rate was higher than the average in 9 out of 12 States other than U.P.). As for the other section, viz. the ex-tenants, the assurance was given in consideration of hard cash they paid to credit of Government.

To refer to a historical example, it was in part consideration of curtailment of rights of the petty Rajas and big zamindars of Bengal and Bihar that Lord Cornwallis in 1795 announced that they will continue to pay only the existing revenue rates on their lands in perpetuity. The rates were merely a few annas per acre. Times later changed greatly and rapidly; agricultural prices rose, and also the needs of the British Government multiplied immensely. Yet, they honoured the assurance scrupulously till the day, viz. 15 August 1947, that they left the shores of India

Eye brows are likely to be raised at the mention of Lord Cornwallis, and the arguments contained in this note regarded as a pleading for the ex-rajas and ex-zamindars. Actually, however, it is not for the feudal lords, but for the good name of the Congress organization and honour of its government that this plea is being entered. It will not be irrelevant here to refer such critics to the fact that notwithstanding the Planning Commission's recommendation, under Land Reform measures which I had the good fortune as well as the honour to enunciate and shape in Uttar Pradesh, no right of resuming land from tenants was granted even to the pettiest zamindar. On the contrary, permanent rights were conferred not only on sub-tenants but so-called trespassers also. "No such solicitude for the underdog or disregard of the zamindar's or too dog's pleadings or so-called claims, was shown in any other State whichsoever." As the Commission's documents will bear out, owing to a right of resumption being granted to zamindars, innumerable tenants were ejected and muleted all over the country; as for sub-tenants and trespassers" well, they were simply thrown out summarily.

As a matter of indisputable fact, the overwhelming majority of these zamindars were peasant-proprietors. According to Statements Nos. 1 and 3 of the *Zamindari Abolition Committee Report*, Volume II, 92 per cent persons out of 20, 16,800 entered as proprietors of land, paid an average land revenue of Rs 8 each, and 98.3 per cent out of 18, 98,000 entered as cultivating proprietors held 2.5 acres of

unlet sir and khudkasht each. It was in respect of these self-cultivated lands that they were declared bhumidhars. They were landowners but not landlords with any tenants under them to exploit; in fact, a good percentage of them held land as tenants of others. These ex-proprietors-turned-bhumidhars hold somewhat more than 14 per cent of the total cultivated area and constitute about the same percentage of the total peasantry. Looked at in another way, there can no longer be any question of pleading for Rajas or big landlords today. After implementation of the imposition of Ceilings on Land-Holdings Act of 1961, there will be no big landlords at all left.

As regards the tenants who acquired bhumidhari rights, some 43.52 lakh applications for acquisition of these rights were made (and granted) till December 1961. The money deposited with these applications, came to Rs 39.68 crores, and related to about 20 per cent of the total cultivated area. According to rough estimates, the 43.52 lakh applicants above constitute about 20 to 25 per cent of pure bhumidhars or those who are bhumidhars in respect of all their land, about 5 to 10 per cent of those who are bhumidhars in respect of one holding and sirdars in respect of another. These bhumidhars possess less land than the average possessed by a cultivating family in the State—the reason being that it was comparatively the smaller tenants usually possessing more than one land holding, who sought the acquisition of these rights. (During the last financial year, 1961-62, the deposits to the Zamindari Abolition Fund amounted to Rs 1, 40, 22,000.)

The only reply that is seriously and repeatedly made to the argument about breach of assurance given by us not to increase the land revenue of bhumidhars for 40 years, is that the Land-Holdings Tax under consideration, "has really nothing to do with the rates of land revenue" and that no such objection was raised by any of us when, in 1953, the then Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant proposed a Development Levy Bill or when, in 1957, the Large Land-Holdings Tax Act was enacted, "which was also in contravention of the so-called promise given to bhumidhars".

As regards the contention that the proposed tax does not amount to increase in land revenue, "it is legal quibbling which the masses will easily see through". No farmer will fail to discover that the tax he is being asked to pay, is just 50 per cent of the land revenue payable by him today and is, therefore, directly relatable to it and

that, like land revenue, it is a permanent charge on his land (which will be realized, suspended, postponed or remitted exactly for the reasons as land revenue).

As regards the Development Levy Bill, my reply is that no objection on account of breach of faith with the people could possibly be raised against it. The Bill simply proposed a levy of Rs 5 per acre on irrigated land and Re 1 on unirrigated land for a period of 2 years only. The levy bore no relation to land revenue at all as does the tax under question. "The yardstick for the levy proposed in 1953 was not the land revenue a particular cultivator paid to Government, but whether his land was irrigated or not". The levy was to last for 2 years, whereas the proposed tax is to be a permanent measure. Under no circumstances could the levy be confused or equated with land revenue. Even so, it was rejected by the Congress Legislature Party on the ground that not every cultivator was in a position to pay an amount of Re 1 per acre!

As regards the Large Land-Holdings Tax, it was only a new name for an old measure, viz. the Agricultural Income Tax, "which was being realized from before the day the zamindari was abolished". The Agricultural Income Tax Act, 1948, was repealed in 1957 because it had certain loopholes which the large landholders exploited to bring down the amount of tax that should have been rightfully payable. Further, it was not levied according to a uniform formula based on land revenue, irrespective of the area a man possesses, as the proposed tax under discussion, but according to a graduated scale based on "sanctioned rate", on those who possessed land measuring more than a certain minimum area. Sanctioned rates are determined during Settlement Operations largely with reference to productivity of the land in question. The Large Land-Holdings Tax was an instrument of social justice barely affecting 0.1 per cent of the farmers and enjoyed the support of the remaining 99.9 per cent.

Popular faith in the plighted word of their leaders is the basis of all democratic governments. Once this faith is shaken no government will be able to function for long. A government may be able to survive military reverses, famine or even unduly high taxes, but not a betrayal—a breach of assurance solemnly given to people upon which millions and millions have already acted. "There can be no manner of doubt that no longer will any Congress Minister or worker in Uttar Pradesh be able to face the rural masses in public

meetings; nobody will believe in their promises and assurances any more."

This argument, namely about breach of faith with the masses has, perhaps, no relevance in the conditions of any other State. For, no bhumidhari drive was launched anywhere else. Perhaps, the Prime Minister is not aware of this complicating factor in the situation of Uttar Pradesh. As for the Planning Commission, it was not concerned with this aspect of the matter; the Vice-Chairman, Shri Gulzari Lal Nanda was of the opinion that although the moral aspect appealed to him more than any other, it was a matter for the State government itself to decide.

Finally, there is yet another aspect of the problem, partly moral and partly legal, which deserves most earnest consideration at our hands Settlement Operations in 37 (out of 45 temporarily-settled) districts of the State were carried out during the years 1937 to 1943. According to the law in force at the time of Zamindari Abolition, the term of the settlement was to be 40 years. Had zamindari not been abolished, only those zamindars could seek an enhancement in the rents of their tenants today who had failed to do so during the settlement operations, and the number of such zamindars would necessarily have been very small, indeed—*small* because the zamindar was not a man who could fail to avail of an opportunity to increase rents. As it was, such enhancement in rent could be made "only on the ground" that the rent was "substantially less" than the sanctioned rate, and could not exceed "one-fourth of the existing" rent. Looking to the history of the landlord-tenant relations, it will be a rare tenant (now sirdar) who pays a rent which is less, or can be called "substantially less" than the sanctioned rate, and which, therefore, was liable to an increase. It is now proposed to increase these old rents (called revenue today) by 50 per cent at one stroke. So that, we are doing to "our peasantry what the zamindars could not have possible done!"

The impropriety of the proposal to increase land revenue today will be indelibly impressed on the mind of a disinterested observer when it is stated that:

(*i*) In 1948, the Zamindari Abolition Committee had recommended "an immediate reduction of rents on uneconomic holdings", at the rate of 6 annas per rupee on holdings up to 1 acre, 4 annas on holdings up to 4 acres, 2 annas on holdings up to 6 acres and 1 anna on holdings up to 10 acres". According to the calculations of the

Committee, "when the rates of reduction are actually enforced, the total reduction will probably amount to Rs 150 lakhs, and give relief to over 80 lakh persons or roughly 70 per cent of the cultivators". This recommendation was not accepted by the State Government.

