REVOLUTIONARY PEASANTS

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PREFACE.

In the large areas of the world, peasants are astir with a new spirit of hope and adventure. They are no longer indifferent to their old shackles of feudalism or the new instruments of exploitation created by Capitalism. They are in revolt against Capitalism, Imperialism and Feudalism. Contrary to the expectations of Western Democrats and Communists, they are not freeing themselves from feudalism only to fall a prey to Capitalist exploitation, nor are they so blind to modern world political trends as to accept the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to free themselves from the clutches of Capitalism.

Modern peasantry have a positive ideology of their own; they want to regain effective power in modern society and control over the modern State. They no longer think in terms of peasant kings and kingdoms. They do appreciate the high state their forefathers had enjoyed in the ancient village commonwealths. But they know they cannot restablish or recapture the bygone past; they wish to achieve the most democratic society possible under modern conditions. They know that to think in terms of establishing their own peasant regimes, democratic or dictatorial, is both wrong and unwise. They have learnt this lesson from the Soviet experience, that to seek to establish a one-class dictatorship is to do irreparable wrong to the other toiling classes; to think of converting all other toiling classes into their own predominant class is an impossibility and to ignore the legitimate yearnings, for their proper share in power and responsibility, of all other classes is to retard the total progress of all the toiling masses. Therefore, they have come to evolve their most progressive and democratic political ideal—the democratic partnership of all the peasants, workers, artisans, professionals and intellectuals. That is the Indian ideal of demo-

cratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru and as adopted by the Kisan Congress, Youth Congress and Students Congress. The Communists of the South Eastern European nations have been forced, by the strong peasant movements, to realise the need for the same democratic partnership, although they call their move a 'National Front.' But the class-conscious, and politically-minded peasants all over the world must insist upon their own effective leadership in any political combination that stands up for this great ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. Such an insistence becomes inevitable, if modern peasantry should avoid the fate of the Balkan peasants—who are being split up and sandwiched between the all-powerful Communistic proletariat, on the one side and intellectuals and professionals on the other—and also the fate of the Chinese peasants who are being led, by their own Red Government, into the embraces of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But modern peasants owe much to two very opposite modern forces; that is, Capitalism and Sovietism. Capitalism has forced them through the machinations of its instrument of of World Markets, first to open their eyes to the modern menace of world-wide economic crisis and then to realise the need to organise themselves in sheer self-defence as well as to think in terms of modern economics. Sovietism has shattered whatever inferiority complex peasants might have had about their right to and capacity for playing their part in the governance of their countries and also their pressing need to capture political power. Yet our peasants are not making as great progress as the proletariat and professionals and intellectuals either in developing their organisations or in achieving their share in political and economic power in modern state and society. It is the duty of those who are peasants and who are interested in their movement, to investigate the causes for their comparative weakness in modern world politics.

We find that peasants are easily being way-laid by Liberals or Radicals or Democrats who generally stand for the interests of professionals and intellectuals and urban people or by the Communists or Socialists who also stand for the urban proletariat and their associates in modern industrialism, that is, the engineers and mechanics. Both these two sets of politicians offer to organise our peasants and even to lead them along revolutionary channels towards the achievement of democratic rights and institutions and capture of power for the masses. But they take care to see that peasants are kept as only subordinate partners in their political combinations and that in the democracy of their conception, the professionals and intellectuals, the proletariat and mechanics and other urban masses provide the major portion of leadership.

Why is it, that except in Denmark—where the peasants' party had come to form the Cabinet (1946) but only for one year-peasants have failed to take the lead in forming the ministries in their respective countries ? Even in those Balkan countries where there used to be powerful peasant parties before the war, they have come to be disrupted and even declared unlawful by the so-called 'National Front' governments which are being propped up by Soviet Russia.

One thing is becoming clear ; that somehow, peasants are failing in the modern political-cum-industrial world for want of some essential ally or allies. It is our duty to help our peasants to ally themselves with the artisans and proletariat and also with the professionals and intellectuals whose numbers and influence are fast increasing.

Our peasants have also to develop suitable institutions social, economic and political—among themselves which are capable of engaging the attention, affection and activities of a growing number of their own intellectuals who need higher

opportunities for displaying their leadership. What is happening today is that most of the well-educated peasant youths leave agriculture and the village in preferring industrial and commercial employment and town life, because agriculture is unable to offer them as high emoluments and as big opportunities for the exercise of their qualities of leadership and enterprise as the more highly organised industries, commerce and professions ; Unless this wasting process is arrested, our villages and peasantry will soon come to be denuded of almost all their enterprising and educated youths possessing qualities of leadership and initiative ; the villages will then become the sinks for 'mediocrity. Indeed, most of the present day urban and industrial leaders and intellectuals have hailed from villages and are of peasant stock. But they seek to serve the urban interests while rural interests have come to take a back place in their minds.

We have to devise progressive but peasant-wise institutions and organisations through which we can minimise this drain of rural peasant intellectuals to the towns and retain such intellectuals and people of ability and initiative in our villages and for serving our peasants. It will not be enough to seek to inspire them with the ambition of serving our villages and peasants for the sake of service and for achieving the fulfilment of the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. Such an ideal of public work and service can inspire and engage the attention of only a small section of our intellectuals of peasant stock and rural origin.

If peasant economy is to afford competitive and effective opportunities for educated and ambitious peasant youths and intellectuals, it must bend all its resources in building up co-operative societies for almost every branch of its activities and develop a pyramidal integrated national structure, in which more and more peasant youths can find employment on salaries

and allowances comparable to the emoluments obtainable in urban employments and through which they can, at the same time, serve and advance the interests of the peasantry.

One other benefit that peasants can derive from the organisation of such co-operatives is that their own youths and leaders who desire the fullest scope for the exercise and display of their capacities for initiative, organisation and leadership can be provided the widest opportunities in organising, managing and developing these various co-operative ventures connected intimately with agricultural operations. Since they have to organise and lead peasants in and through these co-operatives and their success or failure will depend upon the degree and quality of of service they render to peasants through their activities in the co-operatives, such leaders will have to be continually loyal to the peasant commun ty. The farmers' co-operatives in the U.S.A., Australia, Canada and New Zealand have thus provided the local farmers very able and experienced leaders who have made it their prime duty to think constantly of the work of the advancement of the peasants. In African countries too, the first source of modern leadership is provided by the co-operative marketing societies organised by the cocoa and coffee and tea growers. In India, China and Japan too, quite a large number of peasants have found their first opportunities for leadership in co-operatives. Indeed it is because Danish farmers have developed such co-operative organisations, retained so many of their own intellectuals in the employ of these co-operatives and thus achieved effective co-partnership between themselves and intellectuals of peasant origin, that they have achieved not only a Co-operative Commonwealth in the economic sphere but also a peasant Cabinet in political life. It is also because the pre-war governments of Balkan countries were afraid of the great accession of economic strength and political leadership that their local peasant parties were deriving from their co-operatives that they used to obstruct their development.

One of the biggest weaknesses of the modern world peasantry is that they have been unable to mobilise their strength for quick, concerted and decisive strike action in the same way in which the proletariat and the professionals have been able to do. Strike has not yet become a weapon in the hands of peasants as it has in the case of the urban, proletarian and professional, groups. It is not because the services rendered by the peasants do not hold a key position in the modern capitalist or Soviet dispensation but because peasants have not been able to learn how to wield and turn that key position to good account.

Why is it so ? Because peasant economy dependent as it is, upon millions of unorganised peasants with little or no scope for concentration of their productive efforts in a concerted manner, has not yet enabled the peasants to utilise the modern weapon of Strike. But wherever and whenever peasant economy has been supplemented and strengthened by co-operative organisations, the productive efforts of peasants have come to achieve a qualitative transformation and therefore a new power. Co-operative peasants have become a menace to Capitalism. Peasant co-operatives help peasants to achieve concentrated and effective economic power under a concerted and competent democratic leadership. They can resist the pressure, economic and social, of the urban interests and their consumers ; they can also stand up to the Capitalistic or proletarian governments. In fact they can come to think of wielding the modern weapon of Strike. Only peasant co-operatives can hope to offer effective resistance to modern governmental requisitioning and compulsory procurement of agricultural produce at arbitrary and unremunerative price levels. They alone can reinstate the modern peasantry in their former state when they had complete autonomy and power to effect crop planning and even to stop production of any or all crops for one or more years, in one or more regions and fix the price levels for their produce and the scales of remuneration that all their groups and classes of tillers

were to get in their society. Hence the duty of every peasant intellectual and organiser to promote and to build up their power through co-operatives to organise strikes on the food, fibre and oil-seeds fronts.

As things are, most of the peasants are so much engrossed with the never-ending and pitiful activities and responsibilities on their small holdings that they have little or no inclination or opportunity to study and attain an adequate knowledge of the modern conditions of life that shape their environment and living. They are slaves to and also victims of the incalculable vagaries of nature and the vicissitudes of seasons. Therefore, their worries are never-ending. They get no opportunity either to enjoy care-free leisure or to pursue cultural attainments. Hence the incapacity and consequent failure of most peasants to take active interest in politics and to capture their proper share of political power. Agricultural co-operatives offer the greatest chance for peasants to insure themselves against the failure of crops, cattle, epidemics and vagaries of nature. They can also relieve them of their daily worry over the fate of their crops by helping them to achieve co-operative insurance against the vicissitudes of seasons and epidemics.

Only co-operatives can help peasants to achieve the same amount of freedom from individual risks and responsibilities as is now being enjoyed by the industrial proletariat and also by industrialists and capitalists. And such relief from the demoralising worry that today is the main feature of an ordinary peasant's life is the first pre-requisite for the achievement of mental freedom by our peasantry from the perennial risks attendant upon peasant economy. Such freedom can be best assured through agricultural co-operatives and the peasant masses who come to achieve such emancipation from the daily worries and fears incidental to peasant economy can afford to play their ablest and most effective role in political life and attain both strength

and statesmanship in the political and economic life of the country. Hence the need for all those who believe in Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj to work most enthusiastically for the progressive co-operatisation of agriculture. Indeed co-operatisation of agriculture in all its aspects is the biggest revolutionary instrument in the hands of modern peasantry to help them to attain and sustain their fullest share in political and economic institutions and in the State power.

A conscious effort has to be made by all those class-conscious peasants and others interested in peasantry to bring about an effective and growing co-partnership between peasants, professionals, intellectuals and others with business activities. In addition, an effort has also to be made, as in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries, to provide adult education and agricultural training to the peasant youth in some such special educational institutions as the Danish Folk Schools and Agricultural High Schools. These have to be supplemented by special schools for imparting training, organising and running co-operative societies.

All these can only prepare the peasant youths for the next step, in their education and preparation for a political career. That next step is the provision of political education, on a definitely 100 per cent peasant political lines, in such special institutions as the Indian Peasants' Institute at Nidubrolu. Therein peasants' youths have to be taught the principles of modern world economics and politics from the viewpoint of peasants who are out to achieve the fulfilment of their ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj and who wish to achieve parity in political and economic spheres of life with all other classes of toilers and who believe in the progressive and eternal nature of their own peasant class.

The days are long gone by when peasants had to depend

upon such unorganised, indisciplined and spontaneous mass revolts as had taken place in history and as are even now being experienced in certain parts of India—for instance the Bhils Revolt in Dahanu in Bombay Presidency in January 1947—for the beginning of their revolution. The past failure of such revolts and their present ineffectiveness ought to be enough warning against peasants' dependence upon such methods. Mere reckless burning down of houses, stores, godowns, etc., of landlords and money-lenders, the killing of a few of them and the destruction of a few of their records, as had been the practice in the past, cannot solve even a fraction of the problems of modern peasants. Capitalism and Imperialism have created such tremendous world-wide problems that they can be faced and tackled not by local and spontaneous efforts but only by nation-wide, or even world-wide revolutionary action, undertaken in a concerted and well-disciplined manner by peasant organisations which can depend upon the loyal support of their peasants in their respective countries. These are times when peasants have to organise themselves on a national and international scale and brace themselves up to face the complicated problems of prices, tariffs and exchange policies and international trade and monetary schemes. Therefore, peasants need a new type of leadership, capable of comprehending and coming to grips with such problems. The requisite leadership can be made available only if our peasants develop their co-operatives, provide their own youth to work them and gain the necessary training in leadership and knowledge of the technical aspects of modern industry, trade and commerce through the co-operative organisation of agriculture.

If only the peasants had been organised on a world scale and their political ideology of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj had been developed and popularised and their political capacity for action had been institutionalised by the formation of peasant political parties during the inter-war period in all or most of the

countries of the world, at least to the same extent as the proletarian parties, could Soviet Russia have succeeded in disrupting and even destroying the peasant parties and unions of the countries of South-Eastern Europe? Could the nationalist movements of Turkey, Arabian countries, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan India, Burma and the South-Eastern Asiatic countries and China have so fully prevented the transference of political power into the hands of their peasants as well as they have so far done? Hence the urgency of the need of the world peasantry for the development of their class consciousness, their peasant unions and the peasant political parties

We thus close this study on this note of hope that the modern peasant has not only provided himself with his International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) but has also been provided with the highly powerful and progressive World Food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O.). This F. A. O. is likely to play the same progressive role in the peasant world as the I. L. O. has done in the labour world.

Let us hope that the modern youth of our peasants will no longer drift into the Communist bye-lanes or the blind alley of proletarian dictatorship but will enthusiastically embrace the growing revolutionary peasant movement and its co-operatives and its Peasants Congress and its ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

I can assure all enthusiasts of the peasant movement that they need never come to suffer from the same sense of frustration that the Serbian peasant intellectual Pribichevich is suffering. The Indian Peasants' Institute which was inaugurated in 1934 by Mahatma Gandhi was flowered into the Indian Kisan Mazdoor Praja Vidya Pith with its projections in the kisan schools and citizenship colleges in many provinces.

Hundreds of peasants who have graduated from these centres are today winning Indian peasants for the progressive Socialist cause of the peasant way of the East as contrasted with the Socialism of the proletarian way of the West. They are able to stand on their own feet and withstand the erosive ideological offensive of the Communist Party and its disastrous efforts to disrupt the ranks of peasants and form rival peasant unions. They are out today, to help Indian peasants to play their independent and competent role in the national anti-imperialist revolution. They have even been taking the lead in organising a united front of all peasantry and all other toiling masses in all colonial countries. Hence the formation through their initiative of the Colonial and Coloured Peoples' Freedom Front with its contacts with the Pan-African Congress on one side and the Pan-Asian Conference on the other.

The plan for this thesis was sketched out in 1943 while I was confined in the Amraoti jail in C. P. Subsequently I have been able to add much to the original thesis and bring it up-to-date.

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CHAPTER I

PEASANTS NEGLECTED.

Historians have somehow confined their attention to the dynastic rivalries and struggles for power between feudal chiefs, and princes and neglected woefully the attempts, made from time to time, by the peasants and working classes to come into their own. They have been so much under the spell cast by the princely and priestly order and under the mistaken impression that only the upper classes, intellectuals and professionals mattered in the life of nations that the ideals and aspirations and the efforts and struggles of the peasant masses of different countries to gain their due place in society have rarely received sufficient attention.

Peasants were the first among the various orders of society to bring social organisation into existence, to give society an order and a plan and shape by founding the villages and the polity of the Panchayats. They, it was, who had always formed the democratic backbone of the village republics. They, indeed, were the architects of the village polity which formed the model for the later city-states of Greece. They were responsible for the highly ingenious and tolerant federal conception of social democracy, which the late European political philosophers like Gierke and the Indian political architect Mahatma Gandhi have praised so greatly. This tolerant federalism implied that every race and tribe and practitioners of every craft, art and occupation could form themselves into independent social units, each with its republican and elected leaders and its own law to govern the social and economic organisation and the

rights and responsibilities of its members *vis-a vis*-their caste or craft guild or Panchayat. Under this dispensation, every Panchayat based on craft or race was given functional representation in the Village Republican Panchayat and thus, a plural society was built up. It is typical of this democratic but orderly governance that both in Europe and Asia, the social order of the peasant society should have partaken of the same tolerant and essentially democratic and federal political principles and methods. And yet, our historians have bestowed too little thought to these great achievements of our peasant masses of the world.

The traditional historians have all along contented themselves with the narration of the personal, family, social and economic forces on their political plane, as between the princes and the priests who had imposed themselves upon the democratic peasants. The glamour attached to the achievements of such conquerors and dynasties, such as Alexander and Napolean, the Manchus and the Moghals, has blinded them to the creative and progressive achievements of the masses. The irony of it all is that though the theory of the Divine Right of Kings and priests to rule had long ago been exploded and the peoples of many a nation had shed blood on several battle fields in succession before they could shake themselves free from their fascination for Royalty and its Divine Rights, our historians do not seem to have liberated themselves from their fascination for the princely and priestly order. Hence, their unpardonable neglect of the part played by the peasants and the proletariat in the world's history.

Once they had lost their power and feudalism had imposed itself on them, the peasants everywhere came to be degraded into slavery, serfdom, and peonage in the African Reserves and Indian Hills and kept down by the growing pressure of economic and social oppression and political loss of rights. In vast areas of

the world, even their Village Panchayats were deprived of their rights ; their land ownership, collective and individual, was denied and their very right to regulate their own social life was abrogated. Only in India and China did they succeed in retaining their fundamental Panchayat Democracy for many centuries and in preventing the all-enveloping feudalism from disrupting their social and civic rights of the village.

But it took the peasant masses a long time to recover from their political torpor and religious stupor and to begin to cherish again political ambitions on a national scale. The translation of the Bible and the Protestantism of the nobles opened their eyes to their right to rebel and to strike for power on a national scale. But their fight for a breathing space within the suffocating feudal regime was so difficult that in Europe, there could be no successful or powerful nation-wide struggle of European peasants for political supremacy. The peasants of Europe, therefore, had to wait until the Russian proletariat triumphed to give wings to their political ambitions. In India, thanks to the long-standing democratic practices of the Panchayat and the early downfall of the consecrated princely monopoly of power, the Andhra Kisan clans gained and retained supremacy in South India for six centuries beginning from the eleventh and the twelfth and lost it finally only when the Muhgals, Maharattas and the British came to conquer them and to drive them once again to confine themselves to their villages and lands. Even in Northern India, peasants of different clans and of different provinces were in revolt at different times and achieved political power for a time.

Throughout these historical periods, there has been a dearth of political philosophers to espouse the cause of peasants, workers and other toilers and their right and need for political power, social and economic freedom and equality. The French revolutionary thinkers and encyclopedists served the cause of the

rising bourgeoisie but could not stir or awaken the broad masses. It was only since the advent of Marxism that a definite and organised effort has come to be made to help the toilers to regain their power in modern society. Unfortunately, Marx came to the wrong conclusion that only the proletariat could be revolutionary and progressive and that peasants, artisans and small traders and professionals could only play a counter-revolutionary role. And so, European Socialists and Communists have ever since neglected their duties towards the non-proletarian masses and have even gone out of their way to frown at and obstruct the growth of peasants' political, economic or social organisations and movements. Fortunately for the world peasants, the Indian peasants have been free from this retrograde and anti-peasant thraldom of European Socialism and have come to be inspired and led into political action by their dynamic and overwhelmingly powerful National Congress and its leader, Mahatma Gandhi.

Once again world peasantry have begun to think in terms of capturing or regaining their share of power in the various sectors of modern society. They have learnt their lessons from the experience of Russia. They do not want any longer to be ruled by others, even if they be the friendly-inclined proletariat or the democratic-minded professionals or the liberal-minded middle-classes. They do not wish to establish their own dictatorship. They want to achieve their share of power through a democratic partnership with the proletariat, artisans and professionals. That our peasants should have been brought to the realisation of their need for national political leadership on the basis of their ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj is itself a revolution.

Let us now begin to piece together the various revolutionary attempts made, consciously and unconsciously, by peasants of different climes to regain their lost political and economic free-

dom and social democracy, and see how at long last, the peasant masses of the world have progressed in their ideology and technique of revolutionary struggles.

Now that peasants, proletariat and all the other toiling people are trying to come into their own all over the world, it is useful to cast a glance at some of the revolutions and struggles that our ancestors had engineered or taken part and see if there are any lessons to be drawn and inspiration and confidence to be derived from their study. We can but try to get a bird's-eye view of some of those peasants' struggles which have left some mark on the pages of history and we have to await another opportunity for a fuller study of them. Studies like the " Seven days that shook England " are needed to enliven the stirring events of the past and recapture for us a glimpse of the aims, ideals, thoughts, passions and achievements of the great leaders and loyal but heroic rank and file of peasant fighters who had risen against the many indignities that pressed them down. To form the background to our picture of the modern peasant and his aims and ideals, to give the lie direct to anti-peasant prejudices of the Communists and Socialists of the European persuasion and to indicate that peasants are revolutionary in their own right, we are giving this cursory and unadorned idea of the revolutions and struggles of world peasantry.

Many able historians have pictured in much detail the struggles and revolutions of the proletariat and great men like Marx, Engels, Lenin, have drawn inspired and learned lessons from them. As M. Pribichevich complains " Peasants had no historian of their own ". As peasants' ill-luck would have it, none of the famous Socialists of the West has thought it necessary to dispel the widely prevalent thick mist of Socialistic and proletarian prejudices against peasants and keep them better informed about the various revolutionary efforts made by the world's peasantry and warn them about the latent but illimitable

revolutionary resources of peasants. On the other hand, "most sources of history about the peasant up to the 19th century were written by nobles and priests for nobles and priests". (Living Space p. 200). It is also difficult to gather authentic and full information about their revolutionary struggles. But they have left a glorious and infectious trail of heroic deeds, inspiring ideals and unappeased but human yearnings that spread an aura at the dawn of the present peasant era of the modern world.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN PEASANTS' STRUGGLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

On a close study of history we find that the Chinese and Indian masses were alive to their rights at a very early stage of the pre-Christian period and that great thinkers and rulers like Lord Buddha, Confucius and Asoka had paid special attention to the needs of the toiling masses for democratic institutions and economic justice. For instance, Confucius inaugurated a number of reforms favouring peasants. "He fixed the prices of goods and used State revenues for the development of trade. Communications were improved, roads and bridges being repaired ....." The power of the nobles was curbed ; the common people were freed from oppression and all men declared equal in the eyes of the law ! All this happened in about 500 B. C.

Indian history is replete with many paradoxical developments and cross-currents. Even while many republican regimes were assuring democratic life for large sections of the masses in certain parts of the country during and prior to the times of Lord Buddha, there were monarchical regimes also and a conservative order prevailing therein. Many of the evils to which we have become familiarised by the caste system used to prevail in those areas of monarchical order. Such reactionary ideas as the Divine Right of Kings and the indispensability of monarchy and the Divine Right of upper castes, especially the Brahmins and Kshatriyas to monopoly in statecraft and power in the state, gained much sway over the ruling sections of the people of those areas and the ordinary masses had obediently to accept the retrogressive social order.

Buddhist Era.—Lord Buddha declared all men and women equal in the eyes of God and Justice and tabooed all caste distinctions and opened the way for democratic progress; the general unrest and discontent prevailing among his contemporary masses against the growing stratification of Hindu social and economic classes must have considerably been strengthened by these revolutionary doctrines of such a noble preacher. His teachings were a direct challenge to that social order and its fundamental conceptions. Although Lord Buddha did not launch any attack upon the princely order of his day, his very dismissal of the supremacy of the caste system, his refusal to accept the divine origin of the brahminical ceremonies and conceptions and his democratic invitation to all the masses, men and women, high and low into his order and his readiness to treat them all equally opened the flood gates of revolution against the orthodox brahminical oligarchical social order.

It was a result of that social revolution thus initiated by Lord Buddha, that the Mauryan Emperors of Pataliputra, who could boast of only peasant origin, came to rule over the largest part of India despite the brahminical prejudices against such Sudras —people of the untutored masses—ever coming to rule. That Buddhist social revolution opened a glorious chapter of social advancement of the masses in most parts of India. And for well-nigh six centuries the various tribal masses, the erstwhile slaves, semi-slaves and agricultural people, including landed and landless peasants, shook themselves free from their age-old and stunting conceptions of inferiority to the upper classes who ruled by the sword and their sacred books. The masses began to exercise the fullest rights of citizenship in their village commonwealths and the local district and regional commonwealths.

The Ashokan edicts make it clear that this regeneration of the masses was a widespread and a nation-wide phenomenon.

Ashoka, the noble emperor, inaugurated the famous social reconstruction programme and inculcated noble ideals or family and social life of the masses. He led the way for subsequent ages, by recognising the duties of the State towards the masses. He softened many of the harsh, anti-peasant decrees of his grandfather, Chakravarthi Chandragupta and enjoined upon his civil servants to look to the interests of the masses. By popularising the conception of eight ways of perpetuating spiritual progeny, he laid the foundations for the well-known Indian tradition of everyone trying to render some public service, from the planting of a tree to the construction of a tank, a watershed or a rest-house, for the poor.

