

FEUDALISM AND LAND REFORMS

India is a continent of clusters of villages. More than 80 per cent of the population lives in rural India. More than 70 per cent of them depend directly on agriculture. The poverty of the rural population is a great hindrance to industrial development. The development of the home market is a primary condition for industrial growth. It was primarily for this reason that every bourgeois democratic revolution was fundamentally an anti-feudal agrarian revolution. In the imperialist period, no liberation revolution can fulfil either anti-imperialist or anti-feudal democratic tasks, unless it is both anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. We had previously noted that such a full-fledged national liberation war cannot be led by the bourgeoisie.

The Indian bourgeoisie has been closely linked with the feudal forces from its earliest period. A large number, like the Birlas, own extensive agricultural farms of their own. Quite a number, like the Tatas, were closely linked with feudal princes from the initial period of their industrial development. Even the national leadership of the national movement, such as Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad, hailed from the land-holding class. The leadership in the provinces was much more closely related to the landlord class. Consequently the National Congress, even though it talked of land reforms, off and on, mainly to shatter the influence of the Left forces, was never serious at any time about mobilising the peasantry in any national struggle. From the beginning it looked with derision and decried the growing people's struggle in the princely States.

To except this leadership to go even half way in the implementation of anti-feudal reforms is foolish. Even the Zamindari abolition proceedings were an eye-wash. As Gunnar Myrdal explains in "Asian Drama", "These measures can hardly be said to have produced a radical change in property relations. For the former intermediaries, abolition meant merely a change in the sources of their income and - particularly for those with a large income - some reduction in size". These reforms affected only the intermediaries; they did not touch any of these landlords in India

who possessed unrestricted ownership rights. In the name of 'personal land' as much land as possible was allowed to be retained by the feudals. "The right to **Sir** and **Khudkasht** (i.e. home farmland) made zamindars resort to eviction of even occupancy tenants themselves on a large scale and claim it as their personal cultivation. Hundreds and thousands of acres have been thus affected in recent months." (H. D. Malavya : "Land Reforms in India" Page 452).

Sub-tenants of these lands, i.e., the actual share-croppers who were the cultivators of the lands, not only did not receive and benefit from this legislation, but in the majority of cases got thrown out of the land. A considerable number of actual tillers belonging even to the category of the middle peasants, who were dependent on those lands, were socially and economically degraded when the zamindars took over land for their personal cultivation. Evictions reduced the status of many of them into agricultural labourers.

Thus the abolition of zamindars in the main did not change the economic or social base fundamentally in India. Rather, as Gunnar Myrdal has said, "Put bluntly, the answer is that the abolition of the intermediaries in India and Pakistan was not intended to give land to those who actually till it." (Page 1309).

Land Reforms Enactments

Land reforms in the bourgeois democratic revolution are to hasten the development of commodity production and capitalist relations in agriculture. Feudal land relations hinder the growth of the home market.

In India, the medieval character of landlordism, comprising various forms of tenant farming based on servitude and bondage, payment of wages in kind, permanent labour, food loans to labourer at exorbitant rates on enslaving terms, and quite a number of other innumerable medieval practices are prevalent all over. The mass of peasants crushed by feudal exploitation are being ruined.

The essence of land reforms in India should amount to the break-up of the large land concentration in the hands of generally 10 per cent of the landlords and the creation of a free and hard-working peasantry capable of developing the productive forces

and promoting the progress of agriculture completely free from medieval forms of exploitation by feudal landlords. Therefore, the big landed estates will form the basis of distributable land area along with the land of the temples, trusts, and the land maintained by the industries such as the sugar factories.

As Lenin has explained: *"The future is distinguished from the present by the incomparably greater 'equalisation' in ownership, that the new distribution of the land conforms far more to the 'labour principle'. And that is not accidental. It cannot be otherwise in a peasant country, the bourgeois development of which emancipates it from serfdom". "The idea of equality is the most revolutionary idea of the struggle against the old system of absolutism in general and against the old system of feudal landlordism in particular".* Therefore, the pivot of the struggle is the complete break-up of feudal landlordism which is the most conspicuous hindrance to the development of productive forces in India.

Do land reforms in India, as they are being implemented by the ruling class, conform to these characteristics? Of course not, even though the political leadership had vaguely talked about land reforms. In the post-war period of peasant upsurge, along with the extremely repressive methods adopted to drown the peasant struggles in blood, the bourgeoisie and its government talked of ceiling on land, and distribution of land to the *'tiller of the soil'*. The policy of the *'carrot and the stick'* was adopted to divert the fighting masses and to drown their struggles in blood. Land reform committees were appointed. Their reports were published and discussed. Resolutions were passed - all temporarily to stall the agitation of the rural masses. All these measures were mainly adopted to save the rural landlords from the wrath of the peasantry by creating a situation for diverting them from agitation, and into believing the promises of the ruling party. And finally came the land ceiling Acts.

After giving innumerable exemptions for pasture land, garden lands, commercial cropping such as of sugarcane, and mechanised farming, and so on, the ceiling was fixed at extremely high levels in such a manner that there would be no need for the government to implement the Act.

Even though I do not propose to analyse the whole gamut of land legislation, it would be necessary to understand a few

important aspects. Let us take as an example the Andhra Land Reforms.

An author in a weekly from Delhi, discussing the ceiling Act of Andhra Pradesh analyses the ceiling clause as follows :

"A family holding has been fixed at 6 to 12 acres of wet land depending on the fertility of land, and the ceiling is placed at 6 times the family holding. Since each individual in the family can be termed as a family under the Succession Act, the ceiling for a five-member family comes to 180 to 360 acres wet. In terms of dry land it can be anywhere between 1080 to 2160 acres ! All temple lands, lands under sugarcane, coffee, tea, rubber, and plantations attached to factories were exempted from ceiling."

(Mainstream : February 28, 1970).

As Gunnar Myrdal remarks :

"The impressive facade of parliamentary democracy cannot hide the fact that political participation in any meaningful sense is confined to small upper class groups" (Page 776). This piece of land reform under the impressive facade of political democracy *"will be nothing but an innocuous piece of legislation to be dangled before the masses."*

(Economic and Political Weekly : March 19, 1960).

This one clause in the so-called ceiling Act will be enough to show the deceitful nature of the legislation.

Added to this, the administration representing the upper classes *"behave as if the Act was not meant to be enforced"* (Ladijinsky) - and the panel on land reforms of the Planning Commission says that *Revenue officials were unconsciously hostile in attitude"!*

Is at least the tenancy legislation better ? Even according to the Planning Commission report :

"The legislation has allowed unrestricted termination of such of those tenants who seek to assert their rights defined in the legislation Thus this

piece of legislation has made tenants in general apathetic towards the rights conferred on them. On the other hand, landlords could evict tenants with ease for even minor delays in payments of rents evictions were on a large scale Absence of record rights and of machinery to scrutinize, made the task of the Courts difficult to establish tenant-landlord relationship even when some tenants braved to fight in the courts Thus the provisions were rendered ineffective and the desired change was not achieved".