It will not be irrelevant to point out here that it was in 1948 the ZAC (Zamindari Abolition Committee) made the above recommendation about the reduction in rents, "when the cultivated land per capita or cultivating family was larger than today and the agricultural prices higher than in 1961."

(2) Including AIT, the total revenue derived from land in 1951-52, that is, at the time of Abolition of Zamindari, stood at about Rs 8.25 crores, and including the amount of Rs. 1.98 crores which has been, in a way, paid in advance by the bhumidhars, the total land revenue today stands at about Rs 23.40 crores. It will be found that, after making an allowance for compensation and rehabilitation grants payable to ex-zamindars for 40 years, annuities to religious institutions, etc., local rates, loss in AIT, cost of assessment of compensation, etc., and cost of collection of land revenue, etc., "the state government will be making a net gain of about Rs 7.5 crores per annum for 40 years, that is, till 1992, and of 13.0 crores or so in perpetuity thereafter."

I did not believe my ears when, at the meeting of the Congress Party held on 17 September a supporter of the Land Holdings Tax more than once referred to the example of the USSR and the Chinese People's Republic, and said, if the State was to be developped, for heavier taxes on the scale of these two countries will have to be paid by the peasantry. We have travelled a long way, indeed, from the days of National Struggle, with the result that the masses and the classes would seem to have changed the places they once occupied in our sentiments and our affections. No wonder, then, the disparity in incomes of the various sections of our people, which was wide enough in the British days, has become wider still during the 15 years we have been in office.

To conclude: It is now said that inasmuch as withdrawal of the Bill at this stage will be politically inexpedient, the best course would be to exempt uneconomic holdings from its operation, and, thus, to tax only those who can pay comfortably. This position, however, would not have arisen, had the Chief Minister accepted a request made to him more than once that he should be pleased to

seek the approval of the Party before introducing the Bill, in the legislature. For, it was no ordinary taxation bill but posed a life-and-death question to the Congress Organization. According to him, however, the "established procedure" is that the Party discusses a bill in detail only after it has been presented to or introduced in the legislature and that, were he to disclose the taxation proposals to the Party before they were so introduced, he might be held guilty of the breach of privilege. According to our Party constitution and practice, however, the established procedure, specially for measures involving major questions of policy, is the other way about, e.g. the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill, 1949, and the Development Levy Bill were first discussed in the Party.

As regards the convention about non-disclosure of taxation measures, it obviously applied only to such of them as are likely to have an immediate effect on the market or the Stock Exchange. The Bill under discussion was going to do nothing of the kind.

Further, it has been ruled in the House of Commons and the Lok Sabha that, if a matter of policy were to be announced outside the House without taking it into confidence first, even while it was in session, there was no breach of privilege; at the worst, it was a breach of "courtesy". This is the position regarding public announcements and press conferences; so far as Party meetings are concerned, they are not subject to privilege at all. Otherwise, functioning of political parties in a democracy would become impossible.

This is, however, past. The Bill has been introduced in the Assembly without consulting the Party. But, despite the introduction, there is nothing that stands in the way of withdrawing it. There have been occasions when governments have withdrawn measures pending in the House when they found that they had taken a false step. Our leadership has never hesitated to retrace its steps when higher considerations so demanded it. To give only one example: the Prime Minister bowed before the popular will when he agreed to bifurcation of the Bombay State after the general elections of 1957. He did not suffer in prestige thereby.

Now, to an uneconomic holding. How do we define it? It is defined by some writers as a unit of land which assures a reasonable standard of living to the farmer and his dependants. Others have defined it as an area of land upon which a pair of bullocks and labour resources of an average family, viz. 2.2 persons, could be

kept employed throughout the year. This area will differ with the quality of soil, the availability of irrigation, marketing and other facilities, the draught power of the bullocks and the ability of the farmer himself. Thus, in most parts of the State it will, in my opinion, differ from 6.25 acres to 12.5 acres. In the Bundelkhand region, the figure may vary from 10 to 20 acres. It is often alleged, that, in my view, 6.25 acres of land, irrespective of its quality and other factors, constituted an economic holding under all circumstances. I have never said so, and an economic holding has nowhere been defined in the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1952. The only provision in the Act which mentions an area of 6.25 acres, merely says that, in view of the paucity of land and clamour for it the Gaon Samaj cannot lease out a larger area than this figure.

The *ZAC Report*, 1948, points out that, in a note submitted to it by the Director of Agriculture, he had expressed the following opinion about the area of land that will provide adequate employment for a pair of bullocks:

> The cultivator generally expects to run 10-15 acres with a good pair of bullocks under moderately intensive farming in the west of the Province. In the east of the Province, with ordinary bullocks he controls 5-8 acres. A pair of bullocks is thus sufficient for the cultivation of from 6-15 acres, depending upon the kind of agriculture and the strength of animals. To keep a pair for a much smaller area is uneconomic but it has to be done in a large number of cases (p. 23).

After a thorough discussion the Committee came to the conclusion that the actual average cultivated area per plough, in various parts of the Province, could not be taken to represent an average economic holding. It held that "the lower limits of 5 to 8 acres could not be regarded as economic units, for, if holdings were larger, the number of ploughs would be decreased. About 10 acres may, therefore, be accepted as the average unit for the whole Province towards which we must aim" (p. 24).

The Planning Commission, while advising fixation of ceilings, has steered clear of an "economic" holding, and spoken only of a family holding. The Committee appointed by the Land Reform Panel of the Planning Commission to report on the Size of the

Farms suggested that a farm which yields a net income—including remuneration for family labour—of Rs 1200—and is not less than a plough unit, that is, an area of land which an average family could cultivate with a pair of bullocks, or its multiple in area, may be considered as a family holding.

According to the report of the U.P. Farm Management Survey, already referred to in these pages (entitled *Studies in Economics of Farm Management in Uttar Pradesh, 1954-55*), in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts, it is a holding falling in the size-group of 10-15 acres that gives a net per acre income of Rs 102.21 per annum (vide Table No. 14.8). This places the size of an average family holding in the western region at 11.75 acres.

Under the U.P. imposition of Ceiling on Land-Holdings Act, put on the Statute Book in 1961, a minimum area of 40 acres of "average" quality has been considered as equivalent to three-family holding, which works out at 13.3 acres as the area of one unit. With inferior land, the area will be larger.

Therefore, if it is considered *infra dig* to drop the idea altogether and fresh revenues have to be raised "directly" from land—irrespective of whether or not the economic condition of the peasantry justifies it and whether or not the Third Plan of the State will falter for want of increase in incidence of the land burden "which, to repeat, is already the highest in the country"—I will urge with all the humility and earnestness at my command that this Bill be replaced by another on the lines of the Large Land-Holdings Tax Act, 1957, with the exemption limit of acreage brought down from 30 acres to 12.5 acres (or 20 standard bighas), and of income or annual value from Rs 3,600 to Rs 1,2000 per annum. Fixation of the limit at 12.5 acres will have one good reason behind it, viz., it is the limit imposed on future acquisitions of land in our State. Further, the tax has to be assessed in a manner that it has no relation to land revenue. The land revenue payable today has no rational basis behind it. It is not based on productivity of soil, but differs with the kind of tenancy that the farmer held under the old law, viz., whether he was an occupancy, ex-proprietary, hereditary or non-occupancy tenant, or a sub-tenant or a trespasser; with the character of his ex-zamindar, i.e., whether he was a rapacious man or had some milk of human kindness in him; and also with the comparative demand for land in a particular district or region. The annual valuation will, therefore, have to be arrived

at not through a multiple of the land revenue, but of the current "sanctioned rate" which was determined during the last settlement operations to large extent, with reference to productivity of the soil. Also, the measure should remain in force only for a period of 2 or 3 years. This Bill can be drafted in a day, and introduced the same day the present Bill is withdrawn. According to my estimate, the number of assessees will come to some 3.0 lakhs and the extent of surplus land or taxable area owned by them to about 40 lakhs acres. I am not sure, but this measure, at an average rate of Rs 5 per acre, may well bring us an amount in the neighourhood of Rs 2 crores.