The Mahabharata gives many instances of mass revolts against tyrants ; learned discussions about the rights or wrongs of regicide, the duties of the State towards the citizen, especially the peasants and so on. A separate and careful study is needed to gain a full idea of the place of the toiling masses during the five or six millenniums before Christ. This Indian epic is full of realistic accounts of numerous political struggles and discussions in which the peasants played no insignificant role. But with the fall in the purity of the professions and practices of the Buddhist monks and the growth of an oligarchical order within their ranks and their monasteries, the Brahminical order gained the upper hand and the Buddhistic republics and democratic social order lost their power. Thus, again, the toiling masses of India were condemned to a very low and powerless status.

Village Republics.—Indians and Chinese had been enjoying their village republican life for centuries before empires came to super-impose themselves upon them. For at least a few millenniums before the advent of the Dravidians and Aryans into India, the Indian masses were guided in their day-to-day activities mostly by the village commonwealths. That these republics used to combine and fight against any invaders

is proved by th stiff resistance offered by them and the Jats to Alexander the Great, a comparatively recent historical figure in oriental history, on his return from India through Sind. That all the heads of peasants' families were then known as Rajahs, is shown by the practices prevailing in the days of Lord Buddha. The peasants' rights to their holdings, the permanency of their tenure and their inheritance of communal rights were recognised at an early age as indicated by the Manu Dharma Sastra and Kautilya's Artha Sastra.

Six Centuries of Indian Kisan Raj :—From the downfall of Buddhism right up to the rise of Veera (Heroic) Saivism of Basava, the Prime Minister of the Kalachuryas of Maharashtra (Karnatak), the Divine Right of the two upper castes of the Brahminical order held sway over the minds of the Indian masses. Only those foreign conquerors and their followers and such of the aggressive Indian clans as had won the goodwill of the Brahmin sages and got themselves consecrated by the Brahmin priests as Kshatriyas could establish themselves as ruling princes in different areas in addition to the old order of kings.

But the challenge of Veera Saivism to the old Brahminical caste gradations again reopened the prospects for the masses to regain some control over the State, at least over certain areas of the country. Even then, the adventurous and enterprising sections of the kisan clans and their leaders could only manage to become at best commanders-in-chief and Prime Ministers of a number of kings of the local principalities. Whenever there arose the need for a ruling prince for any old kingdom or a new kingdom created from out of a portion of an existing kingdom due to any popular or oligarchical revolt, efforts were generally being made by the leaders of the revolts, most of whom happened to be the chiefs of their respective kisan clans, to graft some scions of the approved Kshatriya families of the neighbouring ruling princes.

But the famous Palnad* war of the eleventh century between two Kshatriya rival claimants for supremacy in the Andhra kingdom proved to be the best opportunity for the Andhra kisan clans to discover their own latent abilities not only for military leadership but also for statecraft. The ruling princes and their armies of all the kingdoms in the whole of South India took part in that war. On either side the real leaders of the armies were actually the leaders of the rival kisan clans, the Naidu and Reddi. The end of the war witnessed the end of the Kshatriya regime and the birth of the kisan's sense of self-confidence and their supremacy in the state and society.

Brahma Naidu, the Prime Minister of one of the rival factions, embraced Veera Vaishnavism and abolished all caste distinctions among the kisan clans, removed untouchability and made a Harijan, kannama Naidu, his Commander-in-Chief and emerged victorious out of that great battle. Nagamma, the Reddi kisan woman, became the Prime Minister of the other faction, fought bravely in the war, herself led the armies in a battle and died fighting on the battle front. Thus she laid the foundations for the later active participation of kisan women in both the arts of war and statecraft.

Once they thus shook themselves free from their traditional notion that they had no right to rule, that the Kshatriyas alone could rule as of Divine Right and that Brahmins alone could counsel the princes, and also realised their ability to rule and to fight and that their rights arose out of their own abilities and achievements and not from Shastras or Divine Rights, a new chapter of power and progress opened itself for the Andhra kisan masses.

The Palnad wars ended in the founding of the Warrangal*

*Palnad is now a talk in Guntur District—(Andhra).

* Warrangal is in the Nizam's Dominions.

Kakatiya House of Rulers, all of whom were of kisan origin; their ministers and Prime Ministers and all their army chiefs were kisans. They did not even take the trouble to win the goodwill of their local Brahmin sages and get themselves consecrated by them as Kshatriyas. They had sufficient self-assurance to go ahead with their might of arms and statecraft, and bring the whole of the south under their sway. For nearly 300 years, they succeeded in keeping off the Moslem foreign invaders from Northern India and assuring peace and prosperity to the country south of the Godavari river.

During the glorious period, kisan clans put on the throne the famous woman ruler Rudramma as their queen. It was during her 50 years regime that Marco Polo came to South India and bore witness to the prosperity of the country and the high esteem in which she was held by the masses as well as the mercantile community right up to China. She had the gift of statesmanship. She gave her four daughters in marriage to the sons of the four important kisan clans, thus binding them all to the State in loyalty and interests. She was a great leader in the battlefield too.

Telugu, the language of the masses, and its prose in its spoken form, came to be encouraged by these rulers and their army chiefs and leaders. Many non-Brahmins and kisan writers found favour with their court and the masses had once again a chance to play their fullest role in the high realms of social and political life.

But unfortunately for them, the kisan clans were soon to become jealous of each other. They began to fight among themselves. The Kakatiya court picked up quarrels with the other Kisan ruling clans of Central India with its capital in Devgiri, the modern Daulatabad. Due to their internal schisms and their differences with their neighbouring State of Devgiri,

the Delhi Moslem rulers were able to break down their unity and pierce into their political and military defences.

But the kisans of Andhra and their military and political leaders offered the stoutest opposition to those hordes of North Indian Sultans. Their heroic emperor-leader Pratap Rudra Dev organised their defences most effectively and twice repelled these invasions and forced the Northern Indian Moslem invaders to beat a retreat. Not once could those invaders come as near as to get a glimpse of the Godavari.

On the third occasion, the kisans' defences broke up, as much because of their own internal weaknesses and rivalries as because of the superior invasion forces. Thus came to a temporary end, after three centuries of peerless rulers and progressive administration, the kisans' political leadership over the greater part of South India.

After the fall of the Kakatiya empire, for about 100 years, the Reddis, one of the five great kisan clans, ruled over the whole of the East coast from the Mahanadi down to Pennar near Nellore. They continued the Kakatiya traditions of developing trade, industry and commerce with other countries as well as navigation. They encouraged Telugu literary development. Unlike the Kakatiyas they invited the Brahmins into partnership as their ministers. But owing to their constant warfare with the other kisan clans, they too came to lose their grip over the state which passed into the hands of the Muhammadan conquerors.

The Boyas, another kisan clan, were encouraged by a great Brahmin sage and statesman Vidyaranya to found another kisan state at Hampi on the banks of river Tungabhadra and in the very heart of the Deccan plateau. Vidyaranya wanted to avoid the repetition of the internecine rivalries between kisan clans which played such a prominent role in Kakatiya and

Reddi regimes ; hence his choice of the hitherto untried clan of Boyas for leadership. But he was statesman enough to invite the co-operation of all other kisan clans in forming and leading the defence forces but not into political partnership. Thus was brought into existence the famous Vijayanagar Empire that ruled over the whole of the south from the Tungabhadra downwards.

The kisan clans had distinguished themselves during these three centuries not only by the might of their arms and statecraft but also by their constructive abilities. They went into Tamilnad and felled the forests, brought vast extents of hilly and forest lands under cultivation, built hundreds of villages and thus colonised most of the undeveloped land. They realised the value of irrigation as a means of famine-protection ; and so built hundreds of tanks, thousands of wells and scores of huge reservoirs. They repaired the ancient anicuts and built new ones and developed a number of irrigation projects in such a scientific manner that the modern science of irrigation has been built by Sir Arthur Cotton after their model. But they all committed one very grave blunder ; and that was to discourage or to ignore the ancient village commonwealth in their passion for military discipline and centralisation which became inevitable due to the incessant and growing threat of Muhammadan invasion from the North. Once the village commonwealth was gone, their real bulwark was gone and their genuine springs of creative life and energy dried up.

They demonstrated during their six centuries of statecraft and political leadership their growing capacity for constructive planning in economic and social spheres and their passion for literature, arts and architecture and their abilities in developing a highly civilised and powerful modern State. At the same time they continued to retain their intimate contact with the land and cultivation and their chief kisan characteristics and

occupational activities. Hence their very easy and ready return to agriculture and settlement upon some of the best agricultural areas of the land and their continuation of the traditions of the most progressive agricultural methods and practices even after the fall of their empires.

Throughout these six centuries, these kisan clans cherished their new "VEERA CULT" which had had its roots in the tremendous heroism displayed by their great leaders on the Palnad battlefield and continued to celebrate their homage to their heroes and martyrs who had distinguished themselves in the various wars. This cult provided for them the same spirit of self-confidence and heroic traditions and it maintained their high morale in the same way as the consecration of the Kshatriyas by Brahmins had enabled the Kshatriyas to rule over others with self-confidence. The traditions of their cult linger on even today with the South Indian kisans and hence their regal self-confidence. The memories of their six centuries' old traditions of rule in South India continue to inspire these kisan masses with the necessary ambition to fight once again for political power.

Vijayanagar Peasants' Revolts.—Coming to very recent times, we find that the usual method, of protesting against oppression, adopted by Indian peasants was what the ancient Roman Plebians did ; that is, to organise a mass exodus from the unpopular kingdom. To mention only one of the numerous such instances, when the people of a village had left *en masse* their village and emigrated to the region of a neighbouring kingdom, one of the Vijayanagar emperors (15th century) sent repeatedly his emissaries, asking the people to go back, promising the remission of the new impositions, reduction of old taxes and assuring that the local officials would no longer be allowed to harass them. When eventually the villagers returned the agreement between the Emperor and the peasant masses was inscribed on a stone and installed in a public place

in the village, now in Raichur District of the Nizam's Hyderabad State.*

Guntur Peasants' Revolt.—At the close of the sixteenth century, the peasants of Guntur district rose against the zhulum and new and oppressive taxes imposed on them by the local governor of their Warrangal Nawab They were led by a bold and resourceful person, Nallamotu Somayya of Nadeka. He organised a plough strike, and persuaded the peasants to lay their lands waste. He led a peasants' march to the Nawab of Warrangal and succeeded in getting the new taxes abolished and the local governor recalled. In recognition of his services, the peasants decided to offer the first honours at all their ceremonies to Somayya's descendants.

Alla-ud-din's system of price controls and market regulations do not appear to be very much different from those of Emperor Chandragupta. Both the rulers, the one of ancient India and the other of medieval India, wished to compel their peasants who were not so keen on urban markets and who wished that proper prices should be paid for their surplus grain sales to bring their grain to the markets, sell it only there and at the prescribed prices. Similarly compulsory steps were taken in England too in the 17th century and are being taken today in India to compel peasants to disgorge their grain on pain of penalties and sell them at prices not exceeding the stated prices, all in the interests of the urban masses. Such coercive steps are taken only when the bargaining power for the time being swings more towards peasants. Thus the State had been displaying its partiality since the days of Chandragupta towards the urban people.

Akbar attempted to confirm the rights of peasants to prepare a record of rights to establish fixity of tenure and land tax, to curb the powers of the Jagirdars and the capacity of tax-

*(Third Dynasty of Vijianagara by Venkata Ramanayya, P. 241.)

gatherers and to bring larger sections of peasants into direct relationship with the Emperor and in these tasks he had the help of his great land revenue administrator and finance minister Rajah Todarmal. This was done to appease the peasants who were becoming restless and discontented at the ruthless disregard shown by the new Muhammadan rulers and were groaning under their oppression. That the discontent of the masses used to find much more violent and effective shape in those days, when people were better armed in contrast to our unarmed masses, is indicated by the larger crop of rebellions of peasants during the reign of Aurangazeb, thanks to his autocratic impositions upon peasants, than there had been during the regime of Jahangir and Shahjahan.

Peasant rising against Aurangazeb.—Aurangazeb, the last of the great Moghuls, took things to extremes and inaugurated an open and aggressive anti-Hindu state policy. He took to imposing anew the Jiziya (poll tax) and Pilgrim Tax and started a regular campaign of proselytization coupled with an active policy of religious persecution. The great Jat peasant masses of the Indus and Ganges valleys (whether Hindu or Sikh), the Mahratta peasants, the proud Rajput princes and their loyal peasants, were thus provoked into rebellion.

Fortunately for them, they had the support of the cultural leaders, the Brahmins. The traditional Kshatriyas provided leadership and military organisation. The Sikh religious fervour, the Jat courage and endurance, the Maharashtra intelligence, planning and youthfulness all went to support the great rebellion against the Emperor and provided the morale for the peasant masses. Excepting the Jats, all the others preferred to work under the leadership of feudal or religious chiefs; the Jats, alone, developed genuine peasant leadership. But all of them were steeped in medievalism with all its virtues and vices and the great rebellion partook many of the features of the European Crusades.

Aurangazeb tried his best to crush these rebellions by the bitterest, most persistent and inhuman repression, bloodshed and fire and brought all his armies into action and spent nearly half of his active career in quelling it. But all in vain! When he died, he left the Empire in a high state of disintegration, disunity and discontent. Why?

The Indian peasant masses provided the cause for it. So great was their desperation and distress and so abundant and irrepressible their heroism and sacrifices that their revolts increased from year to year and soon enveloped a great portion of the empire in a great 'rebellion'. The Sikhs—who were almost the erstwhile Jat peasants of the Indus Doab—became a national power in the Punjab, because of the mad repressive "programme" of Aurangazeb and proved to be almost invincible, thanks to their new religious mission and military organisation. The Mahrattas, led by their inspired leader, who later became Chatrapati Shivajee, carried on their marvellous guerilla warfare in and out of the Western Ghats and the Central Indian and Deccan plateau and forced even the imperial forces and garrisons to pay ransom and annual chouth to save themselves from their dreadful visitations. So mobile were their armies, so enterprising and ambitious were their rank and file, and so hardy and fearless were their lightly-clad and lighter-fed fighters that the Emperor's armies came to live in mortal fear of their sudden and ruthless, but well-led and planned encounters at the most unexpected places and occasions. The Mahrattas were inspired by the religious renaissance initiated by the Bhaktas, their spirited Bhajan songs and the fervour of the religious preachers like Tukaram and Rama Das. Aurangazeb's suicidal anti-Hindu activities added fuel to fire.

The general ferment also stimulated them into rebellious activity. Their own economic degradation goaded them into revolt. When an extraordinary leader like Shivaji and an ins-

pired Bhakta like Rama Das had provided them with leadership, organisation and religious justification, the peasants rose to a man and served the general cause of the " great rebellion " of the Hindus. Similar factors, too, were at work in the revolts, organised by the Sikhs in the Punjab, and the Rajputs and Jats in the Doab and Rajaputana.

Jat Revolts.—The most open peasant revolt was what was staged for well over a century by the great Jat peasant masses of Rajputana and the Gangetic plains. The few details given below from Jadunath Sarkar's authoritative History of Aurangazeb, (Vol. V), indicate the capacity of Indian peasants for military organisation, leadership and political activity.

Entering at about 1600 A. D. into Mathura and Aligarh districts as servants and peasants, they grew to be powerful enough to be Zamindars and to refuse to pay revenue due to Shahjahan. They were defeated only in 1660 . . . . (P. 295).

In 1669, they rose again under two able leaders, Rajaram and Ramachandra of Sinsani and Sogar forts. They trained "their clansmen in group organisation and open warfare. Every Jat peasant was practised in wielding the staff and the sword ; they had only to be embodied in regiments, taught to obey their captains and supplied with fire-arms to make them into an army. They built several forts amidst their almost trackless jungles and strengthened them with mud walls that could defy artillery. They then began to raid the king's highways".

Thus for two years, the imperial forces contended against Rajaram's forces without any success. In the end, Rajaram was killed by accident in a war between the imperial forces and his own and his Rajput allies.

But his followers continued to keep the imperial forces at bay

till 1690, when the imperial forces "were prostrated by hunger and the animals perished in large numbers through weakness" because the Jats "cut off their grain convoys and watering parties". When in the end, their Sinsani fort was destroyed by the imperial forces "the Jats disputed every inch of the ground and were dispersed only after losing 1500 of their men". Thereafter "the tribesmen returned to the peaceful work of cultivation".

Their next leader was Churaman, the son of Bhajja, a brother of Rajaram. He had a "genius for organisation and using opportunities he succeeded in founding a dynasty which still rules over Bharatpur". "Being more enterprising than those who had preceded him, he not only increased the number of his soldiers but also . . . strengthened them by the addition of musketeers and a troop of cavalry and having robbed many of the ministers of the Court on the road, he attacked the royal wardrobe and the revenue sent from the provinces" . . . . . (P. 302).

It can be seen from this that peasants too were capable of military leadership and organisation, continuous and planned campaigns and sustained political ambitions. They have thus set an inspiring precedent.

Peasants out for power.—Both the Mahrattas and Jats displayed a passion for political power, ability to construct a State and a desire to found their own Raj or social order. Since they were all along steeped in ancient Indian political lore of the Mahabharata school, they could think of a State only under a monarchical order, but tempered by a ministers' council and the elders' consultative assembly, and the rule of law as indicated in the Dharma Shastras. So theirs was the achievement of the Mahratta and the Bharatpur kingdoms but with peasants to lead and guide them.

The Sikhs too came in time to found their empire. They devised one more revolutionary instrument, thanks to the genius of Guru Govind Singh. They turned all their men into full-trained and ever ready warriors and the whole community was placed on a permanent military footing. They founded their empire, with Maharaja Ranjit Singh at its head and provided a bulwark for the people of the Gangetic valley against the invasions from the North West. To this day, this great peasant community is a highly disciplined, militarised and conscious one.

It should not, however, be understood that beyond dreaming of and making new kingdoms the masses of those days had no ordinary political ideas to entertain or demands to make. Here is their declaration against the poll-tax :—

"This Jizia is repugnant to justice ; it is equally foreign to good policy as it must impoverish the country ; moreover it is an innovation and infringement of the laws of Hindustan. During your Majesty's reign, many have been alienated from the empire and further loss of territory must necessarily follow, since devastation and rapine now universally prevail without restraint. Your subjects are trampled under foot and every province of your empire is impoverished, depopulation spreads and the difficulties accumulate." The answer of the Emperor to this remonstration was to shoot down the demonstrators and get them trampled down by the Imperial elephants, when, with such demands, the people of Delhi and from the country besieged him, while on his way to the Jumma Masjid. Such was the national and political character of the Great Rebellion of the seventeenth century India.

War of Independence.—In all the areas in which the first war of Indian Independence was in progress (1857-60) peasants played quite a heroic part, suffered terribly, displayed great military skill, prowess and achieved victories. But they were

made to pay bitterly for their display of patriotism. To this day, the peasants of Meerut Division pay certain abwabs which were then levied as punitive imposts for their participation in that revolution.

During that struggle, large numbers of peasants threw themselves valiantly into the fray with such abandon that they did not mind leaving their holdings in the care of their landlords. So many of them forgot the wrongs done to them by their landlords and made common cause with them in fighting for freedom. But alas, when later the British had triumphed, their lands were treated as the property of the Zamindars since the latter were found in actual control and they were reduced from the status of proprietors to that of tenants-at-will of their own former lands ; so heavy were their sacrifices. And the Zamindars had no scruples in grabbing their lands so unjustly.

Unfortunately they could not rise beyond the limitations of their feudal environment and hence were reduced to dust before the British arms. And as yet, they had not developed the political aspect of their cultural and traditional conception of unity of the whole of India nor could they anticipate the later twentieth century idea of achievement of a nation-wide organisation, consciousness and unified patriotic endeavour.

We can understand the magnitude of the sacrifice offered by peasants in that struggle when we remember from what a high state of customary rights, individual and collective, Indian peasants fell by deciding to join the war against the British. They had been members of village communities which, according to Elphinstone, contained " in miniature all the materials of a State within themselves and are sufficient to protect their members if all other Governments were withdrawn ".

That the lands were recognised even by the Moghals to be the

common cause with Taluqdars in that first war of independence and such indeed was the reward reaped by the faithless Taluqdars for their rebellion against the British and their eventual submission to the foreign rulers. Is this not typical of what happened in England after Cromwell's yeomen's revolution, in the U. S. A. after the attainment of independence and in the U.S.S.R. after the 1917 revolution and 1920-21 counter-revolution ? Wherever and whenever peasants have gone into any revolution without their own leadership, ideological stand and definite political objectives but under the leadership of other classes, they have uniformly been cheated of the fruits of revolution or been the worst victims of the failure of a revolution.

Santhals' Revolution.—Later came the 1855-73 Santhal and Bengal revolts, this time not only against the British Raj as such but also against the Zamindars who were invested with unjustified and undreamt of powers of ownership of land that peasants had customarily considered and cultivated for millenniums as their own and also against money-lenders who were given powers to get peasants imprisoned for failure to repay their debts and against the autocracy of officials. The Santhals never thought that they could be evicted from their ancestral homesteads, holdings and forests for failure to pay taxes and debts but that had come to happen.

The self-respecting, proud, if unorganised, Indian peasant never could reconcile himself to the preposterous right conferred by the British Government on the Zamindar to distrain his properties, including his draught cattle, grain crops and that too came to be the order of the day. So he rose in revolt against that unjust order of the day, imposed upon them by British imperialism through the convenient media of its allies, the Indian Zamindars and money-lenders.

The peasants "banded themselves (especially in Patna

District) to resist short measures; illegal cesses, and forced deliveries of agreement (one-sided) to pay enhanced rents". And also " there had been combination of Raiyats (peasants) in East Bengal, refusing to payments except what they considered just".

The Santhals found their leaders in two brothers who claimed to have received some occult blessings from the gods to put an end to the zhulum of officers and to the deceit of merchants. As many as 35,000 Santhals formed their bodyguard. They armed themselves with their traditional weapons of bows, arrows, axes and swords. They began to march to Calcutta to place their petition before the Governor to free them from their oppressors. But one Government Inspector obstructed their march and provoked them on 7-7-1855 into violence. Thus had commenced their rebellion and their resultant massacre at the hands of the British. The British officers who had been smitten with remorse later confessed that " it was not war, it was execution ; we had orders to go out whenever we saw the smoke of a village rising about the jungle. The Magistrate used to go with us...I surrounded the village with my sepoys and the Magistrate called upon the rebels to surrender". To such an unjust and peremptory order, the brave Santhals knew only one answer to give. That was defiance. Thereupon they were brutally firec upon and butchered *en masse*.

The Santhals displayed such exceptional courage and military discipline that they faced successive vollies of British bullets with reckless heroism and abandon ; alas, all those risings were put down, if not in Aurangazeb's lynching fashion but with equal firmness and cruelty.

Government had however to yield to these peasants, despite its gratitude to the Bengal Zamindars for their treacherous betrayal of the War of Independence and pass the Bengal Tenancy Act which had come to re-establish the lost permanency of tenure and fixity of feudal exactions.

property of kisans is proved by the fact that Akbar and Aurangazeb had to purchase lands from cultivators.

Todar Mal's revenue settlement conducted under the order of Akbar was made with individual peasants and not with any of the Zamindars or even the headmen of a village. No wonder Holt Mackenzie grew eloquent over the permanence of the rights of these peasants. He observed " the village Zamindars . . . were the immemorial occupants of the soil . . . . . They sold, and mortgaged their lands at will. They may have been bound in some cases to a lower class of cultivators, who had by distinct engagements or long usage acquired the right of occupancy so long as they paid the customary rent . . . . . Nothing but violence appears to have disturbed the tenure of the village Zamindars ; neither the exile nor the longest absence, dissolved the tie that bound them to the fields of their ancestors, nor destroyed their right to resume possession when they returned".

The British came to upset all this. Their early administrators recognised the Taluqdars as the prototypes of English landlords to subserve their political ends. But when they found that these Taluqdars were also undependable, Lord Dalhousie decreed that " the settlement should be made village by village with the parties actually in possession but without any recognition, either formal or indirect, of their proprietory right so as to deal with the actual occupants of the soil".

Thus the U. P. peasants were being re-instated in their traditional rights and holdings by the British who were losing faith in the so-called landed aristocracy, as a political stabilising force. Lord Canning who was no friend of the peasants had to confess that " as a question of justice the lands and villages taken from the Talooqdars had, for the most part, been usurped by them through fraud and violence ".

Naturally the British expected gratitude from those U. P. kisans. They hoped that the kisans who were being helped to get back to their lands from which they had been forcibly ejected by the Taluqdars would betray the national cause and side with them, the new beneficent rulers.

Lord Canning observed in 1858 that "it might have been expected that, when insurrection first arose in Oudh . . . the village occupants who had been so highly favoured by the British Government and in justice to whom it had initiated a policy distasteful to the most powerful class in the province, would have come forward in support of the Government who had endeavoured to restore them to their hereditary rights and with whose interests their interests were identical. Such, however, was not the case. So far as I am informed, not an individual dared to be loyal to the Government which had befriended him".

On the other hand, lakhs of peasants made common cause with that war of independence. The British naturally decided that "the lands of men who have taken an active part against us should be largely confiscated in order, among other reasons, to enable us to reward others". "The Governor-General proclaims to the people of Oudh that . . . . . the proprietory right in the soil of the province is confiscated to the British Government which will dispose of that right in such manner as to it may seem fitting".