The effectiveness of these two pieces of legislation is evident even to the government. Why should any one be surprised at the immensity of the growth of agrarian unrest in the country? Rural tensions are growing, and armed clashes are a common feature all over the country. Cases of Harijans being murdered in villages over land disputes all over the country have become a common news even in the daily Press which rarely reports such incidents. The stranglehold of big land - holders on rural life has increased with the advent of Panchayat Raj, since their economic hold on the villages has been reinforced with political power even at the village level.

Gandhi has said that "a violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is voluntary abdication of riches and the power that the riches give". Voluntary abdication is a dream of the innocent, or the deceitful propaganda of the clever. History has proved that violent and bloody revolution is the only way to get out of this rut of chaos.

The Union Home Ministry's note on the current agrarian unrest has characterised it as follows :

Speaking about the tribal unrest, it says that "the basic cause of unrest - namely, the defective implementation of laws enacted to protect the interests of the tribals - remains; unless this is attended to, it would not be possible to win the confidence of the tribals whose leadership has been taken over by the extremists The tensions in the rural areas, resulting from the widening gap between relatively few affluent farmers, and the large body of small holders, landless labourers, may increase in the coming months and years. A bad agricultural season could lead to an explosive situation in the rural areas".

The situation in the country was deteriorating fast. The above note by the Home Ministry was sent against the background of large-scale unrest in Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and some other states, where a large number of clashes have taken place between landlords and the impoverished peasantry and landless workers. The situation in some parts of Andhra and Bihar at that time was reported to be critical - faced with violent attacks, murder, and arson, organised by the landlords. The rural masses "are on the verge of resorting to armed action In the first eight months of 1969, the number of people killed mostly Harijans, was larger than those killed in communal riots." (Link : November 6, 1969).

The same issue of Link reports a gruesome mass murder of tenants in an attempt to dislodge them from the land even after the government had recognized the occupancy rights and over 90 per cent of them received concerned documents. Link reports : "In the course of the struggle for the land, armed attacks by the landlords are not uncommon in Bihar, but there has been nothing so far to compare with the brutal attack on Umartur Diara peasants near Buxar on U. P - Bihar border. On October 31, 1969, Babus (landlords) of Narhi, Ballia District in U.P.) at the head of an organised mob of about 300 persons, armed with lathis, spears, guns, and other weapons, attacked share-croppers working in their fields in broad daylight, and killed 10 persons on the spot and seriously injured 11 others, of whom one died in the hospital While retreating they dragged the bodies, some of them still alive, several furlongs and burnt some huts of the cultivators. So far only 4 bodies including the headless body of Shia Dahina local S.S.P. worker has been recovered. The bodies of Sri Ram Gond, a C.P.I. worker, and five others are still untraced." (Link November 6, 1969).

It was under such growing landlord terror all over the country, and under the inspiration of Naxalbari peasant armed struggle for land and liberty, that the militant land occupation movements by the rural poor, the struggles of agricultural workers, widespread agitation by tenants, the militant struggles of the tribal people against exploitation by moneylenders and landlords in various parts of the country - in Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Andhra Pradesh - and "Armed action of the Naxalites and communist revolutionaries have all served to highlight the seriousness of the

problem" (Link, February 1970).

The deceptive slogan of '**Garibi Hatao**' was coined by the ruling party at this time. Innumerable Chief Ministers' conferences were held to discuss this problem, with the result that unheard-of, severe, repressive measures were adopted against the peasants and revolutionaries to save the landlords from the righteous retaliatory anger of the peasants. It is evident that, except for the coining of a new slogan for the temporary diversion of the people from their growing anger, nothing tangible has taken place.

The old slogan of intensive cultivation, mechanisation of agriculture, leading to '*green revolution*' continues to hold the field.

Lenin has explained that the transformation of agriculture from feudal to capitalist can take place in two ways :

"The pivot of struggle is the feudal latifundia, which is the most conspicuous embodiment of and the strongest mainstay of the survivals of serfdom in Russia. The development of commodity production and capitalism will certainly and inevitably put an end to those survivals. In that respect Russia has only one path before her - that of bourgeois development."

"But there may be two forms of that development. The survivals of serfdom may fall away either as a result of the transformation of landlord economy or as a result of the abolition of the landlord latifundia, i.e., either by reform or by revolution. Bourgeois development may proceed by having big landlord economies at the head, which will gradually become more and more bourgeois and gradually substitute bourgeois for feudal methods of exploitation. It may also proceed by having small peasant economies at the head, which in a revolutionary way, will remove the 'excrescence' of the feudal latifundia from the social organism and freely develop without them along the path of capitalist economy." ("Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy" Page 239).

The big bourgeois landlord government in India has taken to the path of gradual transformation of landlord **latifundia** into

bourgeois economy, with all its plans for the supply of better seeds, fertilisers, use of pesticides, mechanisation of agriculture, extensive funnelling of state loans into the landlord economy. With the help of immense aid from international finance and Soviet revisionism. As Lenin has explained, this slow evolution "*into bourgeois-Junker-landlord economy condemns the peasants to decades of most harrowing expropriation and bondage*" (Page 239, Ibid).

This is what we are witnessing in our country today. The excruciating pain which the rural economy today is undergoing - the forceful eviction of small peasants and tenants, the growth of concentration of land, increase in the number of agricultural labour, the growing hegemony of upper castes over lower castes - are all symptoms of this growing disease ; "*The evolution is the transformation of feudal bondage into servitude and capitalist exploitation on the land of feudal landlords.*" (Lenin, Page 239).

He further enunciates that this "*implies the utmost preservation of bondage and the serfdom (remodelled on bourgeois lines), the least rapid development of the productive forces and the retarded development of capitalism; It implies infinitely greater misery and suffering, exploitation and oppression for the broad masses of the peasantry, and consequently also for the proletariat.*" (Lenin Page 243).

Therefore, no communist can support this kind of evolution of feudal landlordism. Our task is to firmly oppose it by supporting the fighting peasantry for the total liquidation of feudal landlordism.

Indian Big Bourgeoisie - Landlord Government Strengthens Landlord Base

Every concrete step taken by the government has strengthened the landlord base in the countryside.

The first important step taken by the government to transform the rural panorama was the historic Community Development Project plan in the early 1950's - hailed by the late Jawaharlal Nehru as a revolutionary step. The Community Development Programme, hailed by Nehru as "*the dynamo providing motive force for the successful implementation of Five Year Plans*" was initiated with great enthusiasm and fanfare, with the intensification of building of roads, minor irrigation, elementary education, and

development of credit co-operatives. However *"they seldom reach the broad strata of the population but benefit instead the land-holding class and the moneylenders."* ("Asian Drama", Page 871). An emphasis was given to the co-operative movement to help the agriculturist to develop his resources for fuller utilisation of land and to produce better results. But again the result was to strengthen the landlord economy.