I may point out, however, that, while a tax on the above lines may "possibly" save us from being charged with a breach of faith, it is fraught with political and economic dangers all the same. It will, in effect, be treated by peasants as an advance notice to them that now the Government intended, at not a distant date in future, to take away or acquire lands surplus even to 12.5 acres or whatever other acreage we may decide. Their experience will tell them that it was not long ago that they were required to pay an amount over and above the usual land revenue with the minimum exemption limit of acreage being placed at 30 acres and of income at Rs 3600 per annum—on the ground of social justice. If the peasantry now comes to entertain a feeling that our definition of a large holding and social justice has undergone a change, it will not be easy to convince them of the contrary. "It is holders of more than 12.5 acres or so that enjoy political influence in the countryside. This influence, in future, will be exercised to our disadvantage. As regards its economic consequences: it will create a feeling of uncertainty in the mind of the farmer, and will, therefore serve as a disincentive, that is, inhibit increased agricultural production, which we all aim at. The few economic holdings that are still extant in the State, will be divided into uneconomic units, in order that the holders may escape increased taxation."

Lucknow:
29 September 1962

Sd
(Charan Singh)
Agriculture Minister
Uttar Pradesh

15

Days of Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani

As a result of what was called the 'Kamraj Plan' (after Shri Kamraj from Tamil Nadu who was President of the National Congress at the time) Smt. Sucheta Kripalani who was an utter stranger to Uttar Pradesh took over as Chief Minister of the State in September 1993. Shri C.B. Gupta failed as the Chief Minister and Shri Charan Singh was a *persona non grata* to the Congress High Command which, in practice, meant Shri Jawaharlal Nehru who was wroth with Shri Charan Singh over the latter's views on Cooperative Farming. Like many a Congress leader she also could not be accused of any knowledge of the problems of land and agriculture in the country or how its village life functioned. One should not be surprised, therefore if she also made serious attempts to water down the land reforms legislation that had already been enacted and implemented in Uttar Pradesh several years before she arrived on the stage. This will appear from the two proposals she made or sponsored, viz. first, that all sirdars and bhumidhars irrespective of the area of land they possessed and irrespective of the fact that they had a sound mind and a sound body and did not suffer from any disability, may be permitted to let out their lands, and second, that a person may, in future, be allowed to acquire more than 12.5 acres of land, at least for putting up orchards (12.5 acres was the limit to the area of land which, under the existing law, a person in Uttar Pradesh could acquire in future including the land, if any, which he already held).

When the Revenue Secretariat sent its file to Charan Singh for his opinion about the proposals he categorically submitted that if the proposals were accepted, they will result in re-emergence of landlordism and concentration of land in the hands of a few persons and in undoing what had been achieved through abolition of feudalism or the system of zamindari after more than a decade's labour, both mental and physical.

Regarding the first proposal Charan Singh recorded the follow-

ing note on a file which the Special Secretary (Agriculture) submitted to him:

> I am afraid I remain unconvinced. There has been no change in the rural economy at all to warrant any change in the law, I do not accept the facts stated in the Revenue Department's or Krishi Sachiv's observations thereon, but do not want to go into details here. There are, and have always been some arguments or other in favour of subletting or for the matter of that, both aspects of every problem, but we have to consider the pros and cons of each aspect of the problem before arriving at any decision. I am clear in my mind that the proposed amendment of law will pose greater problems than the law as it stands. The land involved does not constitute any substantial percentage at all, and in the name of increased agricultural production, we should not do anything which will upset the entire basis of our land reforms. Instead, our minds should turn to better enforcement of the law. Reference to the opinion of the Planning Commission or any Five-Year Plan carries little weight with me. We refused to accept their advice in regard to resumption of tenant's lands by the zamindars which led to so many difficulties in other States. A perusal of Wolf Ladejinsky's report in regard to tenurial conditions in package districts submitted to the Planning Commission, will confirm my opinion. Therefore, we here have to take decision on merits and not on what the Planning Commission says or does not say.
>
> Sd
> (Charan Singh)
> 25 June 1964

The Revenue Department which was held at the time by Thakur Hukam Singh since Charan Singh's resignation in April 1959, sent back the file with another note pressing for conferment of a right on bhumidhars and sirdars to let out their lands. Charan Singh, however, stuck to his position and observed as follows for the second time.

CM

> I am sorry that I have kept this file lying with me for such a long time. However, I do not think public interest, as I see it,

has suffered in the least thereby.

I agreed to the matter being placed on the agenda of the meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee for Agricultural Production inasmuch as Vishesh Sachiv (Krishi) told me, the Revenue Department so desired.

I am greatly disturbed by the proposal. I do not know what things are coming to. It is the right of a landowner to lease out his land to others for cultivation, which leads to landlordism or the system of zamindari. It is why, after great deliberation, this right was denied to such of the bhumidhars and sirdars who possessed a sound body and a sound mind. Granting of this right to them now, would amount to undoing what we set out doing with great fanfare, on advent of Independence.

I am also unable to understand how recognition of a bhumidhar or sirdar's right to lease out his land, will result in increased production. It is admitted all over the world that a tenant does not produce as much as an owner. By conferment of the right of lease on a landowner, we are going against this universally-accepted economic truth. As I have already said in my previous note, it is strict enforcement of the relevant provision of the law, which is being violated not by more than 5 per cent of the bhumidhars and sirdars in any case, that is required—and not repeal of the provision, which will make nonsense of our entire land system.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
11 January 1965

The second proposal was initiated by the Chief Minister through the following note addressed to the Chief Secretary:

CS

This gentleman came to see me and drew my attention to the problems of orchards. He is very right in saying that orchards can hardly be expected to be developed under a ceiling of 12.5 acres. I wonder what we can do in the matter. CS may perhaps like to give some thought to it.

Sd
(Sucheta Kripalani)
20 July 1964

CM

The question is whether orchards should be exempted from operation of the legal provision that nobody, in future, shall be allowed to acquire as much land that it will make his holding more than 12.5 acres. The argument that an orchard with a lesser area cannot be fully developed, is not valid, that is, cannot be justified either in reason or in experience. It all depends upon orchards and orchards. Orchards are usually known to bring larger income than ordinary agricultural crops. So, if it is considered necessary to exempt the orchards, there is no reason why the provision of a ceiling should not be repealed altogether.

It was me who was responsible for enactment of this provision. After the necessary amendment in the ZALR Act, 1952 had been made I came across a report of a delegation which had been sent out by the Government of India to China and Japan in order to study Agriculture. The report stated that in Japan, the ceiling for future acquisition had been placed at 7.5 acres. As most of us know, the average holding in Japan amounts to 2.5 acres or so, so that the ceiling there has been placed at an area equivalent to three times an average holding. In Uttar Pradesh, the average holding comes hardly to 4.00 acres, as that our ceiling at 12.5 acres is only just and proper and stands confirmed by the example of a country which, in the matter of agricultural production per acre, is showing the way to most of the countries in the world.

There is yet another consideration. The idea behind the provision was to prevent concentration of land in a few hands. The higher the figure at which we place the ceiling, the fewer the hands will be, in which the land will gradually come to be concentrated with the result that more and more persons will be reduced to the status of labourers, which, perhaps, none of us desires.

I am rather pained at the recent trends which are emerging in our State. Only the other day, I came across a proposal about allowing all the farmers, that is, even those who are not disabled in any manner, to let out their holdings to whomsoever they pleased. Now in other terms, it amounts to full introduction of landlordism or the system of zamindari which Congressmen used to detest so much. Which means that all the emotion and all the effort that we spent on abolition of zamindari was spent

in vain. I can clear in my mind that the proposal about sub-letting as well as the one under consideration here, are retrograde steps.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
22 March 1965

Perhaps, it will not be out of place to mention here that Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani after she had become the Chief Minister, had planted an orchard of her own in the Lucknow district by the side of the Barabanki road.