The consequence was that the great class of kisans fell, the Taluqdars who were the usurpers and adventurers, rose and within the course of a year, the kisans' "rights had ceased to exist or were reduced to a mere shadow; they were completely in the power of the Taluqdars and were subject to every kind of oppression, tyranny and exaction".

Such was the bitter price paid by kisans for having made

Mahratta Peasant Awakening.—With equal fury and fervour rose the Mahratta peasants in the same generation, against the oppressions of money-lenders. They could not brook the idea of obedience to the new laws which gave such coercive powers to money-lenders that any money-lender could with impunity move a court to imprison any one of his peasant debtors. So they revolted, burut down the houses, destroyed other properties of money-lenders, killed a good many such oppressors and even attacked those Government officials who were supporting their oppressors.

Bombay Peasants' Revolts in 1871-75.—These revolts were not well planned, nor were they widespread. They took place haphazardly and in many districts like Kaira, Ahmednagar, Poona, all unconnected with each other. The peasants aimed their blows not on Government, but on money-lenders and even when whole villages were in revolt, great care was taken not to harm anyone else but marwari money-lenders. Generally " the object of the rioters was to obtain and destroy the bonds, decrees, etc., in the possession of their creditors ; when these were peaceably given up to the assembled mob there was usually nothing further done. When the money-lender refused or shut himself up, violence was used to frighten him into surrender or to get possession of the papers".

Again the might of British Raj came down on them and suppressed their risings. Yet it had to yield and redress their grievances at least in part. Hence the passing of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act, whereby an exception was made for the Mahrat a peasants from the operations of the Civil Procedure Code in that they could not be imprisoned for failure to repay debts—a great concession indeed.

Punjab Discontent.—Similarly the Punjab peasants too agitated and threatened to revolt to prevent the rapid aliena-

tion of their lands to the urban money-lenders for failure to repay debts. The British Government could not await a similar rebellion as had taken place in Bengal and Maharashtra since the armed and martial Sikhs might make a formidable enemy. So it hastened to pass the Punjab Land Alienation Act to prevent the alienation of peasants' lands to non-agricultural sections.

South India in Ferment.—Similarly the Krishna and Godavari Deltaic peasants and the Karnataka and Rayalaseema peasants too revolted several times from the beginning of the 19th century to protest against the exorbitant land revenue exactions, the neglect of irrigation facilities and the extortionate method of tax collections. G. Lakshminarasu Chetti organised a grand constitutional agitation against the Madras Tortures Act and succeeded in getting it repealed and this saved the South Indian peasants from being put to several cruel and inhuman tortures for failure to pay taxes. The South Indian peasants resorted to their ancestral method of *satyagraha* by abandoning their lands and villages (a method of satyagraha adopted by the Lohara peasants in 1936, and by those of the Orissa States in 1939 with much less success) and migrating to the neighbouring Indian States or even British districts. Since peasant solidarity was so great in those days and also since the cultivation of land under the then prevailing tax burdens was such an unwelcome task none would go and occupy their lands and houses and Government had to climb down and agree to a reduction of their tax burdens in order to persuade them to return to their lands and villages.

Contribution of the Indian National Congress.—With the beginning of the 20th century, the Indian National Congress began to champion the cause of the oppressed peasants. It imported a political significance,—common cause with the nation-wide freedom movement and anti-imperialist bias—into every one of the struggles that peasants have had to wage in order to free themselves from new imperialist impositions and

machinations. Thus country-wide campaigns were organised with nationalism as their dynamo and economic pressure as their propellers against the vicious indenture labour system, contract labour in plantations, exploitation by European planters in India and other parts of the British Empire. Now that political consciousness and organisation were added to economic grievances, success began to dawn on the horizon of Indian peasants. The indenture system was abolished and some relief was got for plantation labour. A large number of risings took place in Malabar both in the last and present centuries. They were misnamed communal riots and their basic causes, the political and economic grievances of peasants against the local landlords were not sought to be removed. Of course there was always the tendency for communal leaders to exploit these basic factors. But thanks to the sacrifices made by the Mopilla (Moslem) peasants, the Madras Government had had to pass the Malabar Tenancy Act which conferred permanency of tenancy upon a very large section of peasantry.

Gandhiji and Peasant Satyagraha.—An entirely new dynamic and political revolutionary tendency has come to be imported into peasant struggles by Mahatma Gandhi since his advent on the Indian politico-economic theatre in 1916. He familiarised the peasants of Champaran in Bihar and Kaira in Gujerat with his new weapon of Satyagraha, an open, non-violent, organised, politically alive revolt against injustice—in their struggles against the indigo planters and land revenue collectors respectively. He introduced the technique of first enquiring into the essential facts of the peasants' grievances, then formulating their demands, educating them as to the nature and magnitude of their needs and immediate demands, training them in the art of internal self-sufficiency pointing out the need for economy in case of a prolonged struggle against the authorities and steeling their mind to the rigours of jails, and other harassments of imperialism. He would convince the peasants

that the satisfaction of their carefully moderated minimum demands was most urgently called for by Dharma or social justice, and that it would be their sacred duty to force the authorities to perform their Dharma towards them. The injection of this inspiring and ennoblin conception of serving Dharma by revolting against injustice and by seeking redress for their own grievances, would steel he determination and fighting morale of the peasants. As the champions of Dharma, peasants would go ahead, to face all their enemies without fear and with perfect confidence in their own cause and in their duty to and capacity for teaching their opponents how to conform to Dharma. As Colvin strengthened the bourgeoisie by his casuistry proving that they were helping society by helping themselves ; as Marx put new life into the proletariat by demonstrating that they were the heirs of capitalism, chosen by Dame History, so Mahatma Gandhi invested the peasants as well as the colonial peoples with the saintly staff of satyagraha to achieve the protection of Dharma for themselves and to oblige their opponents to conform to Dharma and thus save humanity from injustice.

Bardoli Satyagraha.—With the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, his greatest kisan disciple, Vallabhbhai Patel organised and led the Bardoli peasants against the resettlement enhancements proposed by Government. Under his inspiring guidance, peasants braved all risks, faced with courage the loss of their beloved cattle and ancestral lands and even risked eviction from their villages. At last, they triumphed over the Government. That was in 1929.

Again in 1930, when Mahatmaji gave this call to the people to rise against Imperialism to achieve national independence, the Bardoli peasants rose to a man, refused to pay taxes, faced the auction sales and eventual loss of almost all their lands and refused to have any truck with Government. Such was the marvellous strength of their political revolt led by their great Sardar.

exactions in U.P. and Bihar in 1921 and 1931-33; the anti-resettlement campaigns of Godavari and Kistna Deltas and a number of peasant struggles against landlords of Venkatagiri (1931) Tsadumu and Munagala (1939) were organised in the South by some of us. There were also the Land Satyagraha in Bihar (1939), the anti-Zamindari fight in Bengal, and Andhra, and Canal Duties struggle of the Punjab and Bengal (1939), the Jute prices struggle (1937-42), and the Debt Relief Agitation of Bengal. All these campaigns shared the same new features.

Aboriginal Kisans.—There are more than 200 lakhs of aborginal kisans in India. The Santhal rebellion of the last century and the Koya revolt of the thirties of this century and the recent agitation among the Bhils of Dahanu, the tribes of Mymensingh, and Mayurbhanj have shown that these aboriginal tribes too have in them the irrepressible spirit of revolt that can shake up modern capitalist hegemony to its very roots.

The pity is that the Santhal tribal people are not fully aware of their legal rights accruing from the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act. "Even were they aware of it, not one in a thousand would have the means and the courage to risk the Rajah's displeasure by having recourse to the law. Hence, Rajahs and landlords ruthlessly exploit this helplessness of the ryots" observed Rev. Kanjiya in 1946. ("Modern Review".)

These Santhals are losing their lands to the plainsmen, whether they be money-lenders, landlords or touts. Many are the causes for this. The following are mentioned by Mr. Ece Meulder in his article in the "New Review" of February 1947.

(*i*) Rent suits and executions, (*ii*) loans, (*iii*) surrender by fraud, (*iv*) wilfully defective settlement, (*v*) Zhulum and brute force of landlords, officials, etc., (*vi*) illegal mutilation of kisans' names on landlords' registers, (*vii*) misunderstanding

of the tribal peoples' rights by the courts, (*viii*) starting penshops on aboriginal land and then quietly or suddenly rebuilding these shops into pucca buildings, (*ix*) covering aboriginal areas with grogshops, instead of providing wells, tanks and other forms of irrigation, (*x*) the threat of leasing out forest and grazing lands to companies of financiers, bankers or landlords.

As a result of the growing but forced landlessness of kisans caused by the above methods pursued by money-lenders, landlords and corrupt officials, the area of *bakhast* lands is increasing almost in every tribal village, on which the landlord comes to have the right to settle new kisans.

These complaints are to be met with in every tribal area all over India. I conducted enquiries into the conditions of tribes in Hyderabad in 1927 and in Nilgiris in 1929 and in the Andhra hills in 1931-33 and again in 1936; everywhere the same vicious economic forces were found to be at work to deprive the tribal kisans of their rights.

To relieve their social and economic distress and win for them the same political freedom and status as was being granted to the other peoples of India, there was founded in 1936, the All-India Excluded Areas and Tribal Peoples' Association and Sri P. Kodandaramayya has been its soul ever since. A number of provincial conferences also have been held. The Provincial Congress Ministries, notably of Orissa, Bombay, and Assam have been trying to improve educational facilities for these tribal peoples. A few co-operative societies too have been formed. But because we have not yet succeeded in grafting our new organisations on to the traditional love of their own martyrs and heroes who had fought for their freedom and their tribal democratic organisations, as apart from their so-called Rajahs or Chiefs or Muthadars, our modern organisations have as yet

When the Congress was in Ministry in 1937-39 the loyal Sardar saw to it that all their lands were returned. Thus did our peasants gain their initiation in both economic and political Satyagraha.

Vizag Revolution and Raju's Leadership.—The Vizag Agency tribes waged a two-year war against British imperialism with the help of an exraordinary revolutionary leader Sitarama Raju. They made the fullest military use of the strategic advantages of the hills and valleys and impassable gorges and their own special knowledge of the terrain. They were strictly non-violent. They made full use of their traditional weapons. But strangely enough, they pursued the Hindu Dharmic way of liberating their enemies, once they fell into their hands and asked for excuse, with the result that their secret dens came to be known and their ways of organisation understood by their enemy.

What did they fight for ? At first they started asking for free use of the forest lands and produce. Rapidly their demands went up and they wanted to establish Swaraj for the whole of the Agency area, if not for the whole of India.

The tragedy of it all was that their struggle came off a year after the great non-co-operation movement (1920-22) was over and when nationalist India was just recovering from the shock of reaction. The British Government was very cruel towards those brave tribal people. It used all the modern weapons and killed thousands of those unfortunate Koya and Savara people.

Great trouble set in upon these people after their noble and resourceful leader Raju was killed. Most of their other leaders were killed, several others were sent to jail and great

reprisals were hurled upon the masses. Yet the spirit of resistance of these hill tribes did not die. It only awaited another inspired leader and a suitable opportunity. This became clear in the August 1942 Revolution when again these people gave a fine account of their anti-imperialist spirit.

But owing to the special attention paid by the police to this area and its people, even such Congress constructive work as hand-spinning was not allowed. Government encouraged the local Muthadars or village tribal chiefs to tyrannise over the people and thus destroy their will to revolt. Despite all such repression, Congress-men like P. Kodandaramayya and R. M. Sarma had been doing yeoman service to these people. As a result of their work, the Gothi system by which the hill tribes were kept down as hereditary servants (bordering on slavery) of those Muthadars and others who advanced small sums of money to these ignorant and helpless people either for marriage or for drink has come to be abolished since 1940. Yet so many of these people are even now unable to take advantage of it. Secondly, the last Congress ministry has declared their lands inalienable. But during the war, the Advisers' regime again had allowed alienation of their lands subject to the Collector's permission.

The present Congress Ministry is trying to help these tribal peoples. The All-India Adibasis and Excluded Areas Association was founded in 1936. It has now become a powerful organisation developing the political consciousness of these 20 million Adibasis in our country.

Satyagraha Struggle between 1921-30.—Ever since the Non-co-operation movement a number of Satyagraha campaigns have come to be organised against so many unjust laws and imposts; such struggles as those of Bardoli and Pedanandipadu and Duddukuru in 1921 against the land tax; the struggles against Karnataka forest laws in 1921 and 1931-34; the rent

remained largely beyond the affections and reach of their masses.

Recently, we have put ourselves in touch with the natural leaders of some of these tribes, such as Messrs. Samant, Jaipal Singh, Nichols Roy and with the Tribal or Adibasi organisations they have been building up and we trust that very soon these tribal peoples too will be able to march hand in hand with all other sections in our revolutionary attempts to achieve Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

We are encouraged in this hope by our recent discoveries of the revolutionary traditions, legends and ballads that some of these tribal people have built up. For instance, the Manipuri kisan women became so adept in the modern intricacies of markets for their agricultural produce that when the merchants and consumers of Manipur refused to pay them reasonable prices, they organised and went on a strike. For weeks, they maintained their strike and saw to it that there were no blacklegs. In the end, the Manipuri merchants had to accept the demands of those worldly-wise tribal women.

Secondly, when I visited Akola in 1945, and again Udaipur in 1946, I came across the inspiring dance recital of a Bhil kisan cum tribal revolt against their Jaipur and Udaipur Maharanas. According to this recital, which, by the way, is based upon a popular ballad woven by the Bhil poets several centuries ago, the Maharana heaped so many taxes on the Bhils, oppressed them so much and in the end his officers violated their hearths and the modesty of their women, that they rose against his oppression. Their leader, Ram Gopal, organised them for an armed rebellion. For weeks, a guerilla fight went on between the State troops and the Bhils. In the end, their leaders were killed, many of their ranks too fell on the battlefields and out of disgust they left the State in a mass exodus. But

after a time, the son of the Maharaja, when he came to the gadi, repented for the sins of his father and begged the Bhils to return to the State.

This legend is woven into such a powerful and eloquent ballad and it is sung, to the tune of a mass dance which inspires the Bhils even today into such crescendoes of emotion, anger and abandon that one can easily get an idea of the passionate mass movement their rebellion must have been in its own day.

The Adibasis who could organise such a movement and who could perform such heroic deeds in an organised manner not only in the Bhil area under their own Bhil leadership, and in the far distant Manipuri under the leadership of their women but also under the inspiration of an outsider like Sitarama Raju on the Koraput hills of the Andhra can be expected to take once again their place in the vanguard of our present-day revolutionary struggle for the democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

It is from this viewpoint that the foundation of the Jamin Bachais Sabha (the Agrarian League) of the Adibasis of Chota Nagpur is of great significance. It has rightly laid stress not so much on legislation but " on vision, enthusiasm, leadership and the spirit of service and citizenship in the aboriginal leaders themselves. Education is a failure if it cannot give that leadership and vision".

It wants to bring about a "permanent rise in the standard of living implying more extensive and intensive cultivation, a fight against erosion which is the largest single cause of poverty". It desires the " recasting and bringing up-to-date the old Panchayat system of the villages, equipped with thriving co-operative societies ". Educational facilities including law and medical colleges and occupational schools are as much needed as " air and water".

"The firm foundation of the aboriginal peasants' home is a healthy house built on a plot of land that he can call his own and that is sufficient in quality and extension as to be a real economic holding. If that land goes, then the aboriginal peasantry is doomed. Aboriginals stand or fall with their lands."

The system of landlordism should go. All *bakhast* or resumed lands and "common grounds in the village shall vest in the village republic itself".

"No system of militarised or mechanised farms can ever replace the oldest aristocracy of a country—its peasantry."

"The whole village or group of villages ought to be organised from within into thriving co-operative societies and united from without into Agrarian Leagues."

Freedom from middlemen in trade and landownership and reconstruction of the laws of inheritance among the aborigines themselves are the other non-political demands of this organisation. It stands for democracy and Village Republic and is opposed to totalitarianism either in politics or in economic organisation.

Indian States Peasants Rebel.—Between 1937-46, the peasants of a number of Indian States were in revolt against their horrible conditions of life, which were not in any way different from the intolerable conditions, prevalent in the days of Charlemagne, as described in the chapter on "The Peasant Bodo," in medieval Europe by Eileen Power.

The following few quotations from her book on Bodo's life will give us a realistic picture of a part of the misery of the Indian peasants in almost all our Indian States and also in a number of Zamindaris of British India.

"Every year each man was bound to do a fixed amount of ploughing on the domain land and also to give—Carvee—an unfixed amount of ploughing every week when it was needed."

In addition, there was "handwork—he had to help repair building or cut down trees or gather fruits or make ale or carry loads. It was by these services that the monks got their own seigniorial farm cultivated." . . . . . (p. 16).

The farmers "had to carry a load of wood to the big house (of the landlord) in return for being allowed to gather firewood in the woods ; they had to pay some hogsheads of wine for the right to pasture their pigs in the same precious woods ; every third year, they had to give up one of their sheep for the right to graze upon the fields of the chief. Every farmer had also to pay other rents in produce ; every year he owed the big house three chickens and fifteen eggs and a large number of planks to repair its buildings ; often he had to give it a couple of pigs ; sometimes corn, wine, honey, wax, soap or oil. Even the wives of the farmers were kept busy, if they happened to be serfs ; for the servile women were obliged to spin cloth or to make a garment for the big house every year." . . . . . (p.p. 16, 17).

The sufferings of the peasants in the Indian States were even more intolerable and they have had to bear the burden of the continually accumulating illegal *abwabs* or imposts. Their feudalism has inherited all the evils of the Mughal empire and had been maintained by British arms and the Indian princes !

Against this terrible order, Indian peasants began to protest. At first the Loharu, Patiala and Nabha peasants revolted. They organised a 'Farm Strike', abandoned their villages and ran into the neighbouring forests. The States sent out their armed

police and military on horse-back, to hunt the peasants as it were, and force them to go back to their villages and cultivate their lands. After some fight, the peasants gave up their Satyagraha. There came the prolonged Mansa Peasants' Satyagraha for rent reductions. Partial success came their way after a three-month struggle.

The Mysore and Travancore State peoples waged their state-wide struggles for responsible governments. Many were the atrocities committed by the governments. Hundreds of peasants and workers died in those shooting outrages. Only a few political concessions were made and the feudal dues were reduced.

The struggle then spread to the Orissa States. For a while some of the princes fled their states, so furious and all-enveloping were the peasants' revolts, and so helpless were their local police and military forces. The princes hastened to promise to abolish a number of feudal dues, such as forest fees, free supply of fuel, wood, grass, forced labour and supply of animals. Rents too were offered to be reduced. Soon the British forces went to their rescue and the former concessions were mostly withdrawn. Thereupon, the peasants again rebelled, and marched on the princes' capitals and demanded various economic and political concessions. But the British military fired on them, killed large numbers and suppressed their risings. Cruel reprisals were thereafter instituted by the princes. I had an occasion to see large numbers of peasants who fell victims to those barbarities and they were such as to bring shame upon the princes and their protectors, the British. Women were raped, young boys were whipped on their tender parts, peasants were immersed for many moments in rivers, houses and villages were burnt down and grain was looted and cattle confiscated.

Unable to bear these indignities, more than 30,000 peasants

left their villages in a number of States including Nilgiris, Dhenkenal, and marched into the neighbouring forests of Orissa Province ; built small huts out of the forest leaves and branches and lived in those improvised camps for many months. At long last, the States had to agree not to resort to any reprisals or indulge in incendiarism or looting and also to abandon their demands for forced labour and some of its more oppressive forms before those peasants could be persuaded to return to their villages.

I visited their camps and interviewed their men, women and leaders. It was an eye-opener to us. Those camps were perfectly orderly. They were built according to the traditional village planning of our peasants. They were ruled by their peasant panchayats. A number of their leaders were women—old and bold. They displayed their inherent qualities of leadership, organisation, discipline and unity. Under the stress of that revolution, their traditional caste distinctions were gone and untouchability was abolished and they learnt to live as one united equalitarian society.

In the wake of these revolutions, rose the peasants of a number of Maharashtra and Karnatak States. They too achieved a number of triumphs and concessions.

Then rose the Jaipur, Gwalior and Udaipur peasants against their local Thakors and other feudal lords. They made use of the internal quarrels and contradictions between the States, princes and the Thakors of Jaipur. They were led by the late Jamnalal Bajaj, a merchant prince and a great follower of Mahatma Gandhi. They achieved victory on their economic front. The Udaipur revolt was put down cruelly. But forced labour had to be abandoned.

During the latter half of 1946, the Hyderabad peasants have risen against their local feudal chiefs, the Deshmukhs. The

Communists and Congressmen provided the requisite leadership. But as it is always the case with Communists, they tried to elbow out the Congressmen and achieve a "closed shop" for their organisation, with the result that the ranks of the peasants were split and a large section of the middle classes and merchants were forced to join hands with the State authorities in order to save themselves from Communist repression.

The State authorities and their local feudal and other allies perpetrated many horrors on the Warrangal, Nalgonda and Bidar peasants. Lootings, rapings, incendiarism and murders of peasants became the order of the day. It was after the States' Peoples' Organisation and the Andhra Congress had begun to champion the cause of these peasant sufferers, that the State has called a halt to its campaign of repression. But this freedom from the feudal lords of the States is being won at great cost by States peasants. All over the Rajasthan States, peasants have had to struggle hard for months after August 1947 to get rid of forced labour, *abwabs* and eventually the Jagirdari or Thakurdari systems.

The sufferings of Hyderabad peasants were of a sterner type. Owing to the intransigence of the Nizam and his ministry, the States people had to offer heroic resistance to the Nazi terrorism of Razakars, a gang of power-mad Moslems. The tribal people, known as Koyas of Palvancha Taluk, the kisans of Nalgonda, Warrangal, Mahaboobnagar districts struggled heroically against the State's campaign of violence and repression. The Koyas offered many pitched battles in their mountain fastnesses on the banks of the Godavari.

Fortunately the statesmanship and strong 'Police Action' organised by Sardar Patel, the hero of Bardoli peasant Satyagraha of 1928, forced the Nizam to surrender. With his fall has come down the Razakar terror and the power of the landlords.

The liberation of practically the whole princely order and the consequent liberation of 70 million States peoples and their attainment of democratic government is the biggest and most romantic achievement of post-partition India and it is significant that it has been achieved by Sardar Patel, the kisan statesman. The Indian States' peasant masses have been in the vanguard of the States' peoples fight for economic and political freedom and thanks to the attainment of freedom by India on 15th of August 1947 and the statesmanship and revolutionary capacity of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the States peoples have also attained control of the government and the feudalism of the zamindari and jagirdari orders is being liquidated.

Indian National Congress prepared the ground.—The various national revolutionary struggles led by Mahatma Gandhi and the National Congress in 1921, 1930-34 and 1940-43 have roused the Indian masses, particularly peasants as nothing else in recent centuries had done and knit them all together in a more realistic and powerful manner into one great nation with a common and glorious cultural heritage of the greatest antiquity and grandest social contributions. Naturally when we began to organise peasants, we found them already with their feet well planted on the modern plane of national consciousness and determination to beard the British Imperialism in its den through the new weapon of Satyagraha with confidence in their ability to win freedom. Our task was thus very much facilitated.

Contributions of Kisan Congress.—And what can we claim to have contributed, in our turn? A growing sense of class-consciousness, an awareness of unity of peasant interests on a national scale, an appreciation of their revolutionary class Dharma and also of the need for winning the co-operation of the proletariat and lastly a realisation of the existence of class struggle and of the need to end it by strengthening themselves. The discovery of their Dharma to set right the present inequalities of wealth and

income, and consequent achievement of social and cultural opportunities as between the agricultural and non-agricultural peoples, as between the toilers as a whole and the capitalist-cum-feudal-cum-priestly orders and to save the State from the exploiting classes and place it under the democratic control of the masses and also to wield the revolutionary Gandhian weapon of Dharma to save humanity from the ravages of capitalism, imperialism, fascism and periodical economic crises and wars.

Thanks to the twenty-year old peasant movement and thirty years of participation in national struggles, Indian peasants have now come to be at the vanguard of Indian National revolutionary forces and have set up a high-watermark of revolutionary deeds, sacrifices and achievements in 1942 which was far higher than that of any other class of people in India. Verily could Mahatma Gandhi feel proud of the modern Indian peasants.

Veera Gunnamma.—An indomitable spirit of revolt and Satyagraha was displayed by Veera Gunnamma of Mandasa. On the 31st March 1940, even as I was being interned and imprisoned by the Madras Government, the local police and Magistrate were arresting seven of the local peasant leaders of Mandasa on very flimsy grounds. The gathering of peasants consisted of more women than men, since the village was stormed by surprise while men were at work in the field. The women protested against the unjust arrests. The police insulted them. Gunnamma roundly abused them for their behaviour. They fired on her. She sprung upon them like a lioness. She was being shot at and she continued to vigorously protest against that police brigandage and injustice until she was felled by the sixth gunshot wound. Today the Vizagapatam peasants cherish the memory of this great heroine, who, unarmed as she was, put to shame, without flinching under the fusillade of shots tearing at her body, the whole beastly might of British Imperialism. When on the 1st of September 1941, Bharatidevi, the peasants'

president was offering to Gunnamma's memory at her grave, the highest honours due to a peasant martyr, there was a gathering of one hundred thousand peasants. Peasants have learnt how to die nobly and heroically and also how to honour their martyrs. It is in the fitness of things that a woman, Gunnamma should preside over their growing lists of martyrs.