As John Lewis in his "Quiet Crisis in India" states :

"The result, typically and plainly, has been to lodge the village cooperative in the hands of the same privileged village cliques that have been doing most traditional money lending and trading. By insisting on the pretence of indigenous origin, the forces of reform have surrendered the cooperative instrument to the management of the very groups most inclined to resist massive rural reconstruction. In the process, the primary cooperative society has tended to become simply another device for reinforcing the pattern of rural privilege - with the comfortable new feature of a direct line of credit on the Reserve Bank of India." (Page 164).

Whereas the big cultivators are provided with this channel of securing credit at a concessional rate to increase his field of activities, to amass further wealth and profits, the poor and small cultivators are being left free to pass on into the octopus grip of traders, moneylenders and landlords. What wonder, then, that this much advertised co-operative movement further increased the growing discrepancies in income and make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Daniel Thorner, who had "the unusual opportunity of visiting 117 co-operatives of various types scattered throughout all the states of India," in his field report "Agricultural Co-operatives in India", remarks that "In general, I found that hearts of co-operatives were the big people of the villages and that they had their fingers in many other pies as well as co-operation." (Page 3).

He gives the instance of co-operative, joint farms functioning "as a one family shows, operated mostly on family land by one of the landlord families of the village". He produces the case of a multi-purpose co-operative, in which "half of the outstanding short - term loans (Rs. 95,000) out of a grand total of Rs. 1,91,000 had been made to only 11 members." (Page 4). He talks of Nellore district which provided "the most flagrant example of large landlords

using their position in the co-operatives to further their own power and interests." (Page 5). His field report makes it clear that "Soukari (money lending), Sarkari (government), and Sahakari (co-operation)" are co-operating with each other with perfect co-ordination. He reports that "the cultivator, who also does some moneylending, figures prominently in co-operatives in Baroda, Saurashtra, Hyderabad and Rajasthan. The trader-cum-money lender is found in societies in Saurashtra, Mysore, Nilagiris, Nellore and Kashmir. The formidable combination of cultivating moneylender-cum-trader dominates the scene in Mysore and costal Andhra." (Page 8).

Therefore, "in a country where social change is the determining factor for economic progress, mere institution of co-operative service shall hardly remedy the situation. It may even help perpetuating the **status quo**. In such circumstances, the cover of co-operative organisation may even accelerate the process of polarisation - the rich becoming richer and the poor relatively poorer." (Page 34).

Co-operative credit has become the handmaid for the diversification of the activities of the village rich in the countryside. *"A series of developmental programmes on the countryside provides the big cultivators with opportunities to take governmental contracts"* and other diverse activities. *"It has been feared that the cheap co-operative credit, the bulk of which percolates into the hands of this fortunate big cultivator is being mis-utilised for either of these purposes - trading in foodgrains, taking governmental contracts, and lending for trade and commerce purposes."*

(Economic Times April 21, 1966).

Thus the government, through co-operative credit, panchayats, samitis and parishads, so-called developmental programmes, and various other loans in crores of rupees for the mechanisation of agriculture (for tractors, bulldozers, oil and electrical pumpsets, etc.) is feeding the village landlords to increase their share of wealth and income, to increase the disparities in the countryside faster than ever.

With all the tall talk of land reforms and its innocuous land ceiling legislations and tenancy Acts, no democratic land reforms have been implemented by the Congress government in its long tenure in office for the last 23 years. Practically no change in land

relations has taken place, except that with vigorous implementation of Panchayat Raj' co-operation institutions, loans for tractors and other agricultural machines etc., the political and economical strength of the landlords has been further strengthened in the rural economy.

The unchanging relations that continue to exist can be clearly noticed from the following data pertaining to three periods :

Holding Size	1924 *		1939**		1961**	
	Percentage of Population	Area	Percentage of Population	Area	Percentage of Population	Area
Under 5 acres	58.3	12.1	63.7	12.2	55.8	11.8
5 to less than 10 acres	18.4	15.1	16.9	13.1	19.0	14.5
10 acres and more	23.3	72.8	19.4	74.7	25.2	73.7

Note : * 'Agrarian Reforms in India', G. Kotovsky (Page 12).

** According to Census Statistics, Economic Times, July 16, 1965.

With very minor changes, the situation has not changed so far as the concentration of land in the rural areas is concerned between 1924 and 1961.

A large part of the arable land is concentrated in the hands of the small upper crust of the peasantry and the bulk of the peasant families are bankrupt.

In 1951, the first Agricultural Labour Enquiry Sample Survey of Land Holdings, showed that holdings of 5 acres and less made up 59.1 per cent of the total holdings comprised 15.5 per cent of the land, holdings of over 25 acres made up only 5.6 per cent of the total holdings and comprised 34.4 per cent of the land.

These data on the distribution of land among the different groups of farms reflect the profound process of class differentiation which has gone deep among the Indian peasantry.

Another analysis of the data, contained in the census of population and sample survey conducted in 1951-52 by the Ministry of Labour, showed that agricultural labourers and members of their families comprised 36 per cent in 1951.

The National Sample Survey, 16th Round, conducted between June 1960-June 1961, reported that the topmost 10 per cent of the agricultural population held 56.2 per cent of the land as was reproduced in Economic Times of February 17, 1966.

According to the Survey, 30 per cent of the lower rung of the agricultural population hold 0.1 per cent of the land.

The next 10 per cent hold 0.6 per cent of the land.

The next 10 per cent hold 2.1 per cent of the land.

Hence 50 per cent hold 2.8 per cent of the land.

The next 10 per cent of the agricultural population hold 4.7 per cent of the land.

The next 10 per cent hold 6.9 per cent of the land.

The next 10 per cent hold 11.0 per cent.

Hence 30 per cent hold 22.6 per cent of the land.

Therefore, 80 per cent of the agricultural population hold about 25.4 per cent of the land. The next 10 per cent of the agricultural population hold 19 per cent of the land. The topmost 10 per cent hold 56.2 per cent of the land.

It is this topmost 10 per cent of the agricultural population who have the lion's share of all the benefits of the Congress Government's economic policies during the last three Five Year Plans. It was for that reason that the income in the rural sector is increasingly more disproportionately distributed. It was also for the same reason that, even the bourgeois professors recognise that "*the eternal help artificially injected into the countryside - in the form of co-operative movement, marketing and agricultural finance -*" could not change the face of the village, nor could it succeed in creating those forces which could create a democratic base in the countryside . On the other hand, these policies have made the

rich richer and the poor poorer. (V. B. Singh, "India Yesterday and Today)."

Therefore, it is clear that every step that has been taken in relation to land reforms has only aggravated the situation.

On the basis of recent studies conducted in India and in other countries where the green revolution has become the vogue, U Thant, United Nations Secretary General, points out :

The Green revolution is likely to benefit primarily those farmers who are already engaged in commercial production rather than small farmers, and among commercial farmers, big ones more than small producers there is a possibility that small farmers may gradually be squeezed out of the market by big producers and that tenants may be evicted. [Citing an Indian study of the Green revolution he says] "A relatively few persons, not more than 20 per cent of the farm households in Punjab benefited by the Green Revolution. The study also mentioned the burden of taxation there, not to speak of land values spiralling, rents going up and conditions of tenants no better if not worse."