The proposal regarding permission to sirdars and bhumidhars to let out their lands was, at last, discussed by the Chief Minister herself with the Revenue Minister Thakur Hukam Singh (to whom the portfolio of Revenue had been again entrusted in April 1959 after Charan Singh's resignation), the Agriculture Minister, Shri Genda Singh and Shri Charan Singh on 17 November 1965. Both the Revenue Minister and the Agriculture Minister were strongly in favour of the proposal. It was after great argumentation that Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani gave Charan Singh to understand that she was dropping the proposal.

After the discussion Charan Singh recorded the following note in the relevant file which was lying with him:

The file in which the two notes placed below, were recorded by me related to a proposal for amendment of ZALR Act to the effect that sirdars and bhumidhars be allowed is lease out their lands in the interest of increased agricultural production.

The proposal was discussed today by the Chief Minister, Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani, with Thakur Hukam Singh, Shri Genda Singh, and myself. Both the Revenue Minister and the Agriculture Minister strongly supported the proposal. The Chief Minister herself was greatly inclined in favour of the proposal, but after hearing me, she decided to drop it.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
17 November 1965

The proposal, however, came up again for mention at a meeting of the State Cabinet five days later, viz. on 22 November 1965 in

Charan Singh's absence. Mr Hargovind Singh who was one of the three Cabinet Ministers who had opposed conferment of permanent rights on the adhivasis in 1954, was also reported to have supported the proposal. Charan Singh was astonished when he received a note from the Chief Minister on 27 November saying that he "may call the Chief Secretary and the Revenue Secretary for discussion of the subject." However, he did not think it advisable to discuss vital questions with officers that had been settled more than a decade earlier after great thought and labour and wrote back to the Chief Minister as follows:

CM

I came away on that day under the impression that CM had agreed to drop the proposal. However, it seems I was wrong. Anyway, there is nothing that I can usefully discuss with Chief Secretary and Revenue Secretary. Prohibition of letting, except in certain cases, was a policy decision and taken by the Government, the Congress Party and the Legislature, after detailed deliberation. As I have already said in two notes, reversal of the decision will be detrimental to public interest and will undo the effects of zamindari abolition, to a very, very large degree.

Sd
(Charan Singh)
4 February 1966

This matter may wait.

Sd
(Sucheta Kripalani)
10 February 1966

Sd
(Charan Singh)
22 February 1966

16

Summing Up

In proof of what has been said above about the nature of land reforms in Uttar Pradesh and how they were implemented we would again like to refer to a report entitled "Tenurial Conditions and the Package Programme" submitted to our Planning Commission by Mr Wolf Ladejinsky in 1963, an agrarian expert, who was deputed by the Ford Foundation Team to study the effect of land tenure on agricultural production in India. Government of India had selected five districts in the country, viz. one each in the States of Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh for implementation of the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme which was financed by the Ford Foundation.

Mr Ladejinsky had been responsible for introduction of land reforms in Japan while it was under American occupation and, so, could be expected to know what he was talking about. Referring to land reforms carried out in the five states Mr Ladejinsky expressed himself as follows:

> In Madras and Andhra Pradesh, the present land reform law is of a temporary, stop-gap nature, and comprehensive legislation has yet to be enacted. In Bihar, the law in force is still the Tenancy Act of 1885, with some modifications which are wholly inadequate. Legislation in the Punjab is extremely defective and needs complete overhauling. Only in Uttar Pradesh a well thought-out comprehensive legislation has been enacted and effectively implemented. There, millions of tenants and sub-tenants were made owners and hundreds of thousands who had been evicted, were restored in their rights (pp. 2-3).

Mr Ladejinsky further went on to say in the last chapter of his report thus:

> Looking back at the agrarian structure of Aligarh (Aligarh was

> the package district in Uttar Pradesh) after a decade and half of land reform legislation, we have no suggestion either for adding or revising any of it, except with regard to *sirdar*[1] to which we have referred earlier. Many a good piece of agrarian reform legislation has arrived still-born in India, but in Uttar Pradesh it went hand-in-hand with enforcement and important attainments. The lesson to be drawn from this is but one: It can be done where there is a will to do it. Millions of falsified record entries can be ferretted out, correct land titles can be recorded and security of tenurial rights can be brought about (pp. 57-58).

Mr Ladejinsky refers to the scheme of consolidation of holdings as a "vigourous and successful programme" and goes on to remark that "the impact of the programme was quite apparent to us in villages where consolidation has been completed a couple of years ago. Its most significant result can be observed in the number of new surface wells farmers are putting in on the consolidated land" (p. 57).

While dealing with land reform legislation in various countries of South-East Asia in an article published in the *Times of India* dated 9 September 1964, Mr Wolf Ladejinsky again referred to the case of Uttar Pradesh in the following words:

> Administrative problems are a formidable obstacle to implementation of the reforms. On the other hand, judging by the experience of the largest and most populous State of India, Uttar Pradesh, this is not an insurmountable difficulty if there is the will to overcome it. More to the point is the faulty content in many legislative enactments.

The history of land reform legislation will, perhaps, nowhere offer another example of so thorough-going and so far-reaching a measure as the ZALR Act of Uttar Pradesh.

The small Tarai and adjoining Bhabhar area was the only part

[1]The suggestion to which Ladejinsky refers as having been made earlier, pointed out that since the right of transfer of his land is not available to a sirdar as it is to a bhumidhar cooperatives or Government cannot advance loans to him. The deficiency was, however, removed by a subsequent amendment.

of Uttar Pradesh to which, owing to certain complications of tenure and also want of time at Charan Singh's disposal the ZALR Act could not be extended and the bhumidhari scheme could not be applied during his tenure as a Revenue Minister which came to a close in April 1959. Neither the gentleman who held charge of the Revenue portfolio nor any of the three Chief Ministers who presided over the destinies of the State during the period, 1959-67, had the vision or the desire to tackle the problem. In 1967 Charan Singh had left the Congress to found a party based, by and large, on the Gandhian approach to social and economic problems of the country.

Yet another example: He had intended—and to that end initiated a file—to enact a law for conferment of rights of ownership on occupants of houses in the *purwas* (outlying areas) of big towns. Although these tenants or occupants were owners of the building materials, they were liable to ejectment or enhancement of rent on every conceivable pretext or, in case, they converted their kachcha houses into pucca ones. But this simple question remained unsolved and matters stood in 1967 where they did in 1959.

Not only that: as the reader must have noted almost every major step in land reforms that Charan Singh took, met with strong opposition in the ranks of Congress itself. Many leading Congressmen who were at the helm—even those who posed as "progressives" or socialists", that is, greater friends of the underdog than ordinary Congressmen—were found arrayed against the underdog, when it came to brass tacks and affected their own interests or the interest of their class.

As apart from fulfilling dictates of social justice the land reforms in U.P. he proposed—Charan Singh pleaded—were going to serve as the greatest bulwark of democracy. This argument, however, had little or no appeal for his political opponents. But owing to the pressure of Congress legislators who had all or almost all gone through the crucible of struggle against the foreign rulers who drew their main support from the big zamindars—the so-called Rajas and Nawabs—who, in their turn, exploited the rural masses mercilessly, Charan Singh ultimately succeeded in implementing his policies. As time has proved, it is its land reforms that constitute the main reason why Uttar Pradesh—the largest state of the Indian Union where the average land-holding is the smallest in the country, viz. 1.16 ha excepting the two small states of Kerala and

Jammu Kashmir for which the figure stood at 0.70 ha and 0.94 ha respectively —has not suffered from agrarian unrest and, despite the political and administrative conditions in the State being what they are, communism has not been able to gain any foothold in its countryside worth the name, as it has in several other States.