Even in the realm of practical politics, peasants have achieved quite a lot. Between 1937-40, a number of Provincial Governments had to declare moratoria for rural debts, scale down debt burdens, improve the rights of Zamindari tenants, reduce rents and land revenue burdens for all peasants and grant educational and cultural facilities for landless Harijans and prohibit the alienation of the lands of the aboriginal peasantry and so on.

August Revolution and Peasants.—During the 1942 August Revolution, it was the Indian peasant who played the most heroic, dynamic and effective role. Students and urban middle classes too contributed much. But peasants excelled themselves. They rose spontaneously and simultaneously, as if by design and upset the means of transport of the British war machine. Police stations and other local officers of Government were captured. Wherever they succeeded in overcoming the local governmental forces and agencies, they proceeded to establish their panchayats and in several areas in United Provinces, Bihar, Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamilnad, they established their rival Governments. The most famous achievements were witnessed in Midnapore and Satara Districts where for years, the British were unable to regain their control over whole regions consisting of the masses of peasants.

Thus the 20th century and post-August revolutionary peasants have shown that they are bent upon achieving political power and that they are no longer content with mere looting and occasional displays of their discontent and fury. One remarkable feature of this peasant regime of post-August revolution is that

no harm was done to private properties, ordinary individuals or their interests and only Government agents and properties were attacked. Underground activities were highly developed and both criminal and civil agencies of their Panchayat Raj were used to maintain law and order in their emancipated peasant India. Thus the peasant became the central figure of the 1942 revolution.

The peasant-wise significance of Indian national revolution is forcibly demonstrated by what has been happening since the attainment of freedom by India. The huge princely order of 600 and more Indian States and the large numbers of their satellite feudal princes, Jagirdars, deshmukhs, etc., have been fast crumbling to pieces thanks to the strength and statesmanship of Sardar Patel, the Indian Deputy Prime Minister. Almost all the States have either merged in the neighbouring provinces or been grouped into Unions and all of them have been brought in line with the prevailing democracy in India. The 70 million States' people are today able to enjoy the benefits of democratic rule. As if by the flourish of a magic wand the Augean stables of feudal laws are being cleared and peasants are being freed from the clutches and tyranny of both the immediate landlord and his overlord, the prince. This is indeed a great social revolution which is being achieved in an entirely Gandhian manner and it was not expected to come to pass so quickly even by the most sanguine revolutionary.

One other interesting feature of peasant revolution is the rapidity with which peasant revolutionaries were able to construct the whole edifice of separate panchayats for political, administrative and judicial purposes and make them all work efficiently and in harmony. In Satara district from the villages right upto the district level, these tiers of panchayats were built up. And they did remarkable work. They were able to make and enforce laws. They could collect taxes and

cesses and administer public funds. All this was possible because the hoary traditions of Panchayat Raj and democracy were still there with the peasants in their folk-lore and day-to-day settlement of village affairs and disputes. And they served as foundations. So, neither the exercise of political power through panchayat democracy nor the management of administration were new. This is another proof, if proof were needed, to demonstrate the capacity of Indian and Chinese and African peasants to run their administration, if and when they capture political and economic power.

No longer are our peasants' satyagraha campaigns isolated struggles unobserved by the peasants of other parts, as Lenin found Russians to be. Wherever there was a struggle, the peasants of the whole of India came to be interested in it, collected funds, observed sympathetic All-India Days and helped the sufferers in every possible manner. Thus the Mandasa State subjects, the Orissa State subjects, Refugee Camps, the Bengali Flood victims, the Rayalaseema famine-stricken peasants, the Malabar peasants and so many others were helped on an all-India basis. True, the All-India Peasants Congress had come to knit all the peasants together under the aegis of a National Peasant unity. But it was Mahatma Gandhi and the National Congress which laid the foundations for the growth of the new consciousness and familiarised the peasants with the potent idea of their national unity.

In Burma too, peasants played a noteworthy part in the famous Irrawady revolution of 1925-27 which raged over a fourth of Burma area. Violent means were resorted to, economic and social boycott was organised, and a non-payment of taxes campaign was effectively organised. And the remarkable feature of this uprising was the establishment of a rebel and rival government of the Burmese peasants. But alas, it could not succeed against the might of the British. Fearing that this Burmese revolt was caused by the Burmese contact with India,

Burma was separated from India, but that has not prevented the growth of Burmese revolutionary movement. When my wife and myself visited Burma in 1939, the Burmese peasants gave us clear indications of how they were following the Indian peasants' movement and how they too were dreaming of achieving Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj of the Burmese masses. And when the defeat of the British at the hands of the Japanese gave them a chance in 1942, the Burmese peasants established their own national government and showed how they could grapple with the modern problems of statecraft and warfare.

After the advent of freedom by India and Burma, the peasant movement has been making rapid progress. In India, the Congress Ministries which depend so largely on peasants for their support have been busy passing laws to abolish landlordism. Of course everywhere compensation is being offered to landlords and since the burden of this compensation is found to be too heavy, a certain amount of delay is being experienced in the State actually taking over the Zamindari administration. But the system, as such, is practically gone. In Burma too, legislation has been passed reducing rents and conferring permanency of tenure upon peasants and very soon the landlords will disappear as a class. In both the countries peasants organisations too have gained immense strength. One day before his death on 30-1-48, Mahatma Gandhi declared that in Swaraj India the real ruler must be kisans and that all others can rule India only on their behalf. Thus he gave his blessings to us all who have been fighting for political power for kisans and other masses. In fact, he has thus annotated his own assurance to our masses, given in 1945, that in Swaraj India, Congress would be fighting for democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

Today the Indian peasant movement is consciously fighting for the attainment of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

CHAPTER III

CONGRESS KISANS AND THE ANDHRA MOVEMENT

The birth place of the All-India Peasant movement is NIDUBROLU, an Andhra Village in the Circars. It must have been a very prominent place ten centuries ago, since the great Chola emperor Kulottunga laid there the foundation of a great Siva temple and a local kisan resident had been one of the Prime Ministers of the Chola Kingdom a century earlier. This village is also the headquarters of the All-India Handloom Weavers' Congress. Therein is situated the Indian Peasants' Institute founded in 1933 and opened by Mahatma Gandhi.

'The modern Indian peasant movement took its birth in 1923 when I organised a number of peasant conferences on my return from Europe, full of admiration for the Russian experiments and ambition to rouse our toiling masses to achieve a similar social revolution here also. I could not have met with so much ready response from my fellow kisans, even though quite a large number of them were so enthusiastic about my work, as I was of their own blood and profession, if it had not been for the revolutionary awakening caused by the epoch-making non-co-operation movement started by Gandhiji and the associated No-Tax Campaigns of Pedanandipadu and Duddukuru of Guntur District.' This became too clear to me when my efforts to organise the agricultural labour could not at all succeed since the Harijans were as yet not so highly developed in their political consciousness.

Between 1923-28, a number of us, Guduru Rama Chandrudu from the side of Harijans, Sri Bapireedu and myself from that of peasants, were trying to develop local organisations. In 1928, the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association was founded at the

Ryots' Conference held in Guntur. That was again the first Provincial organisation of peasants in the whole of India. Sri Bapineedu, myself and N. Satyanarayana the famous Co-operator of Alamuru, were elected the secretaries.

To provide a scientific basis, as it were for this movement, the two volumes of my "Economic Organisation of Indian Villages" were published in English and my thesis on "The Ryots" was published in Telugu in the "Andhra Patrika". Up till then, the programme put out by us was only one of rural reconstruction, scientific agriculture, better crops, greater productivity of land, consolidation of holdings, co-operation in agriculture and organisation of peasants for the relief of their immediate economic grievances. Moreover, such constructive ventures as getting more land irrigated, getting some land granted to the landless agriculturists and organising panchayats for villages and forest areas were gaining greater place in our activities.

The year 1929 is very significant in India's peasant movement, for it was during that year that I was able to put out the slogan of Kisan Raj for the first time in India, in my presidential address to the second Andhra Ryots' Conference held in Bezwada, and a few Socialists of U. P. and Bengal launched their peasant and workers' parties.

The slogan "Ryot Raj* did catch the imagination of the Andhra peasants. For they were tired of the Non-Brahmin movement, which discredited itself by following the British line and by opposing the revolutionary nationalist movement. They were intensely patriotic and yet, wished to assure themselves that Swaraj would really mean something more definite to themselves than the mere glow and buoyancy of freedom. They wanted power and they found in this slogan what they had been groping for.

*Ryot is an Arabic word, standing in general usage for 'Kisans'.

But even this political slogan did not catch the imagination of the peasants of many provinces since they had as yet not become sufficiently politically conscious. Just that necessary spade work was again done in a revolutionary manner, by the famous Bardoli No-Tax Campaign of 1928 conducted so successfully by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. That triumph of peasants' Satyagraha opened the eyes of large sections of peasants, all over India to their own political potentialities and encouraged them to shake themselves free from the age-long stupor and political depression and began to give wings to their political ambitions. Andhra peasants were not slow to learn their lessons from the Bardoli Satyagraha. They began to create mass enthusiasm for this slogan of "Ryot Raj" and it soon became a political power.

The 1930-34 economic depression, the consequent fall in the income of peasants and in the values of their lands and other properties and the rising burdens of their debts and the resulting loss of their lands opened the eyes of peasants all over the world to the menace of World Markets and the havoc caused by world capitalism. Indian peasants were not so slow in reacting to that calamity in their characteristically revolutionary manner. But it was again the Andhra peasants who gave a dynamic and countrywide lead. It is true that in the Punjab the Sikh peasants organised themselves into "Debt Relief Committees" and the Bengal Moslem peasants began to refuse to pay their debts and rents and rent arrears and even offered to go to the Civil Debtors' Jails. But it was the Andhra peasants who began to demand a moratorium for all agricultural debts and rent arrears and had thus provided a revolutionary economic solution to that crisis. This demand had its quasi-political significance too. Coupled with this demand, there arose the demand for tax and rent remissions. To give a dynamic momentum to these demands, the Peasant Protection Committee founded in Tenali in 1931 initiated for the first time in India, the political-economic weapon of peasant marches.

This combination of two economic demands harnessed to the Peasant March caught the imagination of the politically-minded but distressed, peasantry all over India and thus had the Andhra Peasant Movement gained an all-India hearing, momentum and advance.

Anti-zamindari Movement.—It was again in 1931, the Andhra Peasant Movement against the Zamindari system gained the ear of the Indian public. The Economic Enquiry Committee appointed in 1931 by the Peasant Association revealed the evils of the Zamindari administration, especially in the Venkatagiri Zamindari. It made the Indian public aware of the ugly fact that the condition of peasants in Zamindaris was as bad as the fabled plight of peasants in the Middle Ages and that in actual practice, the Zamindars were enjoying with impunity, all the privileges of independent princes, without their responsibilities. This too attracted wide all-India interests and the "Leader" of Allahabad began to invite the U. P. peasants to emulate the example of the Andhra peasants.

It was that historic Venkatagiri Zamindari Peasants' Conference which in the presence of the late K. Nageswararao and Satyamurti, Sjt. Biswanath Das (who later became Premier of Orissa) and Nellore Venkatarama Naidu, accepted the slogan "Down with the Zamindari System". I had the good fortune to preside over that Conference and to advocate that slogan. This too became, during the following four years, an All-India Peasant slogan and today it has come to be the watchword of the National Congress itself. The Congress Ministries in all the provinces are active in preparing and passing the Zamindari Abolition Bills in their respective provincial legislatures.

Rama Naidu.—The father of this Zamindari Ryot Movement, the coiner of the slogan "Down with the Zamindari System" and the revolutionary bard of the Andhra Peasants

is the veteran nationalist peasant, Nellore Venkatarama Naidu. He is a poor peasant. He is a self-educated villager. He is today the leader of many a peasant leader. Indeed he is the grandfather of the Indian peasant movement. And he is an Andhra, a scion of the ancient Kisan rulers Kakatiyas and Manamasiddhis. He is steeped in the lore of Tikkana of Mahabharat fame and saturated with the spirit of Mahatmaji. Nowhere else have I come across such a revolutionary, conscious and persistent organiser and galvanizer of peasants.

Some of us have been certainly influenced and inspired by Marxian and other schools of European Socialism and so, we could so easily conceive of and fight for the abolition of the Zamindari System. We could also dream of achieving the Kisan Raj or Ryot Raj. But how came it that this pure son of Andhra peasantry and literature and culture and the product of all that is best in our rural India has so boldly and far-sightedly begun to sing of the urgency of the need for the abolition of this very powerful but vicious system as long ago as 1926, that is 23 years ago? My answer is that the South Indian peasantry, with their two millennium old traditions of freedom, power, panchayat raj and self-respect and their thousand-year old cult of "Hero Worship" and love of warfare could produce a man like Ramanaidu, the redoubtable champion of our peasants and freedom of the press and of our country.

Influenced so powerfully as I had been by the inspiring Russian achievements and Leninist destruction of the monopoly of power held by the traditional, feudal, princely, commercial and industrial classes and even the priestly and intellectual orders of society, I could not have continued for all these 26 years my almost lonesome struggle for the recognition, by the great Indian National Congress and its spiritual preceptor Mahatma Gandhi, of the right of the toiling masses for predominant share in power in modern State and society, if it had not been for the ennobling, heroic and irresistible traditions of Andhra peasantry, tradition

that have their root in the glorious Buddhistic teachings and practices of democracy, enshrined in Amaravati, Nagarjuna and Ajanta sculpture; in the revolutionary exploits—missionary, literary and social—of Veera Saivism and Vaishnavism of the tenth and twelfth centuries; in the statecraft, organisational achievements — military, social and economic—of the Kakatiyas of the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries and in the military prowess, love of freedom and statesmanship displayed by the Vizianagar State of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and last but not the least, in the fundamental political fabric of Panchayat Raj, recognised and developed so far-sightedly by the earlier and later Pallavas, Cholas and Chalukyas, in which every caste or tribe was assured of its own autonomous Panchayat Raj and all peoples were able to live a confederational but with all that, a politically unified, life of guild socialism.

Indeed, if it had not been for these sustaining traditions of democracy and self-resp-ect, group life and self-confidence born out of memories of past enjoyment of power and prestige, freedom and self-expression, I could not have found the growing response from the Andhra peasant masses, which alone had continuously inspired me to persist in my work, despite the ever-growing obstructions.

Almost the same can be said of Tamilnad and the Punjab Sikh peasants. They too gave me and the Tamilnad and Punjab Sikh kisan leaders much more enthusiastic and inspired response to our call for Kisan Raj and for the abolition of all system of exploitation and for equality of status and incomes, of opportunities and employment in our social life, than the kisans of any other province. So far as the Tamilian kisans are concerned, they have had almost the same ennobling traditions of statecraft, heroic military achievements and Panchayat Raj as the Andhras. In some respects they can be said to be more zealous guardians and practitioners of Panchayat Raj and confedera-

tional social and political units of autonomy than even the Andhras.

The Sikhs are well known for their bravery, taste for military activities and spirit of self-respect. Though they are small in numbers, they are big in terms of political power, because they are great in spirit and moral strength. All this has been achieved by them mostly because of the teachings of Guru Govind Singh and his successors that every Sikh must be lion-hearted and should be among his fellowmen what the lion is among the animals of the mountains and jungles.

Similar were the teachings and spirit inculcated in our South Indian peasants by the cult of Veera Puja initiated in the course of the Palnad Battle of Karempudi on the banks of Naguleru in Guntur District. That cult inspired the peasants of South India so much that they were raised to the greatest heights of power, freedom and even empire-building. It was that inspiring cult that helped the South Indian masses to prevent the foreign rulers of Delhi from expanding their empire beyond the sacred Godavari right up to the 14th century and later on, beyond their beloved Krishna and Tungabhadra up till the end of the sixteenth century.

No wonder that our message of Kisan Raj made immediate appeal to those brave and self-confident masses of Andhra, Tamilnad, Malabar and Karnatak in the South and Sikhs of Punjab and Gangetic valley.

But this does not mean that the other peasants, especially the tribal peoples—Adibasis and Harijans—are incapable of appreciating and accepting this ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj just as enthusiastically. They too have had traditions of Panchayat Raj and even today they settle their own tribal or caste social and economic questions such as marriages, divorces,

debts, wages, unemployment insurance, and workmen's compensation in their own democratic panchayats. The tribal peoples consider themselves as independent peoples and treat their respective hills, dales, forests and lands as their tribal domains and are yearning for the day when they can become true rulers of their areas and establish their own tribal republics. Similarly even our Harijans are keen on Panchayat Raj. The Mahrattas, who are the most aggressive kisan masses of the Western Ghats, are even today dreaming of regaining political control at least over their beloved Maharashtra; just because the non-Brahmin movement had appeared to help them to gain that political power, they joined it for a while but the moment it became clear that it was a broken reed and that the National Congress was the truly patriotic organisation fighting for effective power for the masses, they have swung over *en masse* to the National Congress. Similarly the Gujerat peasant masses too have found great satisfaction for their passion for power in the National Congress. No wonder that all of them are growing so much more enthusiastic about the new ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj, placed before them, in the name of the National Congress by no less a man than the Father of our national revolution, Mahatma Gandhi.

But the reason why for such a long time and even now, so many great sections of Indian peasant masses have not rushed into the National Congress and Kisan Congress is not their political incapacity to comprehend or develop the demand for political power but because neither the usual type of congressmen nor Kisan Congress workers have been able, so far, to reach them and link up our modern ideologies and ideas with their traditional moorings and thus enable them to step up into the dynamic movements of their twentieth century world. Once this link is established, Indian peasant masses, more than any other section of our people, will soon prove to be the most powerful political forces of India.

It was because of this phenomenal response to our slogan of 'Kisan Raj," evoked among these masses during my propaganda tours of 1935 and 1936 that socialists and communists of the traditional Marxist persuasion took fright and began to complain that I was neglecting the proletariat of the towns and the agricultural workers of the villages. Little did they realise that I was as much steeped in the Marxist lore as themselves but that I was working for Socialism in the Indian context. My stress upon kisan masses was just as natural as the Western socialists first thought of the proletariat. Nor did they realise that while they were trotting out, parrot-like, the century-old western slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat, I was all the time taking care to assure the masses that what we were aiming at was really the Raj of the toiling masses, the kisans and mazdoors. However I took the warning and began to persuade the awakened masses of South India and Punjab that we should fight for Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.

All-India Peasants' Conference at Madras.—Even as this message of the Andhra peasants and South Indian masses was taking wings and was hopping on every peasant branch in every province, the need for a wider organisational endeavour and basis began to be keenly felt. The result was the All-India Peasant Workers' Conference held in Madras under my presidentship in October 1935.

It was then resolved to organise the All-India Peasants' Congress. Both the Communists and Socialists who began to fear the renascent peasant masses who began to march so rapidly on this expanding road towards kisan and mazdoor raj wanted to arrest this growth of an All-India organisation for peasants.

It was at this stage that both Sri Giri and Srimati Kamala Devi, the scions of South Indian traditions of Panchayat Raj, stood by me and encouraged me in my work. It was at this

stage that the Socialist Party began to obstruct our work. Their Bihar leaders issued a statement, just on the eve of the Madras Conference warning us not to go ahead of Provincial organisational efforts. Later, while I was touring different provinces to help local people interested in kisans to form their provincial organisations, I found that the C. S. P. was active in demanding that its members should not commit themselves to co-operation with my organisational efforts. Yet, our efforts were growing increasingly successful. When we met their General Secretary at Benares in December 1935, he agreed to co-operate with us on condition that we convened another meeting of the representatives of the kisan organisations, just at the time of their C. S. P. Conference at Meerut. I knew the strategical significance of such a demand. I agreed with it knowing fully well that none could possibly make himself responsible in history for an open arrest of the growth of the All India Peasant Movement. We met in Meerut and decided upon holding the All-India Conference at Lucknow in April 1936. That Conference met and decided upon establishing an organisation committee of the All-India Kisan Congress. It is interesting to note that one of the Biharee signatories against our Madras plan for starting an all-India Kisan organisation, so far reconciled himself to the inevitable that he accepted the chairmanship of the Lucknow Conference offered to him by the C. S. P. and Communist combination and agreed to become one of the three secretaries of the organisation committee.

The first regularly elected conference of the delegates met at Faizpore in December 1936. I was elected President. Once again some of the Congress Socialists tried to obstruct and finally break up this conference. But they failed. This time it was the Communists who came to our rescue. Thus, the All-India Kisan Congress formally came into existence but under the ominous auspices of a subterranean rivalry between the Congress Socialists and the Communist Party for dominance

over this kisan platform, which they had both tried but in vain, from taking shape and gaining momentum.

Ever since, the Andhra Peasant Movement, which had till then been ploughing a more or less lonely furrow and which had been the spearhead of the All-India movement, became merged in the greater and wider movement.

Let us pause here and observe that all along the Andhra Kisan movement considered itself only as a projection of and an additional source of strength to the greater freedom movement and its organ the Indian National Congress and never did it dream of pursuing national political policies contrary to those of the National Congress itself. Hence my declaration, as the President of the Faizpore Session, that the National Congress should be our common forum in which all these organisations should meet, discuss, decide and co-operate for the achievement of our freedom under its leadership.

But owing to the Marxist persuasion of the Congress Socialist Party and Communist Party and their by-play of rivalry for supremacy on every mass platform and their anxiety to capture and exploit every such front for the furtherance of their own political line, the All-India Kisan Movement was led on from one step to another towards its 1942 culmination, when the Communist Party alone remained in possession of most of the key positions of the organisation by careful and calculated planting of their people in all provinces and by elbowing out first the C. S. P. and next the Forward Bloc. And when the Communist Party adopted the Peoples' War slogan and began to exploit the kisan platform too in furtherance of their anti-Indian policy and commenced their sabotage of the 1942 August movement through the Kisan Sabha too, the Andhra and other South Indian Kisan Congress committees seceded from that All-India Kisan Organi-

sation dominated by the Communists and formed themselves into the nucleus of the All-India Kisan Congress. Thus the real kisan congressites took six years of excruciating experience to shake themselves free from their newly begotten friends, the Marxists, who proved themselves to be more loyal to the European anti-peasant dogma of dictatorship of the proletariat than to the dynamics of the Indian peasant world.

The Ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj.—The kisan movement could not be static and stand on the slogan of Kisan Raj. It moved on to the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Raj. Even that was not enough. It had to provide a progressive answer to the challenge of the revolutionary middle classes, comprising of professionals, intellectual classes and artisans. The Communists had no answer. Their dogma of dictatorship of the proletariat prevented them from being very enthusiastic even about Kisan Mazdoor Raj. Hence their half-hearted support to it, when I moved for its acceptance in the Gaya session of the All-India Kisan Congress in 1939 and their awful opposition to its final acceptance in the Palasa session of 1940. So, how could they so far depart from their Leninist moorings as to embrace the professionals also, not to speak of the artisans? The Socialists too were in no mood to move with us in such a dynamic manner. But we had no such difficulties. We were not bound by any European loyalties, limitations or institutions. Our only institutional loyalty was to our revolution. It was indeed our inspiration. It even proved to be our asset as well as our background. Our Gandhian heritage and practice have helped us to move forward with the dynamic needs of the Indian situation. So, we realised the need for an ideal that can embrace the professional and artisan classes also and inspire in them too the necessary confidence in the leadership of Kisans and Mazdoors. Thus we reached the ideal—our present ideal—of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj (K. M. P. Raj). Because this war has

put into its proper relief the revolutionary and progressive character of democracy and also because we were convinced that in the Indian Raj of the masses, no one class of toilers should be installed as dictators to the detriment of other classes, we decided upon the ideal of democratic K. M. P. Raj.

The Andhra Kisan congressites met formally in the Indian Peasants' Institute in April-May 1942 and adopted this ideal. They published their thesis in May 1942. I then had my talks with both Mahatmaji and Nehru about the need for giving an assurance to our toiling masses that power in Swaraj India would and should belong to them.

As fortune would have it, the national crisis came upon us all too soon. The A. I. C. C. met in Bombay in August 1942 and decided upon launching the national struggle. In order to inspire our masses it offered to place power, in the national government of the future, in the hands of the toilers in the fields, and factories and elsewhere. The Andhra kisans immediately recognised in this assurance of the Congress their own ideal and felt immense satisfaction. When at last Mahatma Gandhi assured our peasants through me that Congress stands for democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj, the Andhra peasants felt a justifiable gratification that they too could think out their ideals clearly, and constructively without being slaves to any foreign ideologies or authorities and without having to swallow the dogmas and doctrines of Western Socialism or Communism with all their historical connotations and limitations. As in the tenth century, when they gave to India the new and inspiring cult of Veera Puja, so in this twentieth century, the Indian peasants have the good fortune to hammer out through their own hard struggle, this inspiring hope of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. And today the great majority of Congressmen in U. P. wish to call themselves as the advocates of Congress

K. M. P. as contrasted with the C. S. P. although this ideal is common to all Congressmen.

One other triumph our kisans have achieved is the inclusion by Mahatma Gandhi in his constructive programme, the duty of Congressmen to organise kisans and mazdoors into their own class Congress—a stand so consistently taken up by myself and by Shri Giri for the last twenty years. Thus by now the Congress organisations of kisans, mazdoors, students, youths, and women have come to be embraced by the Congress movement and our national revolution.