In his presidential address to the Congress session at Bombay, Jagjivan Ram, the then Union Minister for Food and Agriculture, focussed attention on the extremities of land concentration. "There has been a breakthrough in agriculture. Arrangements for public allocation of inputs and credit have considerably improved. But the beneficiaries are not those who are living on a pittance of a few rupees a month, but the privileged minority of substantial and middle cultivators. With 41 per cent of farm families owning only one acre of land and 22 per cent having no land at all, with 3 to 4 per cent of big cultivators enjoying all power, wielding all influence, making all decisions in collaboration with the government machinery and appropriating to themselves all the skill and resources, the expertise the government agencies offer, the poor half of the villagers have little to thank any body for."

These sympathetic vibrations from the ruling party are expected to give Indira Gandhi and her coterie a progressive facade to lull the people into inaction and to the revisionists a ground for full-fledged and open declaration of support to her and her party

in power. Having been incessantly talking about the growth of poverty and the necessity for land reforms, a plan to import thousands of tractors as a loan from I.D.A. for distribution to the landlords is the double faced and deceitful programme of Indira, and company.

It is clear that the big bourgeoisie landlords government is incapable of and is not interested in *land to the tiller*. This type of development which Indira Congress is implementing in India was called by Lenin "Land lord bourgeois revolution" which is "adopted solely to the interests of the landlords", giving them "freedom to plunder the village communes, to forcibly expropriate the masses, to round off their plots, to evict poor peasants, to undermine the very foundations of the life of entire village," etc. (Page 278). This type of landlord bourgeois revolution, as against the total liquidation of landlordism, was inevitable even in the epoch of strongly developed capitalism. "In such an epoch, this bourgeoisie, in the mass, is inevitably counter - revolutionary." (Page 321).

In such circumstances, Marxism must resolutely combat the view that a radical agrarian reform is possible without a radical political revolution. Such a peasant agrarian revolution can become a reality only by advocating, preparing and organising of it on a nationwide scale, by explaining consistently to the peasantry that unless the revolutionary classes conquer political power, land to the tiller is an impossibility.

If the revolutionaries believe in supporting the revolutionary actions of the peasantry and in the confiscation of landlords' lands, then they must seriously think about organising the masses for those actions. As Lenin says, "the peasantry cannot carry out an agrarian revolution without abolishing the old regime, the standing army, and the bureaucracy, because all these are the most reliable mainstays of landlordism, bound to it by thousands of ties." (Page 349) "Needless to say, a radical political revolution is difficult, but so is an agrarian revolution; the latter is impossible apart from the former, and it is the duty of the socialist not to conceal this from the peasants, not to throw a veil over it, but to speak out, to teach the peasants that unless they go the whole way in politics it is no use thinking seriously of confiscating the landlords' land." (Page 350).

Growing Concentration Of Land

The experience of history is that, whenever the people are in a fighting mood to achieve their democratic programme, capitalist parties have been willing to become 'socialist' as long as they could uphold the privileges of the exploited class - in our own country the imperialist, comprador, and the landlord - and their unlimited power over the people.

It was at the time of the Telengana armed peasants' revolt in Andhra, Tebhaga struggle in Bengal, and Warli uprising in Maharashtra, that the question of Bhoodan and land reforms were brought to the forefront by the bourgeoisie. It was again in the immediate wake of Telengana armed uprising of the peasants, at the time of mid-term elections in Andhra, that the bourgeoisie proclaimed their deceitful programme of '**Avadi socialism**'.

It was again during the first communist ministry in Kerala, that co-operative farming became the '*slogan*' of the ruling party to divert the attention of the fighting masses.

Now, again, in the midst of armed uprisings of the peasants, beginning with Naxalbari and Srikakulam, when the question of land had been again brought to the forefront due to thousands of fighting peasants coming forward to forcefully occupy the lands in East Godavari, Mushahari and Terai regions, that the ruling party came forward again with the slogan of '*land reform and land to the tiller*'.

To proclaim land reforms and distribution of land to the tiller as the policy of the government, on the one hand, and to implement policies which encourage the greater concentration in the hands of the 10 per cent rich village landlords, on the other, has been the nefarious and disgustingly deceptive method adopted by the government all these years.

As Economic Times in its editorial '*Farming and Progress*' (January 3, 1970) points out :

"The keynote of the present agricultural strategy is to concentrate on specific areas with a package programme. The green revolution which we are now witnessing is the result of the success achieved by this new farm strategy and one direct consequence of this has been the transformation of the farm economy from

*subsistence to profitable business. Some studies already undertaken have shown conclusively that, in the initial stages at any rate, the benefits of the new technology have gone to those who can command resources for investment to exploit the new opportunities. By the same time the small farmers and tenant cultivators, though they may be willing to adopt the modern technology, have not been able to benefit to any extent because of lack of sufficient capital to invest in the new package of inputs. Mr. Jakhade, (in his presidential address to the All India Agricultural Economics Conference) quoted a research study to show how, in Punjab, the bigger farmers have found in the purchase of land a very lucrative source of investment, **no matter what the ceiling legislation may say.** Thus land owned by bigger farmers increased between 1955-56 and 1967-68 by about 9.5 per cent Farms of the size of 20-25 acres expanded by only 4 per cent, whereas those of the size-groups 100-150 acres increased by about 40 per cent It is, therefore, easy to see how this tendency will aggravate social tensions unless land reform measures are implemented with vigour and expedition."*

The green revolution has given birth to a host of social problems. It has aggravated the economic plight of the scheduled castes who constitute the bulk of the rural poor. The gulf between the rich and poor has widened. It has released some social forces which may lead to the destruction of landlordism itself. In one of the recent Chief Ministers' conferences, Mr. Y. B. Chavan, the then Union Home Minister said : "*The warning of time is that unless the green revolution is accompanied by a revolution based on social justice, I am afraid the green revolution may not remain green*". The green revolution, in the very method adopted at present, is bound to give birth to social tensions.

Wiesmann, writing in the May 1970 issue of Ramparts, the American radical monthly, drew a startling picture of how the green revolution "**was wished on India to promote American business interests**".

He poses the question, "*How long the revolution will remain*

green", and answers the question himself.

"The real disaster", writes Wiesmann, *"is more immediate commercial agriculture, by definition is produced for profit, not people. At the same time, the new seeds required irrigation and pesticides, and heavy inputs of fertilisers, the costs of which soared Those who have not the capital or cannot get credit from village moneylenders or meagre government programmes are pushed out of their lands into agricultural proletariat or worse, while the new kulaks, the peasant capitalists, reinvest their profits in modern labour-saving machinery."*

The tenant, too, has become economically weaker. The green revolution has been responsible for adversely affecting his position in two ways.

First, the landlords are now demanding *higher rents* because of the increase in the productivity of the land. As the tenants' bargaining power is weak, even though the tenant is not in a position to compete with the big farmer in increasing the produce from his land as he cannot afford to induct improved farming practices, he is unable to resist the landlords' demand for higher rents.