The decisions taken in the Revenue Department during the period Charan Singh was Parliamentary Secretary or Minister of Revenue, did not remain confined to the debates on the floor of the State Legislature or the Secretariat files and official circulars, but were publicized and actually implemented in the field. Publicity took the form of innumerable public meetings in the interior; training camps consisting both of officials and non-officials with a view to explaining the drastic changes that were being made in the existing set-up, be it the bhumidhari drive, law enacted or other steps taken to ensure the security of the actual tiller of the soil whether his name was entered in Revenue records in any capacity whatsoever or not entered at all; dismissal of the patwaris and their replacement by lekhpals with reduced powers; duties laid and rights conferred on the Land Management Committees; Consolidation of Holdings and its advantages etc.; and articles published in the press and broadcasts made on the All-India Radio. In fact, every new idea, concept or scheme was taken to the countryside.

Charan Singh's frequent tours to the districts as Revenue Minister and his knowledge of the subject acted as a source of inspiration to the district officers as also to the Congress workers who outnumbered the black sheep within the Congress fold. No officer, howsoever able, could think of hoodwinking or bye-passing Charan Singh, for, along with policies and principles, he was a master of details also. No erring or ignorant officer could escape his vigilant eye. Those who erred, met with a frown or look of disapproval. Serious cases invited deserving punishment which no recommendation or intercession by an outsider, howsoever highly placed he may be, could possibly soften or alter. The result was that the number of punishments was fewer and the out-put, better both in quality and quantity

As has already been pointed out previously, the entire machinery of the Revenue Department got or was set immediately into motion on the report of merest harassment or attempt at ejectment of the smallest individual in the remotest corner of the State. Every

Tehsil or Revenue Officer felt that the eyes of their Minister were particularly rivetted on him.

We do not think we are guilty of exaggeration when we say that Charan Singh's record of solid, constructive service to the State is beyond all comparison. It does not take much intelligence, rather any intelligence at all, to provide money in the budget and then construct a new road, a new school, a new hospital, a new tubewell, a new factory. Whereas it takes not only intelligence but imagination, statesmanship and great application both of mind and body, to think out a new idea, formulate a new scheme, enact a new law, set up a new system, reform the old order, solve problems that affect tens upon tens of millions of people together, and create new values. Almost all the latter kind of work that was undertaken in Uttar Pradesh during the period preceding April 1967, owed its origin or inspiration to Charan Singh.

Charan Singh had the good fortune of having the ablest IAS officer in Uttar Pradesh, Shri Zahur-ul-Hasan as the Revenue Secretary and the ablest ICS officer, Shri J. Nigam, as the head of the department known as the Land Reforms Commissioner. He remembers them both till today and will continue to remember them with pride and affection till his last days for their hard work, scrupulousness and dedication to their duties.

The following order which the Revenue Secretary issued to his office will provide an example of how the Revenue Minister was engaged day and night, with the problems that he was faced with, their possible solutions, the speed and efficiency with which the Government policies were implemented and the imagination with which a new set-up was planned and translated into action:

Office

Revenue Minister desires that the following matters should receive priority treatment from now on. He would like to have a progress report in each case within 3 weeks. The report he desires, should not be merely a formal one showing as to what, in the total, has been done up to the time of writing the report but should definitely show as to what progress was registered during the 3 weeks which have been allowed by RM:

(1) Abolition of *Zamindari* in the following areas:

(a) Government estates except those of Kumaon Division.

(*b*) Hill pattis of Kumaon Division,
(*c*) Pargana Jaunsar Bawar,
(*d*) Government estates of Rampur district,
(*e*) Urdan areas,
(*f*) T & B and Garhwal Bhabar Government estates.

(2) Integration of villages.
(3) Orders regarding conferment of powers upon local authorities in respect of areas mentioned in section 117-A ZALR Act,
(4) Progress of the release of patches of waste and private forests which have been vested in the Forest Department as a result of the abolition of zamindari.
(5) Recruitment of consolidation staff.
(6) Training of survey amins.
(7) Recruitment of 100 new Kanungoes and naib-tahsildars.
(8) Progress of the issue of compensation bonds.
(9) Setting up of an organisation for payment of the rehabilitation grant.
(10) Disposal of the saklana Muafies,
(11) Printing of Revenue Department forms by private agencies.
(12) Enforcement of the Encumbered Estates (Amendment) Act.
(13) Setting up of an organisation to work out the provisions which will be contained in the ordinance on Zamindari Abolition (in Kumaon).
(14) Amendment of rules and instructions relating to court and office by Parliamentary Secretary to Revenue Minister and work in the Collectorates found necessary as a result of inspection by Parliamentary Secretary to Revenue Minister.
(15) Issue of a new bulletin of the Zamindari Abolition Rules.

So far as the last mentioned item is concerned, I may say that I have promised RM that he would have a copy of the new rules on his return from Kashmir. I hope office will do all that is necessary to see that my promise is fulfilled,

Sd
Zahur-ul-Hasan
12 July 1954

Charan Singh was not satisfied with numerous speeches he delivered at public meetings, articles that he contributed to the press and the talks that he gave on the radio: he wrote various

books and booklets also for the education of the intelligentsia. A list is given below which is however, not complete:

1. *How to Abolish Zamindari Which Alternative System to Adopt.*	:	Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, U.P., India, 1947, Pp 68.
2. *Abolition of Zamindari*	:	Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1947, Pp 263.
3. *Whither Cooperative Farming ?*	:	Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, U.P., Pp 126.
4. *Agrarian Revolution in Uttar Pradesh*	:	Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, U.P., India. 1958, Pp 65.
5. *Joint Farming X-rayed: The Problem and Its Solution*	:	Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1959. (Later on this book was republished by the Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964 in a revised and expanded form under the title of *India's Poverty and Its Solution* Pp 527)
6. *India's Economic Policy: The Gandhian Blueprint*	:	Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1278, Pp 127,
7. *Economic Nightmare of India: Its Cause and Cure*	:	National Publishing House, New Delhi
8. *Shishtachar*	:	Gyan Bharati, Delhi, 1984, Pp 203

To conclude: One cannot escape the conclusion that Charan Singh had to wage a relentless struggle for over two decades 1946-67) against the Kulaks who were going by the appellation of Congress and even, Socialist leadership.

Appendix

WHY 50 PER CENT OF GOVERNMENT JOBS SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR SONS OF AGRICULTURISTS

According to the Census of 1931, persons or earners who were actually engaged in cultivation of land they held either as tenants or as owners, as apart from labourers or those who depended solely or principally on agricultural rent, form the largest bulk of the total earners of our province, viz. 57.75 per cent. When the agricultural labourers are included, the figure swells to 75.50 per cent. Occupational statistics were not collected in the Census of 1931, but there was no reason to suppose that the proportion has changed in any material degree since 1931. It is the agriculturists, therefore, who are entitled to be called the people—the masses—of the United Provinces. All the departments of the government have been created with a view to serve the interests of the people. Constituting as they do such an overwhelming percentage of the population, one would expect that the government services in the United Provinces would be manned largely by the sons of agriculturists or that, at any rate, their number in the services would somewhat nearly reflect their strength in the entire populace. But that is far from the case; a census of government servants, according to the profession of their parents or guardians, is not available, but it can be asserted without fear of contradiction that the proportion excluding the services that are either risky or are very poorly paid, does not in any way exceed ten per cent. It is submitted that this state of things has to be radically altered.

The argument based on the factum of numerical strength has been adverted to. What however I consider to be a more important and compelling consideration, is the existence of an inherent conflict of sympathies and interests between the farmer and the classes which have uptil now supplied the officers and other ranks of government service. A man's opinions are to a great extent dictated by his surroundings. Education makes very little difference, if any, to his real opinions; it rather tends to confirm them. His parents, his enviornment, his business, his past profession, his

present friends, acquaintances and relatives—it is the sum total of these things that determines his outlook on life. "The social philosophy of a man", writes Simon Harry "is largely that of the people among whom he moves. The Conservative M.P. associates with directors of limited companies, with the equally wealthy members of his own exclusive clubs, with his hunting, shooting and fishing friends. It is this society which produces his conservative philosophy. His mode of life makes it unlikely that he will understand the real problems of ordinary people: his political views must reflect the interests of the class from which he comes" (vide "Tory M.P." page 193).