These happy triumphs are the result of the heroic and ready response given by our kisans to the Congress leadership and Mahatmaji's clarion call for a non-violent struggle against British Imperialism. By their refusal to be exploited by Communists and by their persistent loyalty to the national revolution, the Indian peasants and the class-conscious Andhra peasantry in particular have won the heart of Mahatmaji and persuaded him to extend his inspiring protection and leadership to them too in their class organisations.

To come back again to our own moorings, that is, the Andhra Movement, it may be pointed out that we did try to win over the growing number of Socialists and Communists who were themselves springing from the families of prosperous peasants and professionals of our towns to our peasant movement. We thought we were succeeding in winning them and helping them to abandon their Marxist prejudices against peasants and to accept our ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj just as sincerely and enthusiastically as we had ourselves done. But alas, we were mistaken. During all those four years of their partnership with us, the genuine kisan congressites, they were only trying to exploit for their partisan ends, our kisan platform to build which we had had to struggle, sacrifice and toil so much for so many years.

Peasant Marches.—It will be remembered that the Andhra Kisan Movement initiated the peasant march in 1933. It grew to be a very powerful and popular weapon in the armour of the kisan movement by 1937. We were holding these marches at least once a year all over the presidency of 25 districts. And everywhere, the revenue officials came to look upon the day of such marches, declared and observed by our organisations, as the kisan day and to welcome our kisans to meet them in their offices at any hour right up to 12 o'clock in the night. This great weapon became so popular and well-known all over India that by 1939, its free and full use by our Bihar and U. P. peasants produced revolutionary effects. Unfortunately, the Communists seized upon this opportunity to turn this creative weapon into a destructive weapon against our Congress ministries themselves, so much so that Mahatma Gandhi was obliged to warn kisans against its use.

In the Andhra, we wanted to go one step further and so, initiated a peasant march from Itchapur right up to Madras. The Communists did co-operate with us. But we conducted it so constructively that when it reached Madras and presented its schedule of demands formulated by me with the aid of the information gathered by the marches, the then Premier, Rajaji had to exclaim that it was a constructive document and his Ministry wedded to non-violent revolution would be glad to try to implement it. Yet, we had not a little difficulty in preventing the Communists from eliminating our workers, one after another, from this great historic march. To the end, it proved to be the real peasant march.

By the end of 1942, the real Andhra Peasant movement, like that of every other South Indian province, came back to its own 100 per cent genuine peasant moorings of Indian nationalism and shook itself free from the untenable and uncomfortable domination of non-congress or anti-

congress political groups. We then formed the All-India Kisan Congress.

What do I mean by " We, the Kisan Congressites ? How have the Kisan Congressites been shaped into what they are ? What is their political credo ? "

Kisan Congressites' Peasants Institute.—Very early in our kisan organisational work, Ramanaidu and I found ourselves against one great difficulty. Most of the Congressites even though many of them were kisans by birth and profession, were not interested in developing such mass organisations as the kisan congress or trade unions and so we could not rely upon them in building up this mass organisation. So, we found it necessary to recruit kisans themselves and teach them the general principles of peasant and proletarian economics and politics of national revolution and the aims, objects, work and achievements of the National Congress and the various national and social revolutions of the world laying special stress on the Russian revolution. So our family were good enough to place property worth Rs. 75,000 at our disposal and thus has come into existence the famous Indian Peasants' Institute in NIDUBROLU. There, we have been conducting, ever since 1934, annual and half-yearly sessions. From the beginning we have been welcoming Harijans and youths of other agricultural workers. We have insisted upon common dining, the giving up of untouchability and other caste restrictions. We have so far trained and sent out about two thousand peasant youths.

In fact this was the first permanent political Training College of its kind in India. Later on, the C. S. P. started its training centres in Bihar and Andhra. And recently I have had the privilege of helping the Students Congress to run its citizenship colleges in a number of provinces.

Unfortunately those of us who were conducting that Institute were ourselves living in a transitional period in the revolutionary life of our nation and the National Congress. Mahatma Gandhi knew his own mind and also the road he was laying down. Pandit Nehru knew the Western socialist ideology. He knew also Mahatmaji's ideology, import and contributions. But he could not reconcile himself fully either to the Gandhism of 1920-40 or to the proletarianism of the socialists of the West. So he was pursuing a zig-zag way in close relationship with socialism of the West and in organic continuation of the Gandhian contributions. So those of us who were the products of Indian National Revolution and who had our moorings in peasant India and who wished to draw inspiration from the exciting experiments of Soviet Russia were trying to find our way in our expanding evolutionary era. Naturally, we could not all be so clear in our ideological understanding of the significance of India going the way which was leading us on to the firmer ground of Communist party. Hence the transformation of nearly 30 per cent. of our own graduates and 90 per cent. of the erstwhile C. S. P. Andhra youths into members of the Communist Party.

But because a great majority of our graduates had felt almost in the marrow of their bones, that the Communist way would be suicidal to Indian peasantry and that the way of the National Congress would be more suitable and creative for our peasants, they refused to be carried away by the ideological offensives springing from Soviet Russia *via* London and Bombay. It is these 100 per cent. peasant-minded people who have so loyally stood by our Andhra peasant movement and kisan congress and made it one of the greatest and broadest revolutionary forces in the Andhra.

It is these kisan congressites who have been touring all over the Andhra area, arousing the kisan masses, organising kisan committees in villages, taluks and districts and their annual con-

ferences. Peasant marches were being led, peasant days and weeks celebrated and peasant songs and slogans popularised by the growing number of peasant youths who have made it their life mission to work for the welfare of the peasant masses and develop their revolutionary capacities and fervour for Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. If it had not been for them, there could not have been developed such a self-reliant peasant movement in the Andhra, what with the cold-shouldering it received from the old time congressmen and the sabotage practised by communists and others. And thus a new and entirely peasantwise cadre of leadership has come to be built up during the last 15 years in the Andhra. It is these people who today have come to man the congress committees and provide their dynamic leadership.

But the communists have made, though in vain, their biggest and most determined efforts to alienate the Andhra peasants from their national congress and kisan congress leadership. From all over India they brought their leaders and allies and invoked the aid of Government, war-time photographers and spent money most lavishly and exploited the absence of all of us in jails and did their worst to make their offensive most devastating. But alas, they failed so signally. Both the Bezwada (1944) so-called All-India session and the Tenali Andhra Session (1945) were huge propaganda offensives against us ; their political leaders were themselves brought to abuse us. All their energies were concentrated to congregate people in those melas and poison their minds against us. But they could not succeed.

To come to the day-to-day activities of our kisan congress, the Andhra kisan congress has been trying to understand the fundamental but elementary needs of our kisan masses and to minister to them.

Village Panchayats.—One of the most important things

needed by them is the resuscitation of Village Panchayats in order to rekindle the age-long traditions of rural self-government. So, the Guntur District Kisan Congress brought into existence in 1931 the Village Panchayat Association with Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao as my General Secretary. Together we worked hard for two years, with the help of a number of loyal colleagues and we succeeded in founding 700 panchayats in that district of 960 villages; thus every village of some significance came to have its own panchayat.

One of the very first results of the establishment of a village panchayat was the payment of half anna in the rupee of land revenue to the panchayat from out of the collections made by Government from the local peasants. A beginning was thus made to regain for the village just a little out of the drain of its resources.

Secondly, we were able to get various roads, culverts, tanks, bridges and wells constructed in a large number of villages. All of them were worth easily Rs. 7 lakhs, out of which Rs. 3½ lakhs was contributed by the Provincial Government, the remainder being contributed by villagers by way of labour, etc.

Similar constructive efforts were also made in West Godavari under the guidance of Sri Gangaraju and the late S. Subbarao, in East Godavari under the inspiration of N. Satyanarayana and in Anantpur through V. R. Rao. Ever since, this village panchayat movement has gained independent momentum and today, more than half the Andhra villages in most of the districts have their Panchayats administering their local civic affairs.

During the war the Advisers' Regime wanted to hand over these panchayats to the village officers and government officials. But Srimati Bharati Devi, the then President of the all-India Kisan Congress, organised a special conference and raised her

powerful voice against that undemocratic move and it was fortunately abandoned.

The kisan movement has stood for the development of co-operative institutions for the benefit of our peasants. Most of our kisan congressites have evinced great interest in organising co-operative banks, marketing federations, land mortgage banks, stores and consolidation societies. The war has given a great fillip to co-operation and we have not been slow in utilising it to popularise co-operation among our peasantry.

We have also been advocating co-operative cultivation. We have organised a number of co-operative land committees for the landless workers, so that they can take over large extents of government and private lands for collective ownership and co-operative cultivation.

The kisan movement has also been advocating self-help among peasants with a view to increase the production of the total quantity of food, vegetables, etc., grown on their lands, around their houses and in their house sites too. Success in this direction is slow to come but it is being met with in a number of places.

Irrigation is one of the most urgent needs of our peasants. My efforts to bring 65,000 acres of land in Guntur District were crowned with success, after 6 years of hard work. Thanks to the organising genius of the late Pingali, a peasant, and the assistance of experienced engineers, Ramalinga Aiyer and the late Arogyaswami Mudaliar, we were able to get the whole scheme worked out in a pucca engineering fashion and get it accepted by Madras Government. This has shown the way to our peasants as to how the peasant movement has to harness the assistance of experts in engineering if they are to get their irrigation schemes carefully examined and quickly adopted by government. I found in my recent European tours that in

England, Denmark, and Sweden too, the farmers' organisations employ such experts with very good results.

We have been agitating for the commencement of Tungabhadra, Sangameswara, and Kamapadasagar projects and at long last, the dwarfed Tungabhadra project and Sangameswara project are now being taken up by Government.

The late Shyam Babu of North Vizag district used to agitate persistently for the development of Nagavali, Vamsadhara, and Mahendra Tanaya projects. They are yet to be taken up by Government. Similarly, Messrs. Kotireddi, Obulareddi, Balireddi and several others have been agitating on our kisan platforms for the development of various major and minor irrigation projects of Rayalaseema. The irrigation needs of this unfortunate area ought to have been given precedence because of its special liability to frequent famines. Yet her needs have been neglected. So, the kisan congress has developed the special media of irrigation conferences to press the urgency of this need upon Government. In recent months, the Congress ministry is showing greater interest in this direction. But even if Rs. 50 crores are invested in the irrigational development of this area it will not be much.

Forests.—The development and constructive exploitation of our forest wealth has been one of the principal concerns of our kisan movement. Sri Balireddi made this, his special care, organised the Andhra Provincial Forest Ryots' Conference in 1938 in Cumbum and the report that we submitted to Government was very much appreciated and as a result, the grazing fee was halved.

But there is a great need to do propaganda among our peasants to make them realise the advantage of preserving, and developing forest wealth and forest growth as an anti-erosion

measure. Immediately, our peasant movement is obliged to come to grips with the destruction of forests by Government and its contractors in their foolish search after charcoal for motor lorries and other purposes.

Cattle.—We have also had to do something to protect our cattlewealth. We found that however much we might be asking for more and more veterinary dispensaries, Government was not able to cope with the demand. So one of our peasant youths, Dr. Y. Sreeramulu, took the initiative, studied the practice by a large number of peasants of the Ayurvedic methods of veterinary medicine and developed his own method and means of administering Ayurvedic veterinary medicines. He started a dispensary, then a college and began to send out, every year, scores of peasant youths trained in this medicine. Our kisan movement associated itself with his creative venture and gave it every possible encouragement. We have also been organising a number of cattle exhibitions.

Subsidiary employment.—We have also realised the great need of our peasants for subsidiary employment and began very early in our organisational career, to propagate hand-spinning, weaving, hand pounding of rice and the development of various village arts and crafts. We have also been popularising the use of improved agricultural implements, tested seed, better manures and latest methods of crop culture, protection and utilisation.

Famine Relief Work.—Famine relief work is one of the most important tasks of the peasant movement in our country and especially is it so in the Andhra where the whole of Rayalaseema and the uplands of the Circars are so much liable to famines. I gained my first experience of organising this relief in 1927 when Ongole Taluk came to be in the grip of a bad famine. I then realised the need for conducting careful economic surveys of famine incidence and the needs of our peasants if they

were to convince government about the need for early offer of famine relief. I also saw that what all public relief could do would only be a tiny bit when compared to what government could be made to offer by way of tax remissions, taccavi loans, famine relief works, and irrigation development. I also realised how greatly our public relief works fell short of the needs of our people during the 1925-26 Nellore cyclone.

Se we put our Ongole experience to good use in tackling the famines in Rayalaseema in 1935, 1939 and 1943, in North Vizag in 1936 and 1940 and rendered timely and effective assistance to those famine-stricken people. Similarly, the famine and food mission started in 1946 by the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee and aided by the Kisan Congress has been able to draw the attention of Government to the real incidence of famine, and the needs of the people and thus succeeded in getting timely relief to the real sufferers. Unlike the Congress Party and others who paid greater stress on the collection of private subscriptions, the Kisan Congress has paid great attention to the organisational side and to making the government do its work in time and in full.

But one important thing we have yet to tackle and that is, the training of our kisan workers in proper methods of conducting economic enquiries, in stuyding government rules and regulations concerning famine relief and in seeing that relief is distributed to the people in need.

Burden of Land Revenue.—The Andhra Kisan Congress has been agitating from its very inception for the lessening of the incidence of land revenue and rents. It has contested the very basis on which the present land revenue system has been developed. It disapproved of the resettlement enhancements. So it fought hard with much success against the resettlement operations which invariably were resulting in enhancements of the

already onerous land revenue rates, to the tune of 18¾ per cent. As a result of the agitation of the late Sardar D. Narayana Raju of West Godavari and V. Satyanarayana of East Godavari, the Government had to appoint a Resettlement Economic Enquiry Committee which recommended against the proposed enhancement of 18¾ per cent. The peasants naturally were organised to resist Government's efforts to enforce that unjust enhancement. I threw myself into that agitation. D. B. R. Krishnayya, Needu, the late Raju and K. S. N. Murti were my colleagues. We formed village kisan councils in more than 300 villages and a No-Tax campaign was very much in the air. Then we were all arrested and put into jail and the movement was suppressed with a heavy hand.

But when I started peasant marches in 1933 on my release and peasants streamed in to join these marches, Government took the cue, and suspended the collection of the enhancement. In fact, that enhancement has never been subsequently collected. Indeed Government stopped all further resettlement operations all over the Presidency and stopped all enhancement and provisionally accepted the Marjoribanks Committee's recommendation to reduce land revenue by 25 per cent. That was indeed a triumph to our movement.

But in the meanwhile, our movement has moved on to the bigger demand that all revenue should be abolished except for the collection of the costs of resurvey of land holdings and preservation of land records and the institution of income-tax on agricultural incomes and to treat agriculture in the same way as industries and commerce.

This demand, though enunciating a novel principle at that time, has now come to be adopted in part by the Travancore and Punjab Governments. The Madras Government has yet to come to grips with it. The first Congress Ministry granted land

revenue concessions to the tune of Rs. 70 lakhs under the inspiration of Sri Prakasam, the Revenue Minister.

The question of relieving the tax-burdens on peasants has not yet been satisfactorily tackled by the Congress ministries anywhere in India. During the war, the Advisers' Regime piled up further burdens on peasants. The Sales Tax, against certain items of which our peasants fought in vain before the war, became a veritable drain on our peasants during the war. It yields a considerable revenue to Government and it becomes so difficult for the ministry to agree to drop any of its items of revenue.

In the meanwhile, the Kisan Congress has found satisfaction for one of its cardinal demands ; *i.e.*, the demand for prohibition. The present ministry has extended prohibition to the whole of Rayalaseema and Madras Province, which is indeed a great boon.

Our Kisan Congress has been demanding, as yet without success, regulation and enforcement of weights and measures. In 1939 and 1942 a number of struggles were conducted in Tenali and other places against the imposition of excess weights by local merchants.

As is well known, every merchant collects a levy in the name of charity on every sale of produce made by peasants and the latter have no control over such collections or their utilisation. The Kisan Congress demands statutory regulation of such collections.

The cost of marketing of agricultural produce is at present excessive and our Kisan Congress has been demanding co-operation in marketing. Some tentative steps were taken by the wartime Government and the present Congress Ministry to minimise the old middlemen and their ravages. But in their place, the

war-time controls have introduced the new menace of monopolists who are able to exploit both the producers and consumers and pocket the expanding margins of profits. The Kisan Congress is as yet helpless to fight this evil owing to the widespread corruption prevailing in Government departments.

War and Economic Sufferings of Peasants.—As soon as the war was declared there was a clamour for controlling all agricultural prices and for preventing any rise in them. Our Kisan Congress has put up a stiff fight against such clamours of urban people and pleaded for a reasonable rise in agricultural prices in view of their failure to rise to the level of industrial prices since the industrial recovery began. This was not to the taste of the Communists and Socialists who had mostly the interests of the tiny minority of urban proletariat at heart. The Kisan Congress succeeded in forcing the Government to stay its hands right up to 1943.

But when the prices of our agricultural produce that was to be exported began to fall precipitately, as for instance in the case of oil-seeds, owing to the loss of export markets, Government did nothing to fix any minimum level of prices. The Kisan Congress pleaded for protection and the Peasant Group of M. L. As. pressed for State action and Mr. G. V. Deshmukh continued to fight in the Legislative Assembly for adequate protection. In the Andhra, Sri K. Obulareddi raised an agitation on behalf of the cotton and oil-seeds growers and in the end the Government of India agreed to protect growers by instituting a fund and by offering to purchase cotton if the price fell below a prescribed minimum. Even this did not help our peasants so much, since the prices thus fixed were always too low.

The war has considerably worsened the condition of our peasants. Inflation impoverished them. Their food grains and oil seeds were requisitioned and compulsorily procured at too

low prices while there has been no scrupulous or successful effort made to provide them at reasonable prices with any of the consumers' goods or even the most essential iron or other agricultural implements or manures or seeds. Peasant masses have had to purchase almost everything they needed in blackmarkets at onerous prices. Thus they were cut both ways.

Against this unjust dispensation, the Andhra Kisan Congress and Srimathi Bharatidevi, its president, Bali Reddi, the Secretary, put up a heroic struggle right up to 1942. But owing to the imprisonment of most of us and the split caused by the Communists in 1943 in the Kisan movement and their half-heartedness about peasants, no effective protection could be achieved for the peasant masses.

Even after our return, most unfortunately for us, the Kisan Congress has not been able to afford even minimum protection to our peasants owing to the overwhelming influence that merchants and urban middle classes have come to gain with the highly corrupt administrative staffs.

And today, we are faced with the miserable plight that even the National Government at the Centre refuses to do the minimum of justice to our peasants by way of assuring them remunerative prices.

Thanks to the advent of Sri Prakasam's ministry in Madras and the Premier's great sympathy for the peasants, our Kisan Congress has succeeded in getting the much-needed minimum bonus for food grains. That is not enough. We must have a basic remunerative price assured to our peasants. The Andhra peasant has already put out the half-threat of an impending "Food Strike" if remunerative prices are not assured to him just as remunerative prices for manufacturers, margins of profits for merchants and wages and allowances for the proletariat

have been granted. The All-India Kisan Congress has adopted this lead of the Andhra kisans.

And throughout this long period of seven years of one-sided suffering and losses sustained by our peasants, the Communists have been pursuing an anti-kisan price policy under the mistaken notion of serving the proletariat who desire a cheap food policy.

Cattle wealth.—As if all this was not enough, our cattle wealth has come to be seriously depleted by the slaughter of dairy and draught animals for the consumption of defence forces, with the result that the prices of bullocks and dairy animals had shot up sky-high. This has forced up the cost of cultivation. Our agitation in the Central Assembly did not bear fruit. Our cattle-shows could help us only a little to increase the interest of our peasants in stock-breeding.

To make matters worse, Vanaspathi has come to compete with ghee and it has further lessened the income of our peasants from dairy farming. To fight these evils, Mahatma Gandhi has started his " Goseva Sangh " and our Kisan Congress has tried to strengthen its propaganda for better breeding and protection of cattle. The need for a National State Insurance Scheme for cattle and crop is becoming daily more urgent. How soon these schemes will come to be organised, we do not know.

Food Famine.—War has brought to the surface another very fundamental defect in our rural economy, caused so sedulously by imperialism and that is the growing loss of India's self-sufficiency in food production and her rising dependence upon export markets for her growing production of commercial crops. The terrible Bengal famine was only the catastrophic demonstration of the canker that is eating at her vitals. Commercial crops could only place money into the hands of peasants, whereas the capitalistic mechanism of world markets failed to bring, as

in peace times, foreign food grains into India, thanks to the control of all means of transport, the mechanism of foreign exchange and foreign trade by the imperialist control of India. Our peasants were faced with the menace of starvation due to food deficits.

Thus while the Bengal Government was taking away all surplus food stocks from peasants, for fear they should fall into the Japanese invaders, through the treacherous offer of higher prices, nothing was being done by Government to assure greater production of food and better means of internal transport.

Only two voices of warning were then raised ; the one by Mahatma Gandhi and the other, by the Kisan Congress. I advocated soon after my release in March 1942 the "Grow More Food Campaign" and the policy of remunerative prices and the Kisan Congress adopted these policies. But the Government accepted only the Grow More Food Campaign and achieved something in that direction but would not offer to pay remunerative prices. The result has been the continued dependence of India upon food imports (nearly 4 million tons in 1948-49) and the payment of Rs. 33 crores per annum as subsidies on these imports to make them cheap enough for our consumers.

Throughout all these seven years of trouble and turmoil, the Kisan Congress has been consistently advocating the fixation and enforcement of not only minimum wages but also the regulation of wages in relation to prices of agricultural produce with a view to protect agricultural labour. But since it has found that Government was not moving in that direction at all, it has been trying to persuade both the peasants and workers to pay and accept agricultural wages in kind, so that both may be independent of the rising spiral of prices. Its efforts in that direction have only been partially successful.

Landed and Landless peasants.—It is interesting to note in this connection that the Peasants' Institute has been advocating from its very inception, *i.e.*, 1933, a harmonious comradeship between the peasants and workers on the land, based upon a mutually settled relationship between the prices of agricultural produce and wages, both to be made dependent upon decent and rising standards of living of both peasants and workers. The Andhra kisans have long ago realised the need for a common front to be put up by both the landed and landless kisans. Hence their lead in founding so long ago as 1935 the South Indian Federation of Peasants and agricultural workers under the presidentship of the late Desodharaka Nageswararao. The charter of minimum demands prepared by that Federation is even today the most satisfactory and progressive charter so far prepared by anyone for our agricultural workers.

Rural Peoples' Society.—The war has brought into special relief the common sufferings of all classes of rural public — the peasants, landed and landless artisans, specially the weavers, the small tradesmen and professionals, the urban classes and masses— due to Governmental action. Higher and remunerative prices were assured to the urban people for their goods and services and lower prices imposed upon agricultural produce. Blackmarkets were allowed to prevail in towns and greater supplies of consumers' goods allowed for towns. The needs of villages and rural areas have come to be neglected more especially since 1940. So our Andhra kisans began to feel the necessity for a common organisation for all our rural population. On my release in 1944, (October), I took up this demand of our masses and gave organisational shape to it in March 1945 by founding in Delhi, the Federation of Rural Peoples' Organisations for all our rural population which is to serve as the forum for all mass organisations of different classes of rural peoples, irrespective of their political allegiances.

Peasants' Demand for Linguistic Provinces.—The Andhra peasants owe much to the Andhra movement in that it first brought them into political life. They know that they stand to gain much from the achievement of the Andhra Province because they can more easily play their fullest part in politics when the official language is Telugu itself and when they need not depend upon the few English-knowing intellectuals to make their contacts with our cultural and social life. They do know that this movement derives quite a lot of strength from professional classes and they welcome it. For this is a mass movement and it is bound to advance their cause for the achievement of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. The very small size in area and population of the Andhra Province and its Telugu, the language of the masses, are conducive to the development of democracy of the masses. Hence their wholehearted support for the conception of Andhra Province.

Adult Education Movement.—The Kisan Movement expects to derive similar strength from the Andhra Village Library and Adult Education Movements, in regard to which the Andhras can claim to have taken the lead, thanks to the initiative of Sri Ayyanki and Sanivarapu. So, wherever the Kisan Congress is founded, there arise a village library or reading room and a night school to spread literacy and culture. It is significant that Sri P. Naghabhushanam, the present leader of the Andhra Library Movement, is a peasant.