Secondly, absentee landlords, whose interest on land was earlier confined to whatever rents could be obtained by leasing of lands, were *induced to personally to resume the land from the tenants.*

Mr. Francine Frankel, who made a study of the impact of the new strategy in agriculture in Ludhiana, observed; *"there is little doubt that the position of tenants has become more difficult as a result of the green revolution."*

With the advent of the green revolution, with the immense amount of finance being funnelled by the government into the coffers of the land-lords in the name of the increasing production, concentration of land in the hands of landlords has been growing. Even though there has been a lot of talk about the distribution of government land to landless peasants, the truth of the matter is that the land is more and more being occupied illegally, surreptitiously by politically powerful and economically dominant groups in the country. A few examples would serve the purpose.

'Land grab by Ministers' - Blitz : December 12, 1970.

Rajasthan : Sukhadia owns Durga Nursery, 40 bighas, with a magnificent bungalow in its confines. He has acquired another chunk of 200 bighas along the Rajasthan Canal. Owns a farm of 85 bighas in Suklapur village, seven miles from Jaipur. The biggest Raghunathpur farm has been acquired in the name of his wife, Indubala Sukhadia, and her brother Dinabhai. He possesses a farm of 40 bighas at Badi, near Udaipur. He has gifted a farm of 55 bighas four miles from Jaipur to his son-in-law, Manha Lal Goel.

In Jaipur City, Ajmer Road has been turned into a minister's farm exhibition road.

(a) Along this road, the first in the series is the 38-bigha farm of Hardeo Joshi, Minister for Industries.

(b) Next comes the 60-bigha farm of Law Minister Barkatullah Khan.

(c) The third is the farm of Social Welfare Minister Amrit Lal Yadav.

(d) The fourth is the 50-bigha farm of State Minister, Mapphool Singh, who also owns a chunk of 150 bighas grabbed by him in the Rajasthan Canal project area, in his native Ganganagar district.

(e) Housing Minister, Bhikha Bhai also owns a 50-bigha farm along this road.

(f) Yet another Minister possessing a 20-bigha farm in the exhibition colony by the side of Ajmer Road, is Brij Sunder Sharma, Health Minister.

'Land Grab in Andhra by land-hungry Ministers', Blitz, September 10, 1970, gives an interesting list of land owned and occupied by some of the cabinet ministers of that period.

(1) Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. J. V. Narasinga Rao, heads the list with a family holding of 1,140 acres, in his home district of Adilabad, and other places.

(2) Ramalinga Raju has a joint family holding of 1,120 acres of fertile East Godavari land and "is a custodian of thousand acres of temple lands as a tenant on long lease."

(3) Purushotham Reddy, Minor Irrigation Minister, has a

holding of 700 acres in Nalgonda district. He is making frantic efforts to legalise his holding of 500 acres of government wasteland in Addaguduru village on the plea of exchange with his own land.

(4) Three thousand acres of fertile Lanka Land has been illegally occupied by Raja of Challapalli.

The land ceilings Act has given immense concessions to landlords by exempting vast tracts of land under sugarcane cultivation, gardens, seed farms, grazing grounds and temple lands from the scope of the Bill.

A few more instances of land occupation or allocation to influential big landholders, retired civil servants, military officers, and so-called '*political sufferers*' in the rich area of Nainital and Lakhimpur districts of U.P., will shock any one who has little bit of decency in him.

(1) In Nainital area, the Prayag Farm has over thousand good acres and another over 2,000 acres. The proprietor of Prayag Farm is reported to have links with a number of business concerns.

(2) A retired army general has been given 1,500 acres of land.

(3) A retired Lieutenant Governor has a farm extending over 1000 acres.

(4) A high police officer has a farm of 500 acres and so has an I.A.S. officer.

The Land Ceiling Acts Have Served No Purpose

To deceive the people the Congress governments in all the states have passed what are known as land ceiling Acts, but in no state have they reduced the concentration of land in the hands of the land-lords. The old zamindars, the rich feudal landlords, even today own thousands of acres of land in their possession. Every ceiling Act has provided several exceptions in the name of orchards, dairy farming, livestock breeding, sugarcane growing, etc. In our own province, no big zamindar of the status of Challapalli Raja or feudal landowners of the status of Dorigallu Venkataranga Reddy have lost even a cent of land. From the information we have with us, let us peep into a few cases of continuing land concentration in some of the other provinces.

In Tamil Nadu, the exemptions from the Ceilings Act include charitable and educational institutions, universities, any trust, co-operative, industrial and commercial undertakings, land in hill areas, plantations, land used for orchards, topes or arecanut gardens, land used for growing trees, garden lands, land used for dairy farming, and livestock breeding, land used for sugarcane growing, grazing land etc.

(a) One of the biggest groups of land owners in Tamil Nadu is the trusts, of which there are as many as 8,251. The government is yet unable to tell exactly how much land these trusts have, but an idea of their holdings can be had from the fact that one trust alone, Dharmapuram Mutt, holds 72,000 acres of land.

(b) **For dairy and livestock breeding**, the former Congress Minister Nallasenadhipathi Chakkarai Manradiar, alone, has been given exemption of 896 acres in Coimbatore district. His application, for exemption of a further 847 acres, is pending. Annor Sambandha Chakkarai had been exempted 1,190 acres.

(c) **In sugarcane growing land**, Thiru Arooran Sugars Ltd., alone, has been given exemption of 14,473 standard acres. Cauvery Sugar and Chemicals of 644 acres.

(d) The hill area lands are all exempted, whatever crops are raised there, and in this category are included plantations in 13.42 lakh acres.

(1) Birlas have extensive landed interests in Tamil Nadu. They bought Nine Valley Tea Estate in Nilgiris from Bajorias, who had got it from one of the Mysore Ranis on a nominal price. The total estate area is 32,000 acres out of which 18,000 acres are under tea and 3,000 acres under coffee. Still, about 11,000 acres are lying fallow. Birlas have another estate of 1,200 acres near Shoranur - besides 3,000 acres of bamboo forests on the other side of the Nilgiris.

(2) The Pandiyah Plantations officially own just 200 acres in the Kandamanyakamoor forest area, but the total area illegally held now is more than 10,000 acres.

(3) S.A.S. Lakshmana Chettiar, owner of South Travancore Plantation Ltd., illegally possesses 600 acres of forest land near Ponmani village in Kanyakumari district.

(4) The D.M.K. leader, and Chairman of the Nagarcoil

Municipality G. Christopher has title deed for only 90 acres of land whereas he at present occupies about 300 acres.

(5) Swatantra Party leader Matyas, owner of Palmoor Estate, has illegally occupied 200 acres of land in Virapulli reserve forest areas.

(6) One, Ganga Naidu, bought from the former Zamindar about 3,000 acres of land in the hill area near Varshanad in Madurai district. He evicted all the tenants from this land and is now occupying nearly 6,000 acres.

A few examples cited from Bihar state would be enough. It is difficult to estimate the amount of land that **Darbhangha Raja** holds under his occupation. It was reported in the Press that one farm, alone, is of 600 acres.