In our country the classes whose scions dominate the public services are either those which have been "raised to unexampled prominence and importance" by the Britisher, e.g. the money-lender, the big zamindar or taluqdar, the *arhatia* or the trader, or those which have been, so to say, actually called into being him—the *vakil*, the doctor, the contractor. These classes have, in subordinate cooperation with the foreigner, exploited the masses in all kinds of manner during these last two hundred years. The views and interests of these classes, on the whole, are, therefore, manifestly opposed to those of the masses. The social philosophy of a member of the non-agricultural, urban classes is entirely different from that of a person belonging to the agricultural rural classes.

A memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission by an Association in the Punjab asserts that "an immense cleavage exist in India between the trading classes in the cities and towns on the one hand, and the agricultural classes, on the other." Then it would impress on the Commission with all possible emphasis "that the urban middle class which is akin to, and includes the money-lending class, has no sympathy with agricultural classes whatever and that the interests of the two classes are diametrically opposed to one another. The urban middle-class, with the academical education they have received, look down upon agriculturists as being only good enough to plough land, produce food, supply the revenues, act as cannon fodder and to be exploited in every way conceivable." The language of the memorandum may sound a bit too harsh and blunt to many an ear; but there is no gain-saying the fact that the city people act superior towards the peasant. That the reading of the Punjab Association is correct is, however, proved by the fact that only the other day when I was talking to an

M.L.A. from one of the big cities of the United Provinces about my move for a greater representation to the agriculturists in the services, his instant reaction was to enquire—"who will cultivate the land then?" It is a matter of daily observation that a townbred non-agriculturist calls his poor countryman from the village a *dehati, ganwar* or *dahqani* in the same contemptuous tone in which a heaven-born European flings, or used to fling, terms "native" or 'nigger' at us all Indians without distinction.

The truth has to be recognised that the environment in which the rural workers live is different from that of the towns. Agriculture produces "a type of citizen, an attitude of mind and a way of life" quite distinct from those developed by any other industry or occupation. "For the peasant," says Count Richard Coundenhove-Kalergi in his book, *Totalitarian State against Man*, "lives in nature, with nature, and by nature, in symbiosis with animals and plants. For this reason his picture of the world is fundamentally different from that of the townsman remote from nature, who spends his days among all kinds of machinery and often himself becomes a semi-machine. The peasant has the slow tempo of the seasons and not the quick tempo of motor cars. His attitude towards the world and to things is organic and not mechanical."

He, therefore, is likely to be a more successful administrator or interpreter of law in a country overful with agriculturists who has had the benefits of a rural environment and tasted the bitter experience of a farmer's life. For, his values of life, more than those of any other, are likely to correspond with those of men whose affairs he is called upon to administer. He alone can understand the psychology of the villager and appreciate his needs. He knows the motive-springs of the farmer and is aware of the handicaps of rural life. A hierarchy of services, composed, as at present, largely of sons of town-dwellers or shopkeepers, moneylenders or those who practise law and medicine, and big taluqdars or rentiers cannot, even with the best of intentions, govern this predominantly agricultural province in the interests of the masses. An officer drawn from these classes simply cannot put himself into the shoes of the common man or realize where the shoe pinches him. He has no sympathy with the feelings of the villager or the peasant. Rather, all his interest and sympathies lie the other way; they unconsciously lead him to take a view favourable to, and to the exercise of his power in the good of, the class from which he himself has risen. It

would be straining human nature too much to expect an officer, or even a legislator, drawn from the above classes to bring to bear the correct outlook on the problems whose right solution oftentimes means the liquidation of or, affects adversely, the classes to which he himself belongs. I am fortified in this view by the opinion of Hon'ble Shri Sampurnanand, Education Minister of the United Provinces:

"Judges and legislators" he says, "need not be deliberately unfair; being human, they would find it almost impossible to transcend the limitations imposed upon them by their class affiliations and group interests." (vide "The Individual and the State", pages 121-22).

Those who have any experience of law-courts know full well the difference between the attitude and behaviour of judicial officers according to the classes in society from which they have sprung. Given the same set of cirumstances in a law suit, the reaction of a judge from a moneylending or taluqdar, family differs greatly from that of a judge belonging to an agriculturist family. All those who have eyes to see, must bewail with the author of the *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and in Debt* (Darling, 1932) the havoc brought by civil courts, presided as they have been by men "for the most part born in the town, knowing little of the village, and often allied with the moneylender by caste, if not by actual relationship." In a law court, particularly in a money suit, the agriculturist finds the scales heavily loaded against him; true, the non-agriculturists have ruled in their own interests. I will reinforce this point by a quotation from a British legal journal:

"It is increasingly recognized that if justices are to do their work satisfactorily, they must have not only a working knowledge of the law they administer, but also a realization of the difficulties and problems of the people whose cases they try. It is said that a bench of justices from an agricultural district would fail to understand the conditions prevailing in a mining town, or in an industrial centre, and that equally the townsmen would fail to appreciate the problems of an agricultural community."

The above conclusions are true of non-judicial officers as well. If one would take the trouble of shifting records, one would find glaring differences in the estimates of remission in times of drought or in case of damage by hailstorm or flood submitted in exactly similar conditions by officers of the Canal and Revenue Depart-

ments, according as they come from the farming or non-farming classes; the latter simply do not possess the insight to realize the plight of the cultivator. Their economic bias—their whole mental make-up—stands in the way of giving a true picture. An important reason, *inter alia* why the Agriculture Department has been a failure is the fact that it is officered largely by men whose families have had nothing to do with agriculture for generations past, to whom the life of the farmer in the village, before they entered the Department, was virtually a sealed book and who, therefore, make inefficient agriculturists, unimaginative organizers and unsympathetic officers. There are officers in the Agriculture Department who cannot distinguish between a barley plant and a wheat plant and those in the Canal Department who do not know how many waterings and at what time a certain crop requires. Similar is the case of the co-operative and Rural Development Departments in all the various branches of their activities, and, one is sorry to note, that even the advent of the Congress Ministry in 1937 did not improve matters in this respect. We would do well to realise, sooner the better, that men having roots in the countryside alone can make these and many other departments the success they ought to be; that the interest which a candidate for public employment has in village life, should be one of the basic principles upon which his selection should depend and the efficiency of an incumbent judged. Commenting on the "Co-operative Plan for the United Provinces" outlined by Hon'ble Dr Kailash Nath Katju, Minister of Justice and Co-operation, Mr Shridhar Misra, writes in the *Leader*, dated 29 December 1946 as follows:

> Finally, it may be pointed out that the method of recruitment of the co-operative staff also requires a great change. The city "Sahibs" who might have been, if at all, to villages only on picnics or for sight seeing, howsoever highly qualified, cannot share in the difficulties of the village people nor can win their favour or confidence, which is one of the most important essential requisites for a social reformer in the rural areas. Selection should, therefore, be made entirely from and amongst those who belong to rural areas and still maintain their association with village life. It is only such persons who can prevail on the country-side without causing much disfavour or suspicion in respect of any movement for village re-oranization.

I think the point, viz. that men's opinions are, on the average, determined by the sources of their incomes, will be conclusively settled when it is stated that members of the Congress Party in the last Punjab Legislative Assembly, almost all of whom represented the urban interests or non-agricultural classes refused to support the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Bills and the Agricultural Marketing Bill in spite of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's specific instructions to that effect. Comment is useless; I leave it to the reader to guess the reasons for their refusal. When such is the conduct of people who claim to be public workers, who call themselves Congressmen this in an age when our leaders have set their hearts on vivifying the villagers and when establishment of the "peasants and workers' Raj" is the avowed aim of all our political work, what shall we expect from ordinary people that usually secure the jobs in the various departments, who are neither public workers nor Congressmen and whose one avowed aim in life is the aggrandizement of the self and the conscious or unconscious furtherance of the interest of their group? Marx had propagated the view that the class which controls the State, will always use its power in its own interest. Though this view may be unjustified as an absolute principle, still it contains a very large measure of truth.