Need for Literature.—But these movements can make continued progress only when there is suitable literature. This was recognised by some of us. So Sanivarapu started the Hindustan Publishing Company. The Kisan Congressites have started the Kisan Publications and our "Peasant Song Books" made a great hit with our masses and it went through ten editions. But it must be admitted that when compared to the flood of communist literature in English and Telugu that

the Communist Party is flinging on our people, our efforts have only been a flea bite. We must redouble our efforts to produce and popularise nationalist, Gandhian, Nehruite, and K.M.P. literature.

The Andhra kisans have shown great enterprise in developing various organisations for their varied needs. For instance, there have come to be separate organisations, all affiliated to the parent Congress, for the paddy growers, oil-seeds growers, tobacco growers, village panchayats, inamdari ryots, zamindari ryots, irrigation ryots, forest ryots, hill tribes, and agricultural workers.

Agricultural Workers.—This brings us to the agricultural workers. Several people have tried to tackle their problems from different angles. For instance, the Adi Andhras who form a major section of our agricultural workers are organised into their caste association. But it caters to many of the economic needs of those agricultural workers. The Yanadi Association owe their initiation to Sri V. Raghavayya of Nellore and they have conducted a number of agricultural strikes in Nellore district against Police zhulum, forced labour, wrong measures and weights and achieved not a little success. The Communists have started as usual their rival organisations with branches in a few coastal districts and they are busy splitting the ranks of the few conscious Harijans who are amenable to organisation. Recently the Agricultural Labour Congress has begun to work for field labourers.

The Kisan Congress is anxious to assist all these agricultural workers' organisations which believe in co-operative and comradely relations to subsist beween the landed and landless peasants. It is convinced that both these sections of peasants have common interests to serve and common enemies to fight, despite some very serious internal contradictions. It knows that the crucial problem is the level of prices obtainable for agricultural

produce, which is the embodiment of the labour and hopes of all classes of peasants. It is only over their respective shares in that level of prices that both the landed and landless may have to dispute with each other. At present they have too little to share between themselves and their common task is to increase their total combined share in the National and World Wealth so that they can have much more to share. So the Kisan Congress has been trying to develop a united front between the landed and landless in their fight for remunerative and decent price-levels for agricultural produce and for the closing of the gap between industrial and agricultural prices.

At the same time the Kisan Congress realises the utter untenability of the existing unequal distribution of land. So it wants to minimise the number of landless peasantry by trying to get the maximum extent of land, now held by absentee landholders possessing more than a prescribed maximum extent and placing it at the disposal of an increasing number of landless workers, organised in co-operative land committees.

Such a method, if pursued zealously and developed with the assistance of the Government also, can give the satisfaction of co-operative ownership over land to a very large percentage of agricultural workers. It augurs well that the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee has also taken up this task of forming co-operative land committees for the landless and agricultural workers in different districts.

Ryotwari Tenants.—There is still the problem of rackrenting of their tenants by ryotwari pattadars. These tenants are as much exploited as the zamindari tenants. They have no fixity of tenure of land. Their rents are too high. They have no protection against failure of crops. The Kisan Congress is asking for suitable protection for these peasants too, without seriously encroaching upon the right of the pattadars. The Bombay Congress ministry has tried to protect them and the present

Madras Congress ministry too is contemplating the drafting and introduction of a suitable protective bill.

Mahatma Gandhi and Kisan Congress.—Two very significant developments have come to help us during the last four years. One is the recognition by Mahatma Gandhi of the need of peasants for their own separate class organisation as distinguished from the National Congress and also our acceptance of the political leadership of the National Congress for the Kisan Congress and limitation of the membership of the Kisan Congress to that of National Congress, so that there can never be any unhealthy rivalry between these two great organisations. The Kisan Congress can only be a source of strength, never an embarrassment to the National Congress in its pursuit of national revolution and freedom and independence.

Kisans begin to plan Village Reconstruction.—The other is the growing recognition by our Kisan Congressites of the need for Kisan Congress to stimulate the initiative of kisan masses and other villagers in planning, undertaking and executing various schemes of rural development and welfare. Much spade-work has been done by Sardar Sastri, Y. Subramanyam, the redoubtable champions of constructive work in surveying and experimenting with the better methods of production of various cottage industries. But dynamic development work to be carried on through the initiative of the peasants themselves has been taken up once again, by the Kisan Congressites of North Vizag, Krishna, West Godavari and Chittoor districts. When the tremendous problem of providing employment for the Burma-Andhra refugees challenged us in 1942 on the fall of Burma, our Kisan Congressites organised their marches, prevailed upon Government to provide famine relief works and also to distribute allowances. When such aids were coming to an end, they organised a number of co-operative centres for coir-making, furniture manufacturing and handspinning and provided employment to thousands of unemployed. Even more interesting

experiments are being made in Chittoor by two very enterprising young kisan graduates, Sree Ramulu Reddi and Rajagopal Naidu. They have built up village Seva Mandals in all the villages of a taluk, a Seva Mandal consisting of 400 workers, a village planning committee and a village co-operative service. They are getting the villagers to build their own village roads and connect their villages with the main business routes. They are repairing old and digging new wells. The special features of these experiments are that whereas we depended in 1930-35 for our Guntur Godavari Panchayat works upon 50 per cent. government grants and government's registration of our village panchayats, these Chittoor kisans have organised Panchayats on their own initiative and undertaken these constructive works at their own cost. Secondly, they are working out their own village reconstruction plans and are executing their works according to their own plans. This augurs well for the future, for it is only by the development of such initiative, co-operative enterprise and organisation of themselves into Seva Dals and working parties that peasants can work out their own salvation and become independent of any centralised State and its funds.

Experiments in Direct Action.—The Andhra peasant movement took the initiative and led the way not only in these various peaceful organisational, agitational and ideological methods. It has experimented with direct action too in a a number of cases. It was first in the field in that direction also, although it must be recognised that it learnt much from the successful experiment made by Mahatma Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Champaran, Kaira and Bardoli. But ours were the struggles carried on by peasant organisations as such.

As long ago as 1923, when the Collector of Guntur threatened the Kisan organisers with dire consequences if they continued their efforts to organise agricultural workers and landed peasants, the kisan organisers dared the Government to do its

worst. That Collector later became the Governor of Bihar and Bengal. He was Sir Thomas Rutherford. We grew to be the founders of the All-India Kisan movement. But to us all, there were the noble path-finders, the martyr, Hanumanthu of Palnad who was shot dead during the forest Satyagraha, Sardar Sastri, Unnava, Achari of Guntur District who were sent to jail for their forest and No-tax Campaigns of 1920. In 1927, the Madras Government threatened, those of us who were organising the famine-stricken people of Ongole, with criminal proceedings. We continued our work undaunted and Government had to yield to our demands for timely and full famine relief.

In 1931, when we were holding the second Andhra Zamindari Ryots Conference, Section 144 was promulgated and the conference prohibited. We did hold the conference and notified the district authorities of that fact and dared them to arrest us. The Madras Government beat an honourable retreat, so great was the mass support offered to our campaign and evoked by our decision to fight for the abolition of the zamindari system.

Venkatagiri Struggle.—Later in that year, the Venkatagiri Zamindar wanted to enhance the grazing fees in his forests and to deprive the peasants of their traditional right over their local forests even though they offered to pay the usual collective grazing fee, as a counterblast to our successful conference, our new agitation against the Zamindari system itself and growing strength of the peasant movement. We protested in vain. We requested Government not to interfere in that dispute between the landlord and peasants. We decided upon Forest Satyagraha. But I was arrested at Bezwada in connection with the anti-resettlement satyagraha. The Venkatagiri peasant association carried on that satyagraha. There was urious repression by both the Government and the zamindar. After six months of awful suffering peasants triumphed under the leadership of Sri Govinda Reddi, a simple peasant.

Even as that struggle was going on, the Zamindars of Munagala and Bobbili were taking cudgels against their peasants for having attempted to form their unions and invited me to go and enquire into their troubles too. One village accountant, Sri Rangarao, was deprived of his office, driven away from his village and his properties were damaged through the vengeance of the Munagala zamindar. A merchant was so much persecuted that he had to purchase peace by giving away six acres of land near Munagala town itself. A peasant leader of Bobbili, G. S. R. Swami, was taken to the courts and put to terrible losses.

We did give a general exhortation to all peasants in 1931 to brave the civil debtor's jail as a protest against the refusal of Government and creditors to grant moratorium for agricultural debts. Several hundreds of peasants went to jail and that forced creditors to grant some concessions.

These sufferings of peasants helped to steel the revolutionary zeal of Andhra peasants. So our enquiry into their troubles conducted on an all-Andhra scale in 1933 became a great success in giving a new fillip to our organisational efforts, and to our later Satyagraha campaigns conducted in the Andhra and in other provinces too.

There were a number of non-rent satyagraha campaigns initiated in North Vizag in 1934-37 under the leadership of Shyam Babu, D.S. Reddi, Latchanna and in every one of them, they achieved success. The late S. Suryanarayana, an educated peasant leader of Bobbili estate, conducted a guerilla satyagraha as it were, over a period of 20 years against the most oppressive local zamindari system and obtained some relief for the local peasants.

In 1938, the Nuzvid Zamindars were on the offensive, the zamindar of Gampalaguden going to extremes. As a result, the peasant leader Butchayya was beaten badly and his village

terrorised. We took up the task of exhorting the kisans of that neighbourhood to prepare themselves in self-defence. That campaign threatened to bring us into conflict with the Madras Congress ministry which would not protect our peasants nor would it allow us to protect them and also with Mahatma Gandhi who would not then allow us to pursue the same dynamic policy of self-defence, as he had later come to adopt in connection with the communal strife. We withstood that test. Our peasants became so strong in self-defence that the Zamindar had to withdraw his hooliganism. Mahatmaji too sympathised with our sincere efforts and excused us for our non-Congress but brave peasant-wise movement. It was this experiment which encouraged the Bihar peasants to launch their land satyagraha under Sahajanand's leadership.

Then came the land satyagraha of Tsadum under Swami Premanand's leadership and the Munagala Satyagraha under that of Rangarao of 1931 sufferings, K.V. Appayya, P. Bapayya, the leaders of Kisan and National Congress committees. In both the affairs, Communists tried to queer the pitch with much success in Munagala. But the Congress leaders and ministry intervened in time to effect a workable compromise. The high-light of the Munagala compromise was that the 6 acres of land forcibly taken from a merchant in 1931 by the Zamindar had to be returned to him by the landlord, despite a sale deed executed by the merchant. Several hundreds of peasants had to go to jail in this campaign and the communists, as usual, persisted in the struggle even after the compromise was effected and when neither peasants nor workers were no longer able to pursue it.

The classic example of what would follow when the Communists who are interested only in encouraging peasants or workers to get into a struggle for its own sake, as it were—in pursuit of their party interests of creating mere discontent among the masses and then driving them to lose faith in everyone else but

themselves, was witnessed in the Kalipatnam struggle. The Communists gave the rest of us in the kisan movement no warning and launched upon a struggle in an unorthodox manner, smacking of American strike methods, and forced the congress ministries to send a few hundreds of peasants to jail, though for a short period. The struggle was about a few thousands of acres of land over which the zamindar had no legitimate rights and peasants had their traditional cultivating and fishing rights. The zamindar wanted to make it all his private property and expropriate the peasants' rights. The Communists would not think of any compromise. The Government would not take the trouble to investigate carefully into the respective rights of peasants and zamindars, so furious it was at the Communist methods and so, the poor peasants have continued to suffer. It is only now that the Peasants' Congress and National Congress have unravelled the mysteries of the unlawful activities of the zamindar.

War and Kisans.—Let us turn to the political action of peasants. As soon as the war was declared some of us were against any willing co-operation with the war effort of government. Sri G.L. Narayana, my brother, was the first kisan and congressman who was sent to jail for one year for his anti-war campaign in 1940. We even flirted with the idea of starting an independent anti-war national campaign, at least on the kisan front, provided we obtained the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi and assurances of non-violent co-operation from Communists. But when we discovered that the Communists were only keen on getting us involved in a nation-wide struggle against Government so that they could exploit the atmosphere of struggle to their own party interests, we abandoned all ideas of starting any struggle independently.

Wethen exhorted kisans and their organisers to enrol them-

selves as satyagrahis under Gandhiji's leadership. There was a good response.

When the August revolution overtook us, the Andhra peasants were better prepared than any other section of our people anywhere in the country, for I, for one, never had any illusions about the slender truce that existed between the Government and Congress after the failure of the Cripps Mission. So the Andhra peasants rose to a man in every district and acquitted themselves heroically and thus demonstrated that they indeed were in the vanguard of our national revolution.

This marvellous response given by our Andhra kisans to the national call all so unexpectedly was in such terrific contrast to the unpatriotic role played by the Communists in Andhra. But it must be said to the eternal glory of our peasants that neither Swamiji in Bihar nor Communists in Andhra could stem the revolutionary tide of peasants. At every stage, the kisan masses have given the wisest and most revolutionary lead.

Thus the kisan masses in the Andhra have been trying to come to grips with the varied problems of rural economy and to develop their initiative in organisational, propagandistic and political spheres. So far they have been very dynamic and creative and all India has been looking to them for ever new experiments. They have retained the initiative almost in every sphere because they have been more advanced economically and educationally.

Defects.—But the Andhra Kisan Movement still suffers from serious defects. Apart from the Indian Peasants' Institute it has no office of its own, either for the provincial office or for any of its district offices. It has not developed any self-reliant financial resources. It is not as yet able to develop a competent and adequate staff to attend to the growing contacts with the

ministry and administration. It is not able to attend to the day-to-day public needs of our peasant masses in such a way and to such an extent as to make them independent of political and legal advisers, document writers and private engineers. It is not strong enough on its own professional equipment so as to minimise the illegal levies collected by the engineers and others of the P. W. D. and Agricultural and Food Departments. It has not even begun to pay a decent honorarium to at least one of the Secretaries of the District and Provincial organisations. No wonder, it remains a perpetual youth, a movement without an efficient office.

This is nothing peculiar to the Andhra section of the Indian peasant movement. All over India it is the same misery and this is not particularly characteristic of Indian movements. In France too, it is as bad.

But in England, Denmark, Sweden, Australia, Canada and America, peasants as well as others are more businesslike and are aware of modern financial needs of organisations and advantages of organisational efficiency. When I was in England in 1923 their farmers' unions were in such an infancy that I had had to canvas among their farmers of Oxford county to join their unions. Soon after that I started our Indian movement and the response given by our peasants was phenomenal when compared to the shyness of English farmers. Yet when I went to England in May 1946, and met the organisers of farmers unions, I was astounded at their efficiency, funds, paying membership and their huge staffs of lawyers, economists, agronomists, engineers, etc. The head office at Copenhagen of the Danish Farmers' Union is indeed a palace and it is built and maintained by that tiny nation of five millions. To some extent their funds, organisation and efficiency are due to the close marriage between their co-operative and farmers' movements. Yet their comparatively greater efficiency, organisation, funds and systematic and

sustained servicing of farming populations have to be emulated by us.

We have also to organise special schools and colleges for training peasants in the economics of agriculture, co-operative methods, the methods of dealing with the mechanism of government and marketing and accounting aspects of agriculture. We may organise them ourselves either independently or on government grants.

Even more than at present our Kisan Congressites have to develop co-operative enterprises among our peasants. The Kisan movement has also to lay greater stress on the political education of the kisan masses and the rebuilding of the social unity and variety of life of our villages. Our present propagandistic activity has to be supplemented by constructive and organisational development.

In conclusion, we can say that our peasants have displayed their self-reliant and revolutionary abilities. They have thrown up their own independent leadership from among their own ranks and have shaken themselves free from the uncomfortable yoke of urban intellectuals who proffered their leadership through the Communist party. They have even fashioned their own 100 per cent. Indian and scientific ideology of the Gandhian way and the ideal of Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj and they owe their allegiance to their Indian National leaders, Gandhiji and Nehru and to no foreigner.

CHAPTER IV

CHINESE AND OTHER ASIATIC PEASANTS.

In China, about the end of the first millennium after Christ, the Chinese peasants began to bestir themselves against their tax burdens and other disabilities. The great statesman, Wang An Shih, responded to that peasant upsurge and effected a number of valuable reforms. " His whole object was to lessen the burden of taxation on the poor and increase it on the rich." . . . . . He lowered the land taxes and permitted the peasant to pay in kind, if they found payment in money difficult. On the rich, he levied income-tax. To help the farmers, Wang proposed that the Government should lend them money which could be repaid at harvest time. Another difficulty which had to be got over was the rise and fall of the price of grain. When the market price falls, the poor peasants can get very little for the produce of their fields. They cannot sell it and have no money with which to pay taxes or buy anything. Wang An Shih tried to face this problem and suggested that the Government should buy and sell grain to keep the prices from rising and falling. There should be no forced labour for public works and every man who worked must be paid his full wage. He also instituted a local militia." Such a comprehensive, advanced and highly peasant-wise programme could have been the result of only a prolonged peasant agitation and the consequent application of the ruler's mind to the peasants' problem (Glimpses of World History—J. Nehru p. 168.)

As in India, so in China, the village commonwealth worked for peasants for many centuries. Many war-lords, rapacious governors and corrupt civil servants had come and gone, but in their village commonwealth, the peasants pursued cultivation

and cultural activities without suffering much harassment from these external political and military agencies. The interdependence of village industries built on the sure foundations of Asokan social ideals, Confucian and Taoist teachings, together with Buddhist principles of social service have helped Chinese peasant masses to enjoy a state of freedom and cultural satisfaction that had been unattainable for many centuries to the Western people. But all this changed with the onrush of European Imperialism and Capitalism. The World Markets came to enslave the majority of the Chinese masses to World Capitalism.

As in India, so in China, the feudal order oppressed the peasant masses just as mercilessly as its prototype had done in Europe. Just as in France, the landlords avoided paying any taxes but managed to live on the tax revenues derived from the masses by themselves becoming a part of the ruling class. So also in China the feudal classes came to form a part of the tax-gatherers and the 'great families' continued to oppress the 'small families,' a category to which the great mass of peasants were condemned.

The exploitation of the peasantry became so intolerable that peasants rose in revolt all over China against the Ming Dynasty. There were a series of these revolts. The leader of one of them "actually took Peking and caused the suicide of the last Ming Emperor. Only then, taking advantage of the collapse of the Central Government, did the Manchus convert their attacks into a permanent conquest."*

Peasants' Achievements.—Knowing that their main problem was to relieve the desperate condition of the peasantry

*Pacific Affairs" June 1936. Article by Wang Yu-Chunn. I am indebted to this journal for all the quotations made from this article.

and thus to stabilise their power and conquests, the new Manchu rulers undertook at once to allot land to peasant owners and to diminish the rate of land tax. The most important measure was the permanent settlement decree of 1713, under the emperor K'ang Hsi, giving the assurance that for the future there would be no variation in the rate of either land tax or poll tax.

But unfortunately these reforms were short-lived. The Manchu emperors were unable to keep their promises. They were at the head of a great engine of exploitation and they themselves were the chief exploiters, simply taking up the place of their predecessors, the Mings. So, they and their officers and their dependents went on piling up impositions and exactions and surcharges upon the bent backs of the peasant masses. As the landlords evaded taxes and as the tax gatherers were themselves free from tax burdens, the rising costs of administration were falling only upon peasants.

Peasants tried many methods to evade these growing burdens. Some attempted to abandon land and others refused to cultivate it. Some attempted to sell away land and become tenants of the new landlords. But because the new landlords were clever enough not to register the purchases, the original owners could not escape tax-burdens even though they had converted themselves into tenants. So many peasants of the same clan grouped themselves into a 'big family' by paying huge bribes—recurring and non-recurring—to the tax-collectors and thus lessened the incidence of tax burdens. All had to offer stiff bribes to every tax-gatherer in order to evade a portion of the many surcharges.

"The rich margin between the land-tax nominally listed and that exacted in practice was exploited not only by tax collectors and officials but by all who invested in land and evaded their taxes by passing them on to the peasantry." So the memorial

sent up by some statesmen complained in the middle of the last century that " the peasant paid in surcharges as much as three times the principal tribute ".

Feng Kuei-Fen, a statesman, complained that the tax-gatherers " openly declare a discount of 30 per cent. (in measuring the grain) and on top of this another 20 per cent. is demanded. Besides heaping up the surface of the measure, trampling it down, and ' seizing the pig ' they demanded food money and a transport fee, a tax-roll fee, a fee for stamping the seal, a fee for sifting rice, a granary door fee and a granary fee ".

" The grimly apt expression 'seizing the pig' refers to the squealing of the peasant when seized by the tax collectors to force him to pay up." (p. 209).

The rents and taxes were supposed to be paid in grain and it was being commuted into cash and even in the conversion operations 20 to 30 per cent. additional burdens were heaped on peasants. " If there was any delay, peasants would be lashed till the blood spurted unless they paid as a bribe, what was known as ' pocket money ' in earnest of full payment later."

Thus toward the end of the Manchu dynasty, the total of taxation centering around the land tax had swollen to the almost incredible proportion of 20 to 30 times the permanent and unalterable tax determined at the beginning of the Dynasty.

Peasant Revolutions.—One may wonder how and why the Chinese peasants put up with such an awful system of exploitation. In fact they did rise against it on many an occasion. But they were put down cruelly.

For instance, an imperial decree of 1799 admitted that "revolts are due solely to the insatiable avarice of the local officials who suck the peasants dry".

"Sporadic insurrections began in the reign of Tao Kuang (1821—50) the most serious of them being in Hunan in 1844 and at the same time there were scattered risings in Chekiang where the slogan of the peasants was refusal to pay the land tax, as it had been at the end of the Ming Dynasty two centuries before."

"By 1846, the pressure on the peasants had already become so severe that, in the words of an imperial decree, 'they murmured like boiling water, and rose against the Government.'

"The great Taiping Rebellion in 1851 in Kuangsi and before its defeat in 1865, had occupied two-thirds of the country. In 1853 began the rebellion of the Nien Min, starting in Shantung and spreading widely through the North, where it dragged on for years; and in 1871 there was another general rising in Shantung against the collection of the land tax. The riot of 1876 was really due to the fact that they hoped to diminish the grain tribute."

The Boxer Rising of 1900 arose, therefore, from what was then an established tradition of peasant revolts and there is no doubt that the Boxers were recruited from poor peasants who had rebelled, originally against payment of the land tax.

The Manchu Dynasty fell chiefly not because of foreign invasion, but because "its ruling class had wrecked the peasant agrarian foundation on which the State was built". So, the falling dynasty was "unable to defend the ruling class which had robbed it of power". But Western Imperialism came to its rescue.

Contrary to the expectations of Western Socialists that the intervention of Western powers into Chinese politics would help to break up this awful feudal engine of exploitation, the western powers "actually propped up the Manchu throne when otherwise it would have fallen. Their policy was to uphold the Manchu Emperor with one hand and with the other to relieve him of part of his profits, as the apex of the ruling class".

Rightly did Wang complain that the "Manchu rulers became process servers and executioners for the Western powers engaged in nineteenth century Imperialist exploitation. . . ."

So the agrarian revolution could not come to a head. The 1911 revolution diverted the attention of the masses to national liberation but raised hopes in them only to dash them to the ground again. The National Revolution of 1927 again raised their hopes but the Kuomintang and its internal struggles for ascendency as between the rival leaders on the death of Dr. Sun Yat Sen prevented the consummation of the revolution. The Communists alone had the courage to offer the biggest challenge to the feudal interests and the brood of corrupt officials whereas the Kuomintang started its New Life Movement and its shy agrarian reforms and co-operative movement to relieve the distress of peasants.

The very success of the Red China regime is mostly due to the peasant leadership and support. The only pity is that the Red China Movement has been hitched on to the Communist doctrine of proletarian dictatorship.

It is true that most of the generals of the Chinese Red Army are of peasant origin and almost all its rank and file are themselves peasants and quite a large number of the leaders of the Communist Party are peasants too. But the tragedy of it all is that the whole of this party is guided by the over-all Russian

leadership of world Communists and also by the Communists' century-old fascination for the one-class dictatorship of the proletariat and on the alleged prejudices and fears of peasants as a class. No wonder the Chinese Communist Party declares itself in favour of achieving the Workers and Peasants Raj ; giving precedence to workers over peasants even when there is no industrial proletariat worth speaking about in the agrarian areas in which it has been functioning. If the Indian Peasant Movement and its alliance with the National Congress is a hopeful sign, the Chinese peasants' subjection to the Communist is a warning to the peasants of all other countries. What is most material is not so much the character of the personnel—though it is indeed an important and essential factor—as the ideology, the political content and character of the leadership and whether it is a party of peasants or of proletariat.

So when the Nationalist movement, inspired and organised by their great leader, Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen, came to demand the abolition of new duties, Chinese peasants rose to a man, boycotted the British and Japanese goods, whenever called upon to do so, with such success that the Imperialists concerned had to reel under these blows directed against their commerce. They joined the Kuomintang, stood by their national leader, helped him to achieve the national and social revolution, to unify China, to liquidate the war-lords and to demand the abolition of the unequal treaties and extra-territorial rights and various concessions. By 1937, when Japan attacked China the entire Chinese peasantry were knit into one great national class, with an ardent nationalist and class consciousness.