One Gajendra Narain Singh owns 800 acres of land. Another Yashwantha Kumar Choudhary has illegally occupied 200 acres of agricultural land. Two mahants in Bihar - Mahant of Bodh Gaya and Mahant of Boudouli own 10,000 acres and three thousand acres of land, respectively.

It is not only the landlords who own thousands of acres of land in our country. Even the industrialists have their eye on the land. One instance will be enough to show the way in which these industrialists have begun to grab the land and become agriculturists. The following few instances of the Birlas' land empire will show why industrialists in India are against land reforms.

(1) **At Almai :**

- (a) 1,200 acres : given by Government for factory purposes.
- (b) 800 acres : private land acquired by the Government for the Birlas.
- (c) 400 acres : purchased by Birlas from villagers at throw-away prices.
- (d) Besides these 2,400 acres, there are 1,600 acres of forest land given to them in the name of agricultural research institute.

This brings the total to 4,000 acres.

This is not the end of the story. There is what is known as the '*bamboo empire*' of the Birlas. A most profitable of Birlas business in the forest wealth of Shahdol, Sidhi, Rewa and Satna areas, which comprised the former Vindhya Pradesh. Vast forest areas were granted in 1954 for 20 years at Rs. 6.50 a ton. In 1956, when the new state of Madhya Pradesh came into being, the lease was further extended by another 10 years at the rate of Rs. 7.50 per tonne.

Even though the lease of these bamboos was meant only for Orient Paper Mills at Almai (which started production only in 1965, the Birlas started cutting bamboos to supply to their paper mill at Brajarajnagar in Orissa. The market rate of bamboos during this period was Rs. 60 at Rs. 80 per tonne. One can imagine the amount of money, minted by the Birlas in the deal.

Birlas are notorious for their capacity to evade taxes. The interim royalty for bamboos due to the Government has now reached the fantastic figure of Rs. 1.5 crores. And there is no indication of the government moving for its recovery.

Grab the land with the Government, connive, lease forest wealth at the cheapest rate, evade payment of royalty to the Government - marvellous achievement of patriotic profit !

(2) *At Thimmapur*, there is the Birla farm of nearly 500 acres on the outskirts of Hyderabad city - at Thimmapur 22 miles on Mahaboobnagar Road.

(3) Birla have a farm in Phulwari Sharit, near Patna. Share croppers who had been cultivating it were evicted by the Birlas in 1970.

(4) Birlas Omali Estate is nearly 3,200 acres, held in the name of tea plantations in Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu.

(5) The Birla farm at Ropar, Punjab, is a 1,000 acre farm at Ropar. It was leased out to the Birlas at a nominal rental of Rs. 30 per acre. Of the 1000 acres leased out, nearly 656 acres belonged to 182 small farmers.

(6) Pipara Farm owned by the Birlas in the name of Gudh Sugar Mills, occupies 4,000 acres, of which 3,200 have been declared surplus under the ceiling Act but not taken possession of by the Government of United Provinces. This farm has

encroached upon 300 to 400 acres of *gaon* panchayat land.

This is not the end of the story of Birla's land empire - though it is enough for the present to show why the Birlas are not for land reforms.

Finally, let us look at one of the examples in relation to colonisation schemes which the Congress government have been implementing in various parts of the country, to understand how government is providing all facilities to the land-hungry monopolists, landlords, and high officials, to grab the land as possible and in the most fertile areas.

The colonisation scheme in Terai area in U. P. was formulated by the British government during the second world war. This scheme was meant exclusively for the settlement of the Pahari soldiers being within their ancestral homeland.

The Central Tractor Organisation went into action, and an area of four lakhs of acres of virgin fertile cultivable land was cleared of age-old impenetrable thick forests. But the original scheme of planned settlement of the Pahari-jawan and the needy poor remained on paper.

As P.C. Joshi, in National Herald of June 14, 1970 pertinently reveals : "What took place was just loot and grab, unmindful of official policies, in contravention of existing laws, and all this with the aid and connivance of pliable or corrupt officials and encouraged by ministerial leaders to whom nothing mattered except power, patronage and 'chanda'.

(1) Fairly easily, and quite soon after 'independence', high military officers, mostly from Punjab secured large land allotments. Here are a few instances of such 'land grab'.

- (a) Major General Chimai, approximately 4,000 acres.
- (b) Colonel Lal Singh of Patiala, approximately 300 acres.
- (c) Air Marshall Arjun Singh's family, approximately 1,000 acres.
- (d) Major Sandhu, former director of the Terai colonisation scheme, approximately 200 acres.

(2) If the retired military officers could so easily become big farmers, how could **the civilians** keep back? A large number of the U.P. government secretariat, at Lucknow, have managed to grab farms in the Terai, in the name of some one or the other in family. From the police, there are I. G. P.'s, S. P.'s Dy. S. P.'s in plenty, and any number of collectors, Dy. collectors, right down to tehsildars.

(3) Local top officials filled the gap. For example :

- (a) Former Commissioner of Kumaon Bowra's wife and brother got a farm in Bazpur area.
- (b) Former Nainital dy. commissioner, Ramrup Singh's son and others a farm near Kichcha.
- (c) Former transport commissioner, cane commissioner, registrar of co-operatives Chaurmani's family, got a farm in Khatima.

(4) Even foreign missionaries have secured farm allotments in the Terai which is part of our border region. They have made Terai their base and started farms, ostensibly for social service, but really to keep a-live contact with their agents in Nepal and collect as much information as possible about our defence position in the area.

- (a) Right on the Indo-Nepal border, between Tanakpur and Khatima, where we too have our military base, the US missionaries have two 'pointer' and 'strange' farms. Tanakpur is the main head for supplies to the defence outposts up above on the Chinese border.
- (b) In Bazpur, an Italian father has a 600 acres farm in the name of running a school and near it there is another missionary farm.
- (c) In the midst of thick forest, away from the main road, between Fatehpur and Patwadnagar, there is a catholic church in Loshu Chani. There are hardly any people around to listen to the message of Jesus, but it is an ideal, isolated spot for clandestine, conspiratorial, nefarious work.

The article in National Herald of June 21, 1970, pointedly

remarks that "if these foreign missionaries' farms are plotted on maps, they make a tell-tale chain".

(5) Among Sugar farms, Escort Farm and Prag Farm are the two foremost farms belonging to sugar mills, occupying thousands of acres. Prag farm, alone, occupying more than 6,000 acres, is constantly expanding its area in the name of cane production. This process of land grab which began in a small way in 1949 has been growing from year to year; these aggressive intruders have literally forced their way in, occupying all the fallow land they can and also seizing the existing small farms of the local people who could be bullied and terrorised.

Other than the sections already mentioned, the following groups of people too have extensive lands in these hill regions.

- (a) Scions of feudal families came to have independent farms of their own.
- (b) Contractors of Chandigarh, Delhi, and other big Punjab towns, to turn their plentiful black money into legal tender and thereby become respectable farmers.
- (c) The land-hungry Punjabi jat also readily came to grab an independent, bigger, plot in the Terai.