It is axiomatic to say that the policy and intentions of a Government can be carried out only by willing instruments who are themselves actuated by the spirit which inspire the efforts of the Government, as it is always the spirit that matters and not the letter which can be only too easily twisted. A large measure of discretion shall always vest in an officer how so much you may limit it by circulars or seek to control it by rules and sections. And it will be readily admitted that this discretion is exclusively governed by the psychology or personal equation of the officer concerned—this predilections, which, I must repeat, with honourable exceptions, are in turn determined, consciously or unconsciously, by his self-interest or the interest of his group. This personal or class equation, if I may say so, has been in the past, and still is, responsible for rendering infructuous many a beneficial legal provision and many a scheme framed by the various government to relieve the masses or help them out of the slough into which they are sunk at present. It, therefore, behaves the popular Government to employ only such agents as will faithfully interpret their will to the people, i.e. recruit officers and men with a rural

mentality in a far greater proportion than hitherto in this predominantly agricultural province.

Not only the administration of the province will be carried on in the desired spirit if the rural element in the public services is sufficiently strengthened, but, further, its efficiency will be greatly increased it will give them a tone, a virility of character as nothing else will. For a farmer's son by reason of the surroundings in which he is brought up, possesses strong nerves, an internal stability, a robustness of spirit and a capacity for administration which the son of a non-agriculturist or town-dweller has no opportunity to cultivate or develop. Agriculture is a pursuit wherein contest with the forces of Nature brings home to the peasant a daily lesson in patience and perseverance, and breeds in him a hardihood and an endurance, i.e. a character, denied to the followers of other pursuits. An agriculturist's son, has, therefore; the strength and firmness to see decisions through, which the non-agriculturist often lacks; his hands and heart will not tremble in a crisis as those of a soft person from the city are likely to do. The peasant's son can be safely relied upon not only to give orders, but carry them out honestly and in the right spirit, as he is simpler and less sophisticated and less emanable to calls of ease and comfort, than his fellow officer from the urban classes. He will not know how to deceive, or, at least, deceive successfully, as his father (for, influence of heredity cannot be denied altogether) and he himself in his childhood were brought up in the company of those who do not tell lies, viz. land, plants and animals; whereas a non-agriculturist and his son in the work of earning their living have had almost exclusively to deal with fellowmen who in the attempt to over-reach one another, unfortunately, speak untruths and prevaricate. Further, a cultivator's son is, perhaps, less open to corruption than a city-dweller because his standard of life is comparatively lower and conforms more nearly to the average and, therefore, he requires less money than one brought up in the luxurious surroundings of a city life. It may be difficult to win an argument, but the voice of honest criticism should be silenced by the following opinion of the famous American "Businessmen's Commission on Agriculture", on the personnel whereof, as the name itself suggests, there was not a single farmer:

"From the social point of view there are potentialities in rural life which nothing else can supply. It is, perhaps, not clearly proven

that the human social stuff which is developed in a rural environment is of better quality than that which issues from the city, though there is some reason to suspect that this is true." (p. 152)

I shall add another unimpeachable testimony, viz:

"As a result of his study of the influx of rural population to London, Sir Herbert Llewllyn Smith pointed out more than half a century ago that it is on the whole the most vigorous in body who leave the country for the town; and their valuable mental qualities are indicated by the fact that country-bred men are so often preferred in London for "employment requires special standing and imposing special responsibility."

London is kept up in bone and sinew by the country element flowing in . . . . It is the result of conditions of life in great town that muscular strength and energy get used up; the second generation of Londoners is of lower physique and has less power of persistent work than the first; and the third generation (where it exists) is lower than the second" (vide memorandum on 'Consideration of National Health' submitted by William Ashley in July, 1923 to the British Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation).

Yet another argument: It is the tiller of the soil who bears the brunt of taxation. Being almost the only producer of wealth, all taxes are ultimately passed on to him. As for direct taxation, he has to pay rent or land revenue and canal dues to the State, though the land that he may possess be 5 bighas in extent and though no surplus may be left to him after the payment of the above dues. A non-cultivator, on the other hand, pays a tax to the Central Revenues only if his income exceeds Rs 2,000 a year. The difference in burden of the two is too patent to need elaboration. This enormity, however, becomes aggravated when one realizes that, by far the major portion of the money that comes out of the pocket of the farmer goes to pay the salaries of young men other than his own. Thus the moisture sucked up from the cultivator's farm, instead of returning to his cottage and his village, descends as fertilizing rain on the towns, in a way. Will it then be absurd to claim that at least a part of the taxes raised from the cultivators be returned to him in the form of salaries to the children?

Reservation of public employments for sons of agriculturists can further be justified on the ground of their educational backwardness for which, not the agriculturists themselves, but the State or society is responsible. All educational institutions other than pri-

mary are located in town and, while at least secondary education should have been free and the concern of the Government, such prohibitive fees are charged and expenses of boarding and lodging in a town so high as are beyond the capacity of the poor farmer who can with difficulty keep his body and soul together. And in these institutions too, boys coming from rural parts are admitted only after all the candidates from the towns have been provided for. Even institutions like the Government Agricultural College, Kanpur meant exclusively to serve the interests of villagers, or, agriculturists, are no exception.

Why? And this leads us to still another plea which can be advanced in favour of such reservation, viz, powers of patronage in 90 cases out of 100 lie in the hands of the townsmen or non-agriculturists; all key places are concentrated in the hands of those who have no relationship or community of interest with the farmer. Charity has always and everywhere begun at home; those in whose power it is to dispense favour will dispense it first to those with whom they are connected by ties of blood or of economic interest. Consequently, the villager's son has no such facilities for securing a job as are available to others and it is not seldom the case that candidates less quilified get a job because the former—villager's son—could not secure recommendations of the highly-placed. The present policy of open-door, therefore, has no meaning in most cases; it has no relation to facts and has to go.

It is for such reasons as these that I plead for reservation in favour of the class which has had far less share in the administration of the province than is its rightful due and whose case has, uptil now, gone by default.

Those who are opposed to this proposal may say that, as agricultural classes are composed overwhelmingly of certain hereditary castes it amounts to communal representation in another form—an evil which has to be scotched rather than encouraged. To call the proposal 'communal' would be, however, a deliberate attempt to mislead people. Nor does the objection come with good grace from those who monopolize the public services today. Communal representation is only that which is based on religion or on caste determined by birth. It may, if one likes, be called vocational, functional or occupational representation, but, by no stretch of imagination, communal. As long as man is man, difierences shall always exist between one individual and another. Classes or groups performing

different economic functions are a *sine qua non* of human society; mankind can never be brought to a dead uniformity in all respects, nor is it desirable to attempt such a consummation. It is for us, however, to say whether in the structure of our society or administration of our province or country, religion or birth shall be the determining or distinguishing factor as between man and man or his occupation and economic interest. Caste based on birth has had its day; it must be abolished. Even as originally contemplated caste was determined by occupation (aptitude and qualities); it was much later on that it became stereotyped and confined to birth. It is a matter of common observation that people, irrespective of the hereditary castes they may belong to or the religious labels they may wear, if they are brought up in the same profession or similar conditions of life, react almost similarly and because of their common economic ties, develop the same mentality common to the particular profession. Howsoever it may be, those at least who believe in class conflicts and have always advocated the rights of peasants and labourers as against their exploiters, should support every step including this proposal which safeguards the interest of the masses and by seeking to shift the contact of differentiation from birth to occupation, in a way, accelerates the operation of modern forces. To convince the doubters of socialist hue I may quote an example of the USSR. There "until June 1931 even children of the intelligentsia—engineers, physicians, college professors, school teachers—though their parents were in the employment of the Government and enjoyed citizenship rights, were admitted to the University only after the quotas of peasant and factory—workers were filled" (vide "The great Offensive," 1933 by Maurice Hindus).

Be it as it may, it is not expedient, nor can it be justified by any standard of fairness, that Public Administration should be monopolized by members of certain non-agricultural classes or by the town-dwellers. Democracy means everywhere Government by the common people, not domination by certain hereditary ruling castes or classes, Hindus or Muslims, as in India hitherto. The claims of the various classes with different economic and social functions have, therefore, to be harmonized on a basis of equality; otherwise bitterness will remain and continue to increase.