It is an extraordinary coincidence that the modern peasant movement of both India and China should have been initiated in the same year—1923. Possibly, like us in India, those original founders of the modern peasant organisations were also influenced by the World War, the post-war economic crisis and the

Russian Revolution Their movement found immediate response from large sections of Chinese peasants because there was already the great powerful and military organisation of 'Red Lances' which had been brought into existence in order to defend peasants, protect their families, properties and villages from the ravages of rival military chiefs, dacoits, etc. The membership of the peasant organisation ran into millions. It concentrated on the special protection of those peasants who had less than 17 acres of land. It demanded liquidation of landlordism. The Kuomintang Government did confer permanent tenancy on peasants, reduced land taxes by 25 per cent., increased educational facilities, provided cheaper credit and controlled the vagaries of moneylenders.

Mao, speaking of the sectarian but orthodox proletarian politics pursued by the former Communist party leader by name Chen-Tu-Husin, observed to Edgar Snow: "I was very dissatisfied with the party policy then, especially towards the peasant movement. I think today that if the peasant movement had been more thoroughly organised and armed for a class struggle against the landlords, the Soviets would have had an earlier and far more powerful development throughout the whole country."

The whole world now knows the glorious part played by them in their national resistance to the Japanese aggression. Edgar Snow has immortalised in his book "Red Star Over China" their splendid sacrifices, excellent organisation, progressive ideals and heartening achievement in rural reconstruction under the leadership of both Kuomintang and Chinese Reds. And Mower has described the achievements of the Chinese masses in their patriotic endeavours and anti-imperialistic strug-

*Red Star Over China. p. 158. Vide also the chapter on "How Red are the Reds" in Snow's "Scorched Earth".

gles in his "China Fights for Unity". During the second world war, which properly speaking commenced in 1937, the Chinese peasants have acquitted themselves nobly and covered themselves with glory. They have led the way for Russians and others in their partisan warfare and 'scorched earth' programme. Fond, as they are, of their lands, homes, villages sanctified by the recollected memories of the deeds and thoughts of their ancestors, they have willingly left their villages and provinces, migrated to unknown and infertile areas, took up cultivation anew, and adopted co-operative methods of cultivation, marketing and other social activities and this raised the power of their national Government to resist foreign aggression. Verily, theirs has been a noble saga of revolutionary national resistance, and glorious organisational achievements through both the New Life Movement and Red Rural Reconstruction.

Lin Yutang, the famous Chinese savant, has expressed the fighting and self-sacrificing patriotic spirit of Chinese womanhood in the following words put into the mouth of grandmother Chao, pictured in his memorable book "A Leaf in the Storm". "Brothers and Sisters of the same world, I am an old country-woman and know nothing. I can't read or write. I know only that Japan wants to destroy our country and that we must fight them. I know that all the common people should love their country and I am only doing my part as a country-woman. My husband is too old. But my son and my two daughters are all fighting. We in the North-East in Manchuria have a saying "Tear down the house to clear out the mice".

Here is one of the songs, sung through millions of lusty throats of Chinese patriots, led by Lin Liang Mao, the student leader :—

"We are all raised upon this land ;
Every inch of it belongs to us
Whosoever dares to take it from us,
We will fight them to the end"

Philippines Peasants Risings.—In the Philippines there have been so far two great national revolutions, one against the Spanish regime and the other against United States' hegemony. Both were helped mostly by peasants. On the former occasion, the initiative was taken by Jose Rizal, who came to be known as the father of the revolution and who was one of the tenants of the Calamba Liocienda (Estate) belonging to the Church. And he mobilised his fellow peasants to rise against the Spanish Imperialist government. On the second occasion it was the Nationalist Socialist Party and Sakidatista group,—who relied upon the traditional nationalist sentiments of the Filipino masses (mostly peasants) and the " widespread peasant dissatisfaction with prevailing conditions to encourage and provoke insurrectionary tendencies "*—who joined hands with the Japanese on the occasion of the Japanese invasion and helped in defeating the Americans. For a couple of years, they enjoyed freedom from American Imperialism and achieved partial national liberation.

Evil Results of Americanism.—The old self-sufficiency economy of the Filipino peasant was broken up ; his small holding being gradually parcelled into uneconomic units or absorbed into the growing number of hocienderos. Among these big estates too, those owned by the Church—so many at one time—were also being purchased and absorbed by the Capitalistic and feudal estates. Thus the Filipino peasant " is now propelled, by forces over which he has no control, towards the breaking up of the old system".

Most of the Filipino peasants and agricultural workers are obliged to exist on sub-normal subsistence because of the feudal and capitalistic exploitation. " The low wages of farm

*Pacific Affairs, June 1938.

labourers prevailing on the sugar plantations reflect the general backwardness of the agrarian economy".*

As for usury, it levys a heavy toll. "Credit functions in a way, to assure the land-owner and the crop purchaser, control over the crops of the tenants and small owners." The usual rate of interest is "about 30 per cent. for six months".

Besides "obligatory services appear as a legalised practice in the contracts". The Fact Finding Committee found extra duties commonly required from the tenant include domestic service in the home of the planter, the building of roads, bridges, dams and fences and the planting of fruit trees. In one estate for instance, impositions were made on the birthday of the land owner, for fishing without permission, cutting bamboo for personal use, for gathering fruit from the trees or when the tenants' animals damaged plants, etc.

No wonder, the Fact Finding survey found that "the hue and cry of the peasantry is for a radical change in the present scheme of their relations with the all-powerful moneyed and land-owning class. In all provinces surveyed, it has been found that the average tenant does not enjoy his constitutional and inalienable civil and political rights. He cannot openly join associations or participate actively in any movement organised for his betterment without courting the displeasure of the land-owner and running the risk of being deprived of the piece of land he tills." (p. 64.)

The Quezon administration of the pre-war period fully realised the need for reform, indeed for an agrarian revolution. But being dependent as it was upon the goodwill of the landlords and moneylenders, it could but propose only moderate

*Pacific Affairs, March 1938.

demands. It proposed to prevent arbitrary evictions, to purchase some of the monastic and secular estates, and take steps against usury and expropriation of the small producer." In fact all these and many more reforms were being demanded by "tenant organisations and progressive leaders in the country".

President Quezon himself stated in his message to the National Assembly on 24-1-1938 : "In the past, taxation has not been concerned with the principles of justice and rarely has it been concerned with bettering the conditions of the people. Rather it has sought only to produce revenues and to place the burden on the backs of those least able to remonstrate ..... the wage earner and the small farmer as a class carry most of the burden; then comes the middle class and lastly the upper class." He recommended the abolition of the sales tax on prime necessities, reduction of taxes on professions and licence fees for small businessmen and suggested increased corporation, import and income taxes.

Was not all this oppression of the peasantry by the feudal and other upper classes, and the neglect of their needs even by President Quezon, justification for the revolt of the peasantry against the *status quo* in the hope of obtaining economic and social freedom also with the help of the Japanese invaders ? We do not know what happened on the fall of the American regime or on its reinstatement and how the Filipino peasants are now faring.

Fiji Peasants—Scorched Earth Policy.—More than half the population of Fiji Islands are Indians. The majority of them are peasants interested specially in growing sugar-cane. But the purchase of cane and the manufacture of sugar are monopolised by an Australian company which dominates the government. When in 1942-43, the Indian farmers found the prices offered by the company to be too unremunerative, they

refused to sell their cane to the company. But the company felt sure that the peasants' strike was bound to fail as there would be no other purchaser and as the peasants were entirely dependent upon food imports, which the Government would stop at its bidding. At that stage, the peasant-strikers did one of the most extraordinary and effective things in peasants' revolutionary career. They decided upon setting fire to their £900,000 worth of sugarcane standing crop. When that scorched earth policy began, their leaders were imprisoned. But undeterred by that, the peasants proceeded with their scorched earth policy and then sowed wheat and other food grains on their lands in time to assure themselves of sufficient food supply. Thus did they defeat the monopolists and force them to agree to pay the economic price of 45 shillings per maund of cane. They have thus shown the way to the present-day Indian peasants who are obliged to moot the idea of a "farmers' strike" in order to force governments (Provincial and Central) to pay remunerative prices.

Mongolian Peasants.—The outer Mongolian peasants who form more than 90 per cent. of the local population, successfully revolted against China in 1911 and achieved their national freedom but in alliance with their local aristocracy. But later on, they had to turn against their own feudal chiefs because they could no longer maintain them in their former state and luxuries. They were effectively helped by Soviet Russia in the revolt and they succeeded in liquidating their feudal order and achieving a peasant regime.

Korean Peasants and National Struggle.—The Korean masses imbibed a nationalist spirit so fully and became so consciously patriotic that Japan, their Imperial master, was hard put to it to keep them under control. Neither in the defence forces, nor in the civil service were Koreans confidently taken by the Japanese. The Korean masses were already ready

to rebel. But as "armed uprisings inside the peninsula have been impossible, attacks have been launched from Manchuria, where there are a million Koreans in exile".

"Too weak to engage in armed struggle, the Koreans at home have maintained a constant and very successful civil disobedience campaign somewhat in the Gandhian style." *

This national movement had three periods : (*i*) from 1919 to 1924 (*ii*) internationalist period influenced by Marxist ideology from 1924 to 1935. (*iii*) the national front for Korean liberation, beginning with 1936. During the first period the very small but powerful middle class took the lead. During the second period, satyagraha was being offered ; in the third period a united front between nationalists and communists was effected under the leadership of the latter. But later on Nationalists and Communists began to fight with each other. Again, an effort was being made in 1936 to form a National Front.

The biggest popular political force is the Chundokyo, which is in essence an agrarian party. "It is humanistic in teaching and says that 'Man is God'. It led a great agrarian uprising in the middle of the nineteenth century similar to that of the T'aipings in China and in 1919 had about two million members."

The sufferings of these peasants were as great and serious as those of China. Growing landlessness of more and more peasants and land concentration in the hands of a few landlords and exorbitant rates of interest and too heavy tax burdens and the absence of any alternative employment were the main causes for agrarian discontent. The loss of national freedom and the system of oppression imposed by the Japanese brought those Korean peasants into their movement for national liberation.

*Pacific Affairs, 1942.

CHAPTER V.

PEASANT STRUGGLES IN WESTERN EUROPE.

Greece and Rome.—In ancient Greece, slavery was taken for granted as a social institution by both Plato and Aristotle. The Grecian democracy became possible as much because of the toils of the slaves as by the love of freedom displayed by the Greeks. But it was the Roman Empire which witnessed the revolts of slaves. Especially famous is the slave rebellion which broke out in Rome about 2000 years ago, under the leadership of Spartacus, who mobilised a huge army against the regime of the slave owners. But the slaves were not in a position to set before themselves a clear goal.

"Frequently the slaves were mere pawns in the hands of the various factions of the ruling class who were fighting among themselves" (Leontiev—Political Economy—pages 41-42). They were put down mercilessly but they paved the way for the institution and popularisation of the safety-valve of monumission which helped many a slave to obtain liberty and emerge into the status of a serf or villein or even a free peasant. The right of a slave-owner to put his slave to death was abolished and the duty of feeding and tending him was cast on him. But this hard-earned serfdom was itself intolerable and subjected peasants to many barbarities. M. Pribichevich says "When serfdom was abolished in Western Europe, it was found that the peasants had been bound to some 150 givings and doings for the landlords. The kingdom of Naples broke the record; there, the land barons were entitled to 1395 various privileges, favours and credits from their peasants". Europe has ever since been in revolt against this vicious system.

French Revolts.—There seems to have been a wave of

revolts against the growing feudal oppressions of the French and English society of the fourteenth century. The dearth of man-power caused by the Crusades, internecine feudal wars and the Black Death raised the value of slaves and villeins and caused a ferment of social forces. The French peasants—not yet free from serfdom—rose in their Jacquerie revolts of 1358 and struck terror into the feudal lords.

" Wherever they went," says Froissart, " all of their rank and file followed them whilst everyone also fled, carrying off with them their ladies, damsels and children, ten or twenty leagues distant " . . . . . " The people without leader and without arms, plundered and burnt all the houses they came to, murdered every gentleman . . . . He who committed the most atrocious actions was the most applauded." This Froissart was "filled with all the prejudices of the upper middle class".

But why did they rebel ? Because they were made to live the life of beasts and like beasts, they turned to bay. But how could those revolts have taken place simultaneously unless there had been some half-concerted plans and a few local leaders who thought of remedying their miserable conditions ?

England.—A more formidable and better organised and integrated revolt took place in England during the same Century. This ability to rebel and organise to achieve their freedom was " won in the teeth of constituted authority in defiance of parliaments, landlords, justices of the peace and sheriffs. It was the result in many cases of a nomad life, in others of illegal unions and strikes".

The age of Wycliffe.—The peasants organised into a " Great Fellowship, " were led by John Ball, a clergyman, and a number of educated people who had sprung

from the free peasantry and lower middle classes of the country towns. The great scarcity of labour brought about by the ravages of Black Death, helped the peasants to realise their own special importance in the rural economy and the helplessness of feudal lords without their co-operation. The Wycliffe rebellion against the orthodoxy of the Church and the prevalence of ideas of Christian Communism, in the wake of the publication of the English translation of the Bible, gave them some ideological strength and they found a great leader and preacher in John Ball.

Over a number of countries a whirlwind campaign was carried on. John Ball, Wat Taylor, John Shirk, Adam Clyme and many others carried on spirited propaganda and set the peasants on fire and told them that the land belonged to them. Large numbers of peasants were " wandering armed, with arms displayed". They devised their own " standards". They had meetings. They made a list of manor houses and record houses which had to be burnt. They drew up a list of feudal tyrants to be tried and hanged. They made careful plans. Their idea was that the new young king being a good man, would listen to their pleadings, realise his mistake of depending upon his feudai councillors and place himself at the head of his loyal people in preference to the feudal tyrants, if only he were convinced and shown the way to right decisions. It was this childish faith in the King that proved to be their undoing. In other respects, their movement was surprisingly modern in its demands, clear-sighted objectives and programme, organisation, propaganda and revolutionary activity.

Let us hear what fell from the lips of John Ball on one of those memorable occasions :—

"Things will never go well in England so long as goods be

not in common and so long as there be villeins and gentlemen. By what right are they lords, greater folk than we ? On what grounds have they deserved it ? Why do they hold us in serfage . . . . . how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it be not that they make up gain for them by our toil what they spend in their pride ? They are clothed in velvet and warm in their furs and their ermines while we are covered with rags. They have wine and spices and fair bread ; and we eat cake and straw and water to drink. They have leisure and fine houses ; we have pain and labour, the rain and the wind in the fields. And yet it is of us and of our toil that these men hold their State." This peroration could be so extraordinarily modern and effective because John Ball was talking about the actual sufferings and feelings of his fellow-peasants. The same capacity to discern facts and eloquently to express their feelings is latent in modern peasant masses too.

We get an idea of the great struggle carried on by those 14th century English peasants from the following glimpses given by the Assize Rolls, published in 'English Economic History' by R. H. Tawney.

Richard de Leycastre of Ely was alleged to have assembled a company of his comrades and commanded "that they should go with him to the monastery of Ely to stand with him, while he, in the pulpit, should declare to them and all others the matters to be performed on behalf of kind Richard and the Commons against traitors and other disloyal men." . . . and they "feloniously broke the prison of the Lord Bishop of Ely at Ely and feloniously led away divers felons there imprisoned".

When he was asked whether he had anything to say in his defence, he proudly "preferred a protection of the Lord the King granted to him for the security of his person . . . . . to endure

for one year." Yet, the unconstitutional and vengeful Assizes condemned him unlawfully to death.

Adam Clymme, it was alleged, "feloniously . . . . . broke and entered the close of Thomas Somenour and there took and carried away divers rolls estreats of the green wax . . . . and other monuments touching the Court. . . . and forthwith caused them to be burned there . . . . ".

He went about warning people that "no man of whatsoever condition he were, free or bond should obey his lord to do any services or customs under pain of beheading, otherwise than he should declare to them on behalf of the Great Fellowship". And so treacherously took upon him royal power. When asked, he stoically replied that "he is not guilty of the premises imputed to him . . . and hereof puts himself on the country".

That to dream of and demand political power is not the special prerogative of either the upper classes or the proletariat and that peasants have been aiming at it, whenever opportunity offered and that even today, as of old they realise the value of political power is indicated by the activities of those early untutored English peasants.

Even such an unsympathetic and anti-peasant writer as Froissart wrote that Tyler addressed his peasants thus :—

"These liberties that the King has given us are to us but a small profit ; therefore let us all be of one accord . . . and if we be first lords of London and have the possession of the riches that are therein, we shall not repent . . . do the King no hurt ; We . . shall do with him as we list, and shall lead him with us all about England and so shall we be lords of all the realm without doubt." Alas, their faith in the King proved to be their undoing. So "of the taking of them, the King and his lords were glad, and

strake off their heads, and Wat Tyler's also and they were set upon London Bridge."

There was another peasant rebellion in 1549 A. D., led by Robert Kett and Thomas Aldryche in Norfolk. But this time, peasants did not aim at the capture of the State. They contented themselves with more modest demands. The formulation and narration of their demands were very modern in their technique and show that peasants, though generally slow in taking to political action, have always been characteristically sound, practical and definite in their demands. To indicate that the modern peasant movement is in direct line of succession to that of the English peasantry of the sixteenth century, the following extracts from the "Demand of the Rebels" are given :

1. "Whereas the lords of the manore hath been charged with cert free rent; the same lords hath sought means to charge the free holders to pay the same rent."

2. "Priests from henceforth shall purchase no lands neither free nor bondy and the lands that they have in possession may be letten to temporal men as they were in the first year of . . . . . King Henry VII."

* * * * * * *

6. "All bondsmen may be made free, for *God made all free with his precious blood-shedding.*"

7. "All rivers may be free and common to all men for fishing and passage."

8. "The poor mariners or fishermen may have the whole profits of their fishings".

* * * * * * *

We can picture these early assemblies of different cadres of peasants, ranging from free and copy holders to bondsmen, sitting together in their small huts or by the big oak or chestnut trees and discussing their grievances, discovering the remedies

and then formulating their common and united programme of demands to be submitted to the king. These poor men had learnt the bitter lesson of the earlier revolution and so would not demand complete political power. They would concentrate on their immediate economic grievances, demand the enforcement of the existing laws, pray for the prevention of encroachments on their rights by the more powerful lords and had enough political sense to concentrate their grievances upon the agencies of oppression. Despite all their care, they were treated as rebels and dealt with as such.

The results of the peasant rising may be briefly indicated as follows :—

1. The process of manumission was quickened and "in James I's regime, it became a legal maxim that every Englishman was free".

2. Temporary reaction set in and "philanthropic legislation in the direction of emancipating the serfs was delayed".

3. Yet, " the landlord had learned to fear his serf".

4. "The peasantry were not tamed by the terrors of royal justice."

5. " The rising was a sign of national energy . . . of independence and self-respect in the mediaeval peasants, from whom three quarters of our race of all classes and in every continent are descended."*

Diggers.—The English Revolution against Charles I was successful because it was supported by yeomen and other peasants, some of the landlords and the rising bourgeoisie. When eventually the Commonwealth was firmly established, the monasteries were sequestered and their lands grabbed by the feudal lords and the powerful sections of yeomen and the enclosure movement received a new impetus, while the commoners, the

* England in the Age of Wycliffe (P.253).

rank and file of peasants were denied even their usual privileges on the commons. But persuaded as they were by the early Christian teachings, large numbers of the disappointed landless peasants, that is, the emancipated and erstwhile serfs proceeded to claim the right to plough and dig land and raise crops as their birthright. But as has been the case with most revolutions and doings of the revolutionary governments, "the politics of Westminster were not those of the village and borough" and the victorious lords were only keen on getting their policy of enclosing the Commons, recognised by the new State. The levellers who formed quite an important element in the army were keen "to lay open all enclosures . . . . or have them enclosed only or chiefly for the benefit of the poor". But the former gained control of the state and were therefore able to defeat the latter.

Winstanely, the leader of the Diggers and Levellers argued, though vainly that "seeing the common people of England by joint consent of person and purse have cast our Charles, our Norman oppressor . . . the land now is to return into the joint hands of those who have conquered, that is the commoners" and that the victory over the king was incomplete as long as "we remain slaves still to the kingly power in the hands of lords of manors". Thus he realised that the most fundamental thing for the masses to achieve was "the kingly power". But it was what eluded the Levellers and Diggers and Cromwell crushed their movement with an iron hand.

"The silence that shrouds these village revolutions was not quite unbroken, but the cry that disturbed it is like a noise that breaks for a moment on the night and then dies away, only serving to make the stillness deeper and more solemn. . . . . The poor have no heirlooms and there was no millet to preserve the sorrow and despair of the homeless and dispossessed."

Post-Napoleonic England with its dominant class of rulers has left " bright and ample records of its life in literature, in art, in political traditions, in the display of great orations and debates . . . . ; it has left dim and meagre records of the disinherited peasants that are the shadow of its wealth." (Hammord's Village Labour, Vol. II, p. 137.)

It is interesting to realise that nearly 120 years ago, the English agricultural workers began their struggle for the establishment of a Living Wage and organised their revolts on village and country-scale and in many counties and made terrible sacrifices, more than a hundred going to the scaffold and several hundreds welcoming transportation for life.

What is even more inspiring is that they had the active or silent support of the farmers, under whom they were working and whenever farmers happened to be in the jury, they obtained their sympathy and support. Those English workers and farmers had anticipated by 110 years our present-day Kisan-Congress programme of united front between these two sections of the kisan class and realised the dependence of wages upon the economic condition of farmers and the inevitability of their united action if at all agricultural wages were to be raised. But as had been the case with so many agrarian revolts and movements, " there is no ground for concluding that there has been any extensive consent amongst them". (The Village Labourer, Vol. II, p. 48.) And that was the tragic feature of those agrarian revolts. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond say in their classical work *The Village Labourer*: " It often happened that the farmers would agree to pay the wages demanded by the labourers but would add that they could not continue to pay those wages unless rents and tithes were reduced". The labourers generally took the hint and turned their attention to tithes and rents ; their usual procedure was to go in a body to the rector often accompanied by the farmer, and demand an abatement of

tithes or else to attend the tithe audit and put some not unwelcome pressure upon the farmers to prevent them from paying." (p. 49).

One worker described thus how the agricultural workers of Brede High had co-operated with farmers in getting the tithes reduced so as to make easier for farmers to raise their wages and thus assure them a living wage. "A little before the tithe audit, the employers approached their workers with the suggestion that labourers should see if they could get a little of the tithe off." Then, "we went to the tithe audit and spoke to the officer, begging as well as we could, for him to throw something off for us and our poor children and to set up a school for them". (p. 51.)

That what the historians said regarding the so-called dissatisfaction of English workers with the introduction of threshing machines by farmers being the main cause of the agrarian riots of 1830 is not at all the truth is borne out by the fact that "the greatest number of the threshing machines destroyed have been put out for the purpose by the owners themselves" and "the farmers in many cases made no objection to the destruction of their threshing machines". Why? Because they did not "have the wish to put down disturbances". (p. 67) Why? Because often the agricultural workers "were accompanied by a good many farmers who had agreed to raise wages if the labourers would undertake to obtain a reduction in tithes" and no wonder "farmers looked on while the destruction (of the machines) proceeded." (p. 62).

But the upper classes and Government would not yield to the demands of workers. So they pursued a severe repressive policy. "The gaols were full to overflowing and the Government appointed Special Commissions to try the revolters in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Berks and Bucks." (P. 72). Although

it was stated in Parliament that "in 19 cases out of 20, the farmers encouraged the labourers . . . . the county authorities evidently thought it unwise to prosecute the farmers." (p. 84).

Besides the farmers, the village artisans too took sides with the workers, thus demonstrating the traditional strength of the social unity of villagers. "The village mechanics, the wheelwrights, carpenters, joiners, smiths and the bricklayers, shoemakers, shepherds and small holders were often prominent in the disturbances" (p. 85). This was a 'riddle' to the judges; "the threshing machines had done these men no injury; they had not known the sting of hunger; till the time of the riots their characters had been as a rule irreproachable."

But they were a little more educated; they understood the causes for the misery of the agricultural workers and realised that both prosperity and poverty would be indivisible. For instance, the two brothers, Joseph and Robert Mason who came to be sentenced to transportation for life, had "exemplary character. But "their opinions were dangerous; they regularly took in Cobbett's Register and read it aloud to twenty to thirty of the villagers. Further, Joseph had carried on foot a petition for reform to the King at Brighton from 177 persons belonging to the working and labouring classes." (p. 86).

That the cruellest repression did not destroy the spirit of the people and that they continued to show comradeship towards even those who were sentenced to death is indicated by the fact that when one cook was hanged his villagers considered the punishment "as murder" and "subscribed their pennies to get the mis-statement about the cook taken out of the newspapers. When his body was brought home after execution, the whole parish went out to meet it". (p. 8). No wonder Isaac Looker, a prosperous farmer was also accused of having written a letter saying that "it was the magistrates and the soldiers and not the

mobs who were the real breakers of the peace." (p. 198).