"The first task of the settlers was to deprive the simple, resourceless tribal cultivators of their small patches of land. Then they started to clear the forests with the help of cheap labour recruited from among the local landless labour. The timber from the forests brought them rich gains. The big farmers and companies, started large scale 'scientific' farming".

The following single instance gives the story of the entire area:

Among the land-grabbers in the area is a big farming company. The company had a knight of the British empire as its chairman, an honorary colonel of the army as managing director, a Minister of Punjab, a retired military officer and relatives of some top Punjab government officers as directors.

The company took about 10,000 acres of land on lease from a talukdar and started clearing the forests

with hired labour. Half of the land thus leased out was redistributed among the heirs, and relations of the directors and new leases were obtained. When the ceiling Act came, equally big chunks were transferred to its share holders and their relations.

A number of complaints were made about these happenings to the district Magistrate, the Commissioner, the Board of Revenue, the Revenue Minister, the Chief Minister, and other high officers of the U. P. Government; but so far no action has been taken, apparently because the directors and shareholders of the company are influential persons. Their influence at various levels of the administration in the state is revealed by the fact that about 80 acres of forests taken over by the forest department were restored to three daughters of one of the shareholders against the usual practice. The person concerned happened to be a high officer of the Punjab Government.

When such are the actualities, "the scare of Naxalbari type of revolt by the peasantry of U. P. is being raised by the supporters of the vested interests and those who want to suppress the poor trying to assert their rights. Recently, again, there was talk of 'Naxalbari' in the eastern districts of the state. What in fact had happened in the area were some feeble attempts by the landless peasants to occupy unoccupied land for cultivation. This was resented by big farmers. It not only created fear that an inquiry might reveal their own illegal seizures, but might also deprive them of the cheap labour they get by keeping large sections of the population landless. **The big farmers, anticipating police support, were the first to attack the landless. When the latter retaliated, the police rushed to establish law and order and forestall Naxalbari, by evicting the landless from the land they had occupied.** The police went through the usual routine of beating the landless, burning their huts, arresting them and prosecuting them under various charges of a serious nature."

Landlord gangsterism all over the country has grown in intensity. We have seen in general how land concentration is growing in the country. Illegal land occupation by the landlords and the powerful has been not only condoned by the Government, it has helped to legalise the illegal occupation. We have also noted

how government loans to the landlords and the implementation of panchayat raj has helped the landlords to become more powerful than they were in the past.

Meanwhile, a government, which calls itself democratic and proclaims its aim to be the establishment of socialist pattern of society, has been leading peasants by the nose for years and deceiving them by promises and delays.

A vast majority of the peasants, through memoranda, demonstrations, conferences, and every available legal means, have loudly and clearly proclaimed that landlordism is an injustice and robbery. Various land reforms committees, beginning with the Kumarappa Committee, have reasoned and declared that land distribution is the foundation for further progress of our economy. Ministerial pronouncements have been continuously promising land reforms in the interests of landless peasants, tenants, and small farmers.

Yet, wherever the peasants have agitated for land and against the illegal occupation of land by the landlords, both the government and the landlords are using all brutal methods to terrorise the people into submission. Even Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao is said to have stated that tenants and agricultural labour "in certain states were being treated just like negroes in South U. S. A. If they claimed any title to the land they were tilling, they are being beaten." (Economic Times, December 27, 1969).

Landlords have become brazen enough to use even lethal weapons, like guns, against the peasants and agricultural labourers. The government, instead of taking any legal action against the landlords, has on the other hand unleashed unheard-of terror against the mass of the people. Some thousands of tenants and landless peasants have been arrested and brought to trial. Revolutionaries are arrested in thousands, most often without any charge. Majority of them are not even produced in court for months, but are tortured in police stations, and hundreds are being shot without qualms of conscience.

To understand the present tension which is growing in the country side, the following few instances of landlords' terror tactics against landless labour in relation to certain land disputes should be noted. These are only a few examples out of hundreds that are happening day in and day out.

There has been landlord gangsterism in Basti villages in U. P. The staff correspondent of *Patriot*, writing from Lucknow, has in the course of an article on '*Communal Gangsterism in Basti Villages*' produced a few instances of excesses of "reactionary feudal elements" to terrorise the landless peasants who happen to be Harijans.

(1) Following land agitation in Pratappur village, Munesar, a Harijan was tortured by a former zamindar. The Harijan was kept hanging upside down for several hours. A complaint was lodged with the police but no action was taken.

(2) In Chaplan village ex-zamindars attacked the huts of eight Harijans and looted their grain. In this village, the zamindars have taken possession of large fallow land and are terrorising the Harijans to make them renounce their claims. Complaints to the police have failed to evoke any response.

(3) The land on the banks of Ghagra, cultivated by the Harijans, belongs to the village panchayats. But the ex-zamindars take 50 per cent share from the cultivators. In some cases the ex-zamindars have looted the whole crop of the peasants.

(4) In village Muraripur, ex-zamindars attacked Harijans when they refused to perform '*Begar*'.

(5) In Mujha area (the area between the rivers Ghagra and Minwer), which remains cut off from rest of the district for months, the conditions were worse. As all the village land had been taken over by the ex-zamindars, the farm labourers had to work for them for nothing more than one meal in 24 hours.

Most important of all, "**scores of reports have been lodged with the police all in vain.**" (*Patriot*, September 11, 1968).

Armed Landlords and their Gangs in Rajasthan

A high-level government enquiry committee was set up by the state government of Rajasthan in March 1970 to enquire into cases of irregular allotments and **benami** occupation of canal-irrigated areas of Rajasthan Canal, Ganga Canal, and Bhakra Project areas, after a long and bitter struggle for land by Ganganagar peasants. The setting up of this committee so infuriated the

landlords who had occupied thousands of acres of land, that they resorted to and employed every available device to frustrate the enquiry. Even the members of government appointed to the high level committee were threatened with dire consequences, should they go into the question of illegal occupation of land. The rich landlords have not hesitated to resort to kidnappings, torture, and shootings, to frighten the peasants from lodging complaints or appearing before the high-powered committee to give personal evidence. The rich landlords are able to organise goonda gangs, supply them with lethal weapons such as sten-guns, rifles, carbines, etc., not only to intimidate the landless rural poor but also the members of the committee.

On April 21, when the committee members were staying at the Anupgarh rest-house, they were surrounded by armed men and threatened that they would be finished off. This incident took place in the very presence of the Minister for colonisation, who happened to be the chairman of the committee.

A group of men armed with guns and led by notorious vested interests, like Gopiram, Maniram, Gurbuchan Singh, Niranjana Singh, etc., stood in front of the deputy commissioner's court and terrorised the applicants who were complaining against illegal occupation. Even some of the advocates were threatened.

At Suratgarh, itself, on the following day, Gurudeep Kaur, who had filed an application against a case of **benami** occupation of land by a rich land-holder was shot at, while she was drawing water from a well. A jeep full of goondas came, fired at her, and drove away. She escaped providentially.