The critic may retort that if you reserve public employment for cultivators, why not for carpenters, weavers, etc. This criticism is

born of ridicule. The principle of administrative convenience is absolute or applicable to all sorts of facts and circumstances; there is none which, when stretched, cannot be reduced to an absurdity, and the principle here advocated of reservation for rural or agricultural interests is no exception to the general rule. It is the agriculturists who form the masses—the demos—and fill the treasury, if conceded, cannot work out injuriously to anybody. Let all the rest take their chance in the remaining 50 per cent. I would, rather, that the departments of agriculture and cooperation should be manned exclusively by agriculturist's sons. We should not forget in this connection that this proposal, if accepted, will affect only future recruitment and it may take a generation to reach the proportion of fifty or sixty per cent, in the entire cadre of the services).

Theoreticians may argue that careers should be open to talent and talent alone, that by reservation in favour of any class efficiency will suffer as it will prevent the best men from coming in that it is the essence of democracy to treat all men on terms of absolute equality, and so on. To such our reply is that talent does not consist in academic or bookish knowledge alone, that men should be adjudged "best" or otherwise only in relation to the task they are required to discharge and not merely be reference to a certain a *priori* uniform standard of answers to question-papers and that in matters of public employment men should be treated equally only after the society or the democratic government has afforded equal opportunities of instruction and progress to all men within its fold or under its charge. It would be patently unjust first to deny the vast mass of the people opportunities of advancement and enlightenment and then to justify their exclusion from Public Administration on the ground that they are inefficient. Uniform academic standards can, with reason, be applied only when equal facilities have been provided. Sticklers for efficiency should further note that I do not urge complete disregard of what are called "educational qualifications"; only those sons of cultivators should be recruited as possess the minimum educational efficiency or have attained a certain qualifying standard. It will not be out of place to state here that a belief is held in certain quarters that sufficient young men from rural areas with requisite qualifications will not be forthcoming; firstly, this is baseless; secondly, if they will not let then the unfilled jobs go to the other

classes. I may say here that the argument about dearth of suitable candidates from the agriculturist classes is, or can be, advanced by those alone who are conversant with eastern and central parts of the United Provinces only where the actual cultivator is very backward economically and culturally, where manual work is looked down upon by the heaven-born caste Hindus and, therefore, the tiller of the soil occupies a still lower scale in the social ladder than what he does in the western part.

An objection may also be raised that the proposal is impracticable inasmuch as in many cases it is difficult to determine whether a particular candidate is the son or dependent of a *bona-fide* cultivator or not, as many people residing in town or carrying on other business are also entered as agriculturists in the Patwari's papers. My reply is, firstly, that people who have returned cultivation as their subsidiary occupation at the time of the census do not exceed eight per cent of the total and, secondly that rules can be easily made for guidance of appointing authority and amended as often as experience dictates. Statesmen all the world over have been set far more serious problems in the administration of their country and they have been satisfactorily solved. This difficulty was one of the main considerations which led the Punjab Government, which have reserved since 1938 sixty per cent of public employment for agricultural classes to define an agriculturist with reference to a person's caste or religion. I hope the United Provinces Government will not commit that mistake and yet do justice to the peasants by solving the problem in accordance with the requirements of national solidarity.

I know that town-folk and country-folk and all classes of this ancient land are bound together for good or ill and that it is a crime to create jealousies between them, but I regard it as a still greater crime to exclude, on any pretext whatsoever, the rural and agricultural classes—the bearers of the inheritance of our health and the source of our nation's youth—from their due share in the administration of their country, and the power and patronage that it carried with it. Because public service, while it solves economic problem of hundreds of thousands of persons in a manner far more luxurious than is the lot of the average member of the public, is also an instrument of political power and supremacy. It would in no way interfere with, but advance, the cause of nationalism to let all sections of the people feel that administrative

machinery is not the close preserve of the town-dwellers or non-agriculturists, or, education and all good things of life the monopoly of the few, but the common heritage of all the sons of the soil. The present disequilibrium has to go therefore.

It may be that confirmed democrats or others with the tongue in their cheek may trump up some other objections than the above. There are, however, arguments and arguments; I can only say that the legitimate claims of the peasantry have too long been subordinated to the interests of the propertied and educated classes—the privileged, non-agriculturist classes; that, as it is the cultivator who pays everybody's interest and carries almost the entire burden of the provincial administration on his shoulders, all those who have any control over the destinies of this province and have the interest of the cultivator at heart should use their influence in seeing that justice is done to him in the matter of recruitment to public services. "In the absence of action of this kind," as the author of the *Wheat Marketing Report* remarks in another connection, "expression of interest in the welfare of the cultivator may be regarded with scepticism." The author of the "Indian Peasant", Dr N Gangulee, a member of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, also complains in the same vein.

> The urban element dominates the political life of the country. The voice of the cultivator is not heard in the land. Yet he represents nearly seventy-five per cent of the Indian people. Every one pays lip service to the cultivator; save a section of the Congressmen drawn from the rural parts no one is jealous of his interests.

It will help the cause that I advocate to state that I have said nothing novel or surprising; the Congress Government had themselves, in their last brief spell of office, accepted this principle of reserving a few jobs, say, one out of ten, to sons of "tenants" in the various departments. This reservation, however, is very meagre and, in addition to having been greatly abused, has practically no influence on the tone of the administration. I plead for the extension of this principle, if it is not to remain a mere platitude and if it is really to benefit the peasantry, for the very reasons which lead our leaders to think on these lines.

To conclude, only as late as late as 29 January 1947, the

Hon'ble the Premier, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, in his inaugural address to the Development Conference of departmental officers held at Lucknow had laid stress on the psychological factor as occupying first place in all human affairs. Speaking of the failure of our nation-building departments to achieve their end, he said:

> There have been air-tight compartments. Every department has been functioning in an artificial atmosphere and the poor simpleton called the villager has been bewildered by the conflicting appeals addressed to him mechanically by a number of individuals none of whom seemed to him to be really sharing his own life or to be really imbued with a feeling of service to him. You have to convince him that you and I are really his well-wishers and do intend to serve him. Unless and until you have done that, our appeal fall flat; it will receive no response. And pardon me for saying that with your collars and pants, hats you cannot make a natural appeal. . . . I personally think that it is time that when our officers went out, instead of going to the inspection house they spent their night with the cultivator's family. It will certainly mean a certain amount of discomfort and inconvenience but it will make their task immensely easy. It is petty, trivial and small things that really influence the psychological attitude of individuals and masses towards big insoluble problems. You just move a little switch and you see light blazing out all over a field for miles and miles. Similar is the case here. If you can just apply the switch rightly, you will see that light glowing forth all over you and you will be surprised to see how easily you can capture his mind and his imagination.

The Premier has laid his finger at the right place; the disease from which our services are suffering, has been correctly diagnosed. But I respectfully venture to point out that his appeal will generally fall flat on our officers, coming from the classes they do and nurtured in the environment they are. Only those who are brought up in the swaddling clothes of the cultivator, will share his life or spent the night with him. Only those who are connected with him by ties of economic interest, by cultural bonds and psychological affinities will strike the right chord or turn on the switch that will illumine his life and dispel the darkness that surrounds him today.

Only those can appeal to the cultivator's or villager's heart or touch his imagination whose reaction to things is similar to that of his, none else. We have, therefore, to go a step further, and not stop at exhortations; the source of recruitment has to be changed.

Lucknow
21 March 1947

CHARAN SINGH

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Well-known in the political field, Chaudhry Charan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, has been a leading figure on the national scene since 1977. Prior to that he held a prominent position in the U.P. Government.

Not many are aware of the rare qualities of head and heart which he possesses. A great scholar of Indian History and Economic Planning, his books *India's Economic Policy—The Gandhian Blueprint* and later *Economic Nightmare of India—Its Cause and Cure* are masterpieces on the subject. The wealth of statistics and information given in the books show the depth of his knowledge and his aversion to slogan-mongering. None has yet challenged the basic cure suggested by him.

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