A kisan worker, Bhajanlal, who had the courage to submit a written complaint before the high powered committee, when on his way to give personal evidence before the commission against two rich landholders who were reportedly cultivating 2,500 acres of **benami** land, was kidnapped on May 7, 1970, near Bikaner railway station by some rich landlords and tortured during his four-day captivity in a desolate decoit-infested area.

It is not at all surprising that landlords are defending their illegal occupation of lands with guns in hand. These landlords have usurped thousands of acres of land and are cultivating them with tractors and other mechanical implements.

For example, Padmashri Chandidan Warad of Warunda has in his possession about 6,100 bighas of benami land under different false names of cultivators. The vast estate is scattered in 16 villages.

Maniram Panjan of village Seeto has more than 4,000 acres of land of his own other than vast areas of illegal occupation.

S. S. P. leader, Mahadev Gupta, who is a member of the high powered commission has said in a statement to the Press that "These persons [meaning rich landlords] are running a parallel government of their own. The high powered committee had, therefore, recommended that all areas in possession of these **benamis** should be seized and special police force posted in the area for the protection of those who field complaints against **benamis**."

Mahadev Gupta further said, "I am convinced that it is not possible to free the land from these rich **benamis** and allot it to the landless by the normal government process. forcible seizure of land by organising the landless to meet the armed attack of the rich landlords effectively is the only way out." (Patriot).

Police Rule in Ganganagar District of Rajasthan

Leaders of the CPI, CPM and the SSP, have in a memorandum to Chief Minister Sukhadia and Home Minister D. L. Vyas alleged that "The police is resorting to atrocities on political workers, to serve the interests of big landlords, feudal elements, smugglers, and henchmen of some ministers."

On August 27, Tara Singh was severely beaten by the police till he became unconscious. When a villager objected to this, he was also assaulted with canes by the police. Later in the evening, Tara Singh was handcuffed and paraded bare-footed in Anupgarh town "At many places in the towns, henchmen of the police threw dust on his face and he was insulted in front of the shop of a big landlord, who was accused by Left parties of having illegally usurped land in the Rajasthan Canal area in the name of landless persons.

When the state CPI Secretary, Rama Nanda Agarwal, MLA, SSP leader Kedarnath, MLA, district SSP Secretary Mahadev Prasad, district Kisan Sabha President and CPM leader Sheopal Singh, went to the Anupgarh police station, they were not allowed

to meet Tara Singh.

The memorandum reported that as many as 33 murders and other heinous crimes were committed during August alone, by landlords and their gangsters (Patriot, September 24, 1970).

Landlords and the government are on warpath against agricultural labour and small peasant :

(1) Landless evicted in Assam : Nearly 7,000 landless labourers who had occupied and cultivated 70 thousand bighas of cultivable wasteland under a forest reserve, in north Kamru district in Assam, have been forcibly evicted by the government in November - December of 1970.

It was reported that the houses of these rural poor have been burnt down. Standing crop - paddy, jute, and other crops were destroyed. The value of the crop destroyed is estimated at about Rs. one crore.

The evicted peasants were even physically assaulted and a large number of them arrested.

Earlier, a large number of landless peasants were evicted from another reserve under Nalbari sub-division of the same district (New Age, December 6, 1970).

(2) Landlord shoots at peasants : In a bid to retain their illegal occupation of Ghair Mazrua lands and to evict the share croppers from these holdings, the landlords in different parts of Bihar state have mounted violent attacks on poor peasants and landless labourers.

In Warisnagar, in Darbhanga district, a notorious landlord Ram Bhagat opened fire on peasants, from inside his house, while several thousand poor peasants and agricultural workers were returning after occupying a plot of their Mazrua land. Landlord Ram Bhagat was trying to re-grab the Ghair Mazrua land which was occupied by the poor peasants. Ten persons sustained bullet injuries as a result of the firing. All of them have been admitted to the Darbhanga hospital.

Even though the magistrate and the police were present on the spot, **no immediate action was taken against the landlord**

when he and his men opened fire on the peasants.

Though the Government is aware of the fact that the landlords in the state have collected a large number of fire arms and ammunition to attack the peasants, it has failed to seize those arms and take action against them. (What else should the peasants do except confiscate the arms from the landlords?) (New Age, September 21, 1971).

(3) Land struggle volunteer murdered in police custody : Ram Kishore, a 17-year-old landless labourer and an activist of U. P. Khet Mazdoor Sabha was arrested on August 29 from his house at the instigation of local landlords in Mahagaon village of Puramufti district and tortured and murdered inside the Puramufti police station.

Ram Kishore's brother, Dakhi Prasad, states in his letter to the Chief Minister that when he visited the police station, on August 30, the station officer informed him that his brother would be '*challaned*' the next day ; when he went to the court the next day to get him out on bail, he did not find his brother there; when again he went to the police station the next day he was informed that his brother was sent to Naini jail. The following day when he went all the way to Naini jail, he was informed that no such person had been kept in that jail. Again on September 4, he went to Puramufti police station, to find the dead body of his brother.

It was clear that Ram Kishore, who was a Harijan by caste, had been murdered at the instance of landlords who could not tolerate a Harijan political worker in their area.

(4) Gujarat Harijans evicted : Some Harijan families of Giraj village in Junagadh district in Gujarat had acquired some lands for cultivation. But the landlords belonging to higher castes were not ready to allow them to cultivate the lands. They started to harass them, and finally with the help of anti-social elements the lands of the Harijan families were forcibly occupied. After two years, the Mamlatdar decided the case in favour of the Harijans ordering that the lands should be handed over to them.

Despite the order of the Mamlatdar, the Harijans could not get the lands for cultivation. On the other hand, they were threatened that, if they did not leave the village within three days, they would be wiped out. When the help of the police was sought,

they were advised by the police official that it would be better for them to leave the village, with the result, ultimately 150 Harijans including women and children had to evacuate the village.

Thus distribution of government land to the landless is a farce designed to deceive the poor. All over the country the most fertile land has been allotted mostly to government officials, ruling party members, and to landlords. Poor and landless peasants occupying these lands were forcibly evicted to make room for this gentry.

In these confrontations between the poor and the rich, we witness instances of a scene of brutalities enacted by the non-violent, truth loving, god fearing, socialist regime under the brilliant leadership of the most popular Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. It is reported that complaints to the police against landlord gangsterism has evoked no response. On the other hand, the police, too, have shown themselves to be part and parcel of landlord gangsterism. Even an SSP leader was forced to announce : "I am convinced that it is not possible to free the land from these rich *benamis* and allot it to the landless by the normal Government process. Forcible seizure of land by organising the landless to meet the armed attack of the rich landlords effectively is the only way out."

The truth that "*power grows out of the barrel of the gun*" is being forcibly taught to the landless labourers and poor peasants by such bitter experiences all over the country.

Historical experience and the objective conditions of today, including the policies implemented by the ruling party proves again and again that land reforms can be honestly implemented only when the rural poor are organised to take courage into their hands and distribute the land amongst themselves by force.