As was usual with agrarian risings, one of the features of this too was " firing of stocks, and ricks and barns. . . . Fires broke out even in counties where the organised rioting made little progress".

Thoughts of Rural People.—Coming to the ideological background of this rising, we find that Richard Carlile wrote a thesis in 1831, for which he was tried and sentenced for two years. He wrote that "the more tame you have grown, the more you have been oppressed and despised, the more you have been trampled on". He praised the workers for their revolts.

Suffield worked out a practical policy of land reform, which is so much like our own in India. The wonder is that a century has elapsed since he had outlined it and we have yet to achieve it. His programme of restoration of land to workers had the merit of applying "public money to establishing labourers with a property of their own, so that whereas under the existing system, public money was used, in the form of subsidies from the rates, to depress wages, public money would be used under this scheme to raise them to make the labourers independent of the farmers and to substitute the competition of employers for the competition of employed".

He understood the need for protecting workers from farmers too. So he maintained that "if rents and taxes were reduced the farmer would be able but would not be compelled to give better wages; if taxes on the labourers' necessities were reduced, the labourers would be able to live on a smaller wage and as long as they were scrambling for employment they were certain to be ground down to the minimum subsistence". To help them not to be so much dependent upon farmers, he suggested that Government should purchase land " at present waste, and com-

pelling priests, with the help of a public loan, to set up labourers upon it and to build cottages with a fixed allotment of land." (pp. 125-6).

After all his vain trials, Suffield concluded in a manner that re-echoes in our hearts equally hurt by the indifference of the upper classes to all our ideals and schemes for the betterment of the plight of peasants. He exclaimed that " with the exception of a few individuals, the subject is deemed by the world a bore, everyone who touches on it is a bore, and nothing but the strongest conviction of its importance to the country would induce me to subject myself to the indifference that I daily experience when I venture to intruce the matter on the attention of legislators." (P. 127.) How well did he express what so many of us have experienced between 1923 and 1946 !

At long last, Suffield is being more than vindicated by the post-war legislation in many countries in favour of agricultural labour.

German Peasant Rebellion —The early Communist spirit as doled out by the Bible, in its translations in local languages, continued to rouse the German peasants also. When they found such eminent clergymen as Luther, and Hubse, rising in revolt against the Church of Rome and making Protestantism quite popular and legitimate, they too felt that they could as legitimately rise against their feudal lords who had till then been sanctified by the blessings of the Church. Their sufferings were unbearable, their suppression appeared to be unjustifiable in the eye of the Bible and their thoughts of rebellion did not appear to be inconsistent with the great revolt initiated by Luther and supported by the Princes. So, the German peasants rose simultaneously and set about killing feudal lords and their agents, burning down their palaces and records and occupying their lands and commons. They came very near complete success in destroying the feudal structure.

Unfortunately Martin Luther was not a social revolutionary. Though he rose from peasant stock, he was an unregenerate and brutish votary of reaction and feudalism. So the false prophet, in whose earlier tempestuous teachings of the sacredness of rebellion they found so much inspiration, turned against them. The very violence and intemperance of his vile outburst against peasants is a measure of the degree and nature of that great revolutionary revolt of German peasants.

Luther barked and hissed. The demand of peasants for the abolition of serfdom and for the reinstatement of the communal rights for free fishing and hunting was opposed by him on the ground that it "should make all men equal and so change the spiritual kingdom of Christ into an external worldly one". What a perversion of Christ's Communist teachings ! He shouted 'Impossible'. An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects. These are so much like the thoughts of the present-day conservatives of all climes ! Then he published his cruel and blood-thirsty slogans—"Let all who are able mow them down, slaughter and stab them openly or in secret and remember that there is nothing more poisonous, noxious and utterly diabolical than a rebel. You must kill him as you would a mad dog ; if you do not fall upon him, he will fall upon you and the whole land . . . A man who is convicted of the crime of rebellion is under the ban of God and the emperor and every Christian can and should slaughter him and will thus be doing a good deed."

To continue to consider peasants as not revolutionary when their revolution had provoked a religious leader to such outbursts is to display unreasoning prejudice. That great revolution failed because of various reasons. The peasants did not have a national leadership. They were too much under the influence of religion. They could not plan and take concerted action all

over Germany. They had neither education nor knowledge of any previous revolutionary struggle to guide them. So, though they came within an ace of victory, they lost and lost grievously.

The wonder is not that their revolution was put down but that despite the most cruel butchery that was perpetrated by the priests in dealing with them, their spirit of revolt and thirst for freedom were not extinguished. Successive generations of German peasants went on revolting. In the wake of the depopulation and social unrest caused by the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) the peasants tried to evade the feudal regulations and to avoid working for their feudal lords and to escape to towns. So great did this trouble become that "villagers were forbidden to let rooms to unmarried men and women. Such persons were to be reported to the authorities and were to be imprisoned if they were unwilling to be servants, even if they were employed at their work, such as sowing for the peasants on daily wages or if they were dealers." Marx proceeds to say "For a whole century in the decrees of the lesser German rulers, we read bitter invectives concerning the wicked and impertinent rabble that will not reconcile itself to its hard lot, will not be content with the legally prescribed wages." (Capital—Vol. II).

The troubles of German peasants were many. "Direct taxes, forced labour, servitude of various kinds, continue to crush the German agriculturist who must in addition pay indirect taxes upon everything that he buys . . . . To heap ruin upon ruin, he dares not sell his produce where he pleases ; he does not buy whatever he needs from traders who could supply it at the lowest prices . . . he would be quite unable to pay the direct taxes unless he had recourse to the spinning wheel . . . . In winter, therefore, the peasant goes to bed at midnight or at one in the morning and rises at 5 or 6 . . . So much work and so little sleep wear people out and that is why men and women alike

grow old so quickly in the country than in the towns. No wonder, they revolted again and Frederick the Great (1740-86) had to fight hard to put them down. But he was farsighted enough to realise the need for a few reforms. So he "compelled the landlords to rebuild the cottages, barns, etc., and to equip the farms with cattle and farming implements, and was "the first to secure the right of property to the peasants." There was yet another revolt in Saxony in 1790. Thus, despite their terrible disabilities and the certainty of even more terrible reprisals in case of failure, German peasants rebelled again and again in the vain hope of gaining freedom.

That part of Germany which has come under the sway of Russia is at last experiencing a land revolution. All lands and livestock belonging to the Nazi landlords and proved traitors were confiscated. By November, 1945, "over 50 lakhs of acres of land taken from 7,745 landowners had been distributed among 270,000 poor peasant and landless labourer families". Property of churches, schools, hospitals, co-operatives, municipalities and scientific institutions have been exempted.

Land Reform Committees of 5 to 7 members elected by small peasants and agricultural labourers of the villages have been entrusted with the distribution of these lands and their efficient cultivation. Co-operatives are also being encouraged.

Swedish and Swiss Peasants.—In Sweden there was a more fortunate peasant revolution in the 17th century. This rising bourgeoisie made common cause with them and they together succeeded in extracting a number of valuable concessions from the king.

Switzerland Leads the Way.—Switzerland gained her freedom through her freedom-loving peasants. "The 700-year old country of free peasants is the only example in history

of a successful peasant revolt against the feudal system." Ever since the peasant revolts came to be known as "Swissing".

M. Pribichevich has said "Waves of rebellions made up of tremendous peasant masses and sometimes gathering irresistible impetus began to sweep over Europe in the 14th century, to reach their high mark in the 16th and to continue to beat with greater or lesser strength until the very beginning of the twentieth". (Living Space, p. 200.)

To those who stubbornly maintain that peasants are incapable of revolutionary effort, M. Pribichevich says that there were waves of peasant revolts in the sixteenth century, one in France, four in England, one in Flanders, in Piedmont, in Catalonia, in Majorca in Holland, in Northern Germany, in Austria.

France.—The French Revolution of 1789 owed most of its success to the revolutionary peasants, though its leadership—spiritual and intellectual—was monopolised by the urban middle classes. The sufferings of the peasants were so great and had continued for so long that their hearts were set on their various demands. The priests too were found to be so cruel and ungodly in their exactions of tithes and so shameless in their alliance with the landlords that peasants lost their regard for them. The much-pauperised and degraded rural clergy made common cause with them ; the peasants, therefore, did not find any inconsistency with their religion as they had learned the Bible not from the clerical aristocracy whom they hated, but from the local inferior clergy who joined hands with them. Since Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and other cyclopedists held sway in the cultural realm of life, peasants did not have any fears lest their revolution against the feudal regime might be against God and Religion. So they went ahead with their practical work of revolutionising rural economy.

their weapon of law and order. He inaugurated the extremely effective programme which came to be known as Boycott, after the name of the landlord against whom it was first used.

Parnell advised the Irish peasants thus : " When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted, you must show him, on the roadside when you meet him . . in the streets of the town . . at the shop counters . . in the fair and in the market-place and even in the house of worship, by leaving him severely alone, by isolating him from his kind, as if he were a leper of old. You must show him your detestation of the crime he has committed and you may depend upon it that there will be no man so full of avarice, so lost to shame, as to dare the public opinion of all right-thinking men and to transgress your unwritten code of laws." Ever since, revolutionary peasants all over the world have pursued with great success this effective technique of boycott. All credit to Irish peasants and their parliamentary and revolutionary leader, Parnell.

The Irish peasants threw up successive batches of leaders ; poured out their blood unstintingly over many generations ; slaved to their very bones to finance their struggles and displayed such discipline and dare-devilry, capacity for secret agitation, organisation and revolutionary activity, and unflagging devotion to the national cum peasant ideals that today their example continues to inspire the freedom movements of the colonial peasant masses in their struggle against Imperialism cum Fascism.

Their struggle has another interesting and inspiring object lesson. Those who go on harping upon the possibility of peasants being bribed into betraying the national or anti-imperialist cause are fully answered by the Irish peasants. The British had liquidated landlordism, though gradually from the days of Balfour administration; conferred the land upon the Irish peasants

and only desired them to pay the sale price in annuities. Even agricultural co-operation was organised to save peasants from the British and Irish middlemen. Preferences were shown for Irish agricultural imports into England, Catholic emancipation was ordered and as many other bones of contention as possible were removed. With all that, the Irish peasants refused to quieten down, to swallow their nationalism, and to reconcile themselves to Imperialism and accept their lot as the keepers of the backyard gardens for the British bourgeoisie. Nothing would tempt them to forget their love of freedom and passion for peasant culture. The sons and grandsons of the migrant Irish-Americans continued to pour their streams of money, arms and blood into the Irish struggle. The regenerated and invigorated gallic language was transformed into a national, mass-wise, progressive literature, thanks to the services of inspired poets like A. E., Yeats, Cousins and gifted organisers like Griffiths, Collins, and De Valera.

At last freedom was won. The Irish peasantry again refused to be split up for long on the core of ideological but technical differences and so helped Cosgrave and De Valera to liquidate the civil war, that sprang up in the wake of the treaty concluded by Griffiths and Collins with the British Government. Almost the first set of big things that De Valera has done, after coming to power, was to repudiate the land annuities payable by Irish peasants to the British.

If any evidence is needed to refute the silly prejudices entertained by so many orthodox Communists that peasants cannot continue to be loyal to the very end of any revolutionary movement and that they are likely to leave the other revolutionary masses in the lurch, the moment their economic needs are partially satisfied, this glorious participation, leadership and achievements of the Irish peasants in the Irish freedom fight is more than enough. What marvels can be achieved by the re-

While the urban masses were indulging in successive waves of intoxicating assembly speeches, guillotine-operations and political discussions, peasants proceeded with their revolutionary tasks in as clear-headed a manner as they would tackle any emergent farming situation and their characteristic hard-headed realism did not forsake them. Their ready wit stood by them. Like the English revolutionary peasants of John Ball, they captured the rent rolls of landlords and priests and burnt them and did away with traitors through open trial. Like the German peasants of Luther's time, they razed castles and monasteries to the ground, destroyed the feudal citadels, and liquidated the feudal rights. Anticipating the later Russian peasants by more than a century, they proceeded in a methodical manner, to split the great feudal estates and divide them between themselves and thus laid the foundations for the 19th century prosperity of France. The onerous tithes were gone ; all other feudal dues were dismissed. Thus in every village and district, the peasants rose like an ocean, against their local oppressors, overwhelmed them as in an avalanche and led by their hard-headed local leaders, completed their job of redistributing lands, reordering rural economy and freeing themselves from feudal domination. They had done their jobs so thoroughly and irrevocably that even Napoleon, Louis XVIII and Napoleon III could not dare disturb their achievements. Is this not a heartening precedent of revolutionary construction ?

Irish Struggle.—The triumph of the Irish, hardly ten million in numbers, over the mighty British Empire and its dreadful Black and Tan reprisals, which would shame the later Nazi cruelties, is mostly due to the unceasing, steady and strong anti-imperialist spirit and love of national freedom displayed by successive generations of peasants. Nationalism got intertwined with the biting economic needs of the masses and their struggle was as much for the liquidation of feudalism as against the British Imperialism, both of which became inseparable engines of ex-

ploitation. The dwarfed and continually discouraged and struggling bourgeoise who were never allowed to sever their umbilical cord organically connecting them with the rural masses had to make common cause with the masses and provide cultural and political leadership and supply to the people the sustaining and unbreakable nationalist ideology. If any national revolution was predominantly an agrarian struggle the Irish Freedom fight was pre-eminently such.

The revolutionary and effective character of the Irish Peasant Movement can be seen from the following extracts from Parnell's speech :

" A fair rent is a rent a tenant can reasonably pay according to the times. "

But how is a landlord to be made to agree to it ? Here was Parnell's answer in 1848 :

" You must show the landlords that you intend to hold a firm grip on your homesteads and lands. You must not allow yourself to be dispossessed. (From " Parnell " by St. J. Irvine. p. 98.)

How did Parnell measure the determination of peasants to fight for a just and essential solution of the Irish land question ?

Parnell answered by saying that it must be " your determination not to pay unjust rents, . . . to keep a firm grip on your homesteads . . not to bid for farms from which others have been evicted and to use the strong force of public opinion to deter any unjust men amongst yourselves.—and there are many such—from bidding for such farms."

But what was to be done to a traitor to the peasant cause ? Parnell defined the peasants' duty. It is not to kill him or shoot him for that way leads peasants into the arms of exploiters and

Peasants came very much into political prominence and their organisation grew to be one of the biggest political parties. They had a share in the ministries. But owing to the non-peasant-wise policies pursued by the proletarian dictatorship of their neighbouring country, Russia, they were not encouraged to rush into the embraces of their local rising proletariat. They were so close to Russia that every day, thousands of Ukrainian peasants on both sides must have been crossing the border. They would have been encouraged to exchange their local feudalism, because of local repression for the Soviet system, if really their experiences and knowledge of the Soviet treatment of the Ukrainian peasant was encouraging and inspiring. Unfortunately the Russian treatment of peasants did not encourage them to be revolutionary. Therefore the Polish peasants were content to await a better ideology and a more wholesome and more real peasant order, while in the meanwhile consolidating their newly-won national freedom they established their peasant proprietorship and won, more or less, immunity from most of the formal feudal disabilities. The very fact that Stalin was obliged to declare that each Polish peasant family would be granted a farm of five acres and a cow, after occupying half of Poland in 1939, in order to win over the loyalty of Polish peasants, shows how the proletarian dictatorship of Russia has had to bend before the Polish peasants. The imposition of one-sided organisation of agriculture, more for the protection and progress of the proletariat and the towns had prejudiced the Polish peasant masses and acted as a damper on their revolutionary career between 1929-39.

Poland too, which had thus been the home of the worst landlordism is at last being emancipated from its clutches after this second world war. As many as 8,832 large estates (of) 6,274 big land-owning families, amounting in all to over 40 lakhs of acres, have been divided up among 302,893 families of landless labourers and poor peasants. Co-operatives have been started and in July 1945 7000 Co-operatives were working.

Balkan States.—In the Balkan areas of Rumania, Bukovia, Bessarabia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Greece and Yugoslavia, peasants have had a long tradition of revolts against their persecutors. For centuries they made common cause with all others in their national struggle for freedom and against their oppressors, the Turkish imperialists. Naturally their peasant movement was intertwined with the problem of their national liberation. They had undergone terrible sufferings at the hands of both their imperialist masters—the Turks—and their internal enemies—the landlords. Yet, they persisted in their loyalty to their national revolutionary cause and achieved their first main objective—the defeat of the Turks and their final withdrawal from the Balkans.

But the solution of the internal economic disequilibrium and the liquidation of feudalism became very difficult problems. The Hungarian peasant suffered most because his feudal lord was in alliance with the Austrian Emperor. He rose many a time in revolt but in vain. Again and again the chains of slavery were fastened on him. Even the temporary period of Hungarian national freedom under the leadership of Kossuth did not relieve much of his misery. He awaited the end of the last world war for his liberation but he did not achieve much success. Again, at the end of this war, he is in revolt.

Yugoslavia.—The Croats of Yugoslavia have shown themselves to be the most persistent and resourceful revolutionaries. They have found great and sincere leaders in the Radich brothers. The elder Radich was shot dead by the reactionaries while he was on his feet in Parliament. But the peasants would not give up their movement. They have sought to develop constructive strength through the organisation of co-operative societies. They have organised a peasants' university and a number of other educational centres. Their political consciousness was so high that in an election they were able to

volutionary alchemy that results from the intertwining of nationalist fervour, anti-imperialist passion, economic needs, agrarian traditions of discipline, loyalty and deep-felt sentiments of freedom, nationalism and village solidarity is also displayed by the triumphant century-old Irish struggle and its resurgent, self-reliant, and revolutionary-minded peasant masses of today.

Reactionary Boers.—The Boer War was of another type. There, the Boers were struggling against the rising British bourgeoisie, the Capitalistic tendency to welcome the entry of coloured masses into partnership in their growing mining and other industrial operations and also for the retention of the predominance of the Boers in the country of rural economy as against the menace of industrialisation, of the Whites over the coloured peoples, *i.e.*, the doctrine of herrenvolk. Theirs was the cause of race-cum-colour-mongering, feudalism with a vengeance. They, it was, who first gave the bitter experience of guerilla warfare to the British imperialist forces. They showed, through their ability to organise, fight and throw up able leadership in war and peace, what peasant masses could do. *Unfortunately they were on the wrong side of history and justice.* The upshot of that war was that capitalism, feudalism, racialism and imperialism, the four evils of the twentieth century went into a coalition and the spiritual fore-runner of European Nazism, American Ku-Klux-Klanism and White Australianism, was given birth to, by the very accommodating British imperialism. Just as the aerial bombing of peaceful Pathan villages on the Indian frontier led the way to Mussolini's aerial bombing over Abyssinia and the blitz over London and Berlin, so also South Africanism sowed the seeds for the growth of Nazism.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PEASANT IN EASTERN EUROPE.

Polish Peasants' Struggle.—It is also one of the marvels of collective loyalty to the ideal of national unity, culture, peasants' national heroism and sustained devotion to a cause, how the Polish peasants, together with their intellectuals, had kept the light of their freedom's struggle aglow well over three centuries, despite the fact that their nation was split up between three empires, the German, Austrian and Russian, and their masses were brutally being forced to learn the imperialist languages, ways of life and their agriculture was all placed at the mercy of the rapacious alien landords. They carried on their revolutionary struggles in different shapes on various occasions in one or the other of the three empires. By unearthing and rejuvenating their native language and culture, by organising private schools, by infiltrating into the University staff, by capturing the heart of the students, by pouring new wine into the old bottles of rural ballads, they maintained their morale and strengthened their ideological propaganda.

In achieving all this, the Polish peasant masses had the inspiring tradition of the revolutions of their forefathers. For instance, between 1630-1738, there were 14 peasant risings in Bohemia and another, 37 years later. In this last one, "the peasants, marching on Prague, attacked castles, churches." But they failed and were massacred terribly. Hence the saying "he failed like the peasants at Chlumec."

At last, after the last war, the dreams of the peasants and their national heroes were fructified in the modern Polish State. Landlorism was mostly liquidated and even in the remaining feudal estates, the rights of tenants were secured and established.

give 98 per cent. of their votes to Dr. Radich, their great leader.

Radich was a great revolutionary. His was both a warning and a message to all the peasants all over the world. He said "Men, don't be silly. You have no past, for history belongs to kings and nobles, your masters. The dust of your forefathers could tell you only of tortures and slavery, not of glory. You have nothing in the past. Yours is the future." (Living Space, p. 196.)

Repeatedly were the peasants' unions and parliamentary peasants' parties banned by the State. Yet they stood loyally by their movement. Radich was succeeded by Dr. Machek. He too evoked great loyalty from peasants. "Peasants, much more difficult to organise than workers, have a far greater capacity for passive resistance once they are organised. The Yugoslav Government had to admit, after the public balloting of December 1938, that Dr. Machek had obtained 95 per cent. of the entire Croatian vote." M. Pribichevich therefore says, "Not Stalin nor Hitler nor Mussolini can dream of getting a solid 95 per cent. in opposition in public balloting and against an adverse dictator." (p. 238.)

During World War II, the peasant movement went underground. The peasants became socialistic in their outlook. They joined forces with the allies. They carried on partisan warfare with supreme efficiency because they had built up a tradition of incessant revolt against their State. Today they seem to be achieving both economic and political power in their society.

The Latest Position.—This country which has come under the governance of a Communist, Marshal Tito, has had naturally a more drastic land reform. Its slogan is "the land shall belong to those who till it". All estates over 110 acres or 50 to 80 acres

of crop lands where owners themselves do not cultivate the land" would be confiscated, in addition to all the landed estates owned by the banks, business and by churches, etc." Religious institutions might retain up to 15 acres each for maintenance or philanthropic purposes or up to 50 acres if they are of special historic significance. Such lands are made inalienable. Co-operatives are being encouraged and land is being granted to Co-operatives too, if the concerned peasants desire it.

It is noteworthy how the newly formed Cominform has begun to attack the Communist dictator Marshal Tito and accuse him of deviation in favour of peasants. True to their anti-peasant prejudices, the Communists of the Cominform have complained that Tito has shown too much tolerance of and affection to peasants and encouraged their passion for their holdings and too little zeal in abolishing peasant proprietorship. Because Tito has found himself so secure in the affections of Yugoslav peasants and their nationalism, he has so far been able to dare the Cominform. But it shows how great is the threat that Communists hold against peasants and how difficult it is for genuine patriots of any country to remain loyal as against the overbearing Soviet international hegemony.

Tito has had to exclaim, in his 1949 New Year Message, in exasperation of the Cominform's unscrupulous propaganda against his pro-peasant policies that "great things can never be built by false means and in a dishonest way". His shipping minister complained "it is not permissible according to Marxist-Leninism for one Socialist country to use lies, slanders and economic and political pressure against another. Yet this is exactly what the Cominform countries are doing."

Rumania.

In Rumania too, peasants have been revolutionary. They were only a little more lucky than those of Bulgaria or Yugoslavia.

In that great peasant revolution of Rumania of 1907, "bands of peasants armed with guns, axes and scythes roamed about the country demanding division of large estates and staging pogroms of the landlords." But they too were defeated and cruelly butchered. After the last war, they were able to dislodge a large number of landlords. They forced the State to distribute a large portion of the lands among the peasantry. For a time their leader, Stambouliski became the Premier. He was trying to multiply rural schools, increase rural communications and organise co-operative credit banks. But unfortunately he was murdered. Many of his colleagues were butchered and his party banned in the civil war that took place. In consequence of this outrage, as many as twenty thousand peasants laid their lives in support of their movement. Now that the Second World War is over, Dr. Menieu, their leader, has been repressed and the peasant unions and party are outlawed.

Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria too, peasants had been in a continuous state of rebellion against their masters. Again and again they were put down with a heavy hand as in the other Balkan States by the mighty arm of the State. Only once after the last war a liberal ministry supported by peasants attempted to parcel up the feudal estates and distribute them among peasants. But that ministry was overthrown by a shortlived Communist ministry. It cancelled the liberal land re-division measures of its predecessors under the mistaken hope of subsequently collectivising the land. But before it could do anything, it was, in its turn, overthrown with the result that peasants have had to groan under the feudal burdens. It is yet too early to know the details of the social revolution that is happening to peasants after the end of this Second World War. But Bulgaria has gone completely into the hands of the Communist party and who can say whether the Bulgarian peasants would be treated differently from the Russian peasants.

Hungary.

We shall give but a glimpse of the bitter war waged by Hungarian peasants against their oppressors in the fifteenth century. During that struggle 45 out of 73 settler-villages were destroyed with the assistance of the gendarmerie. Thousands of peasants were also destroyed because they were treated as "Less than nothing". During that struggle the translated Bible played a revolutionary role. They found that "God did not want us to be slaves. Christ was for us . . . . A great power emanated from his simple speech". "A peasant named Balaz, a mayor of one of the villages, rose and gathered a great following. He inflicted blows all over Hungary. Another village mayor, Maton, backed by numerous serfs, murdered the nobles". These local uprisings spread over the whole of the country. The peasants sent five serfs as their negotiators. They said "the lords tread under foot even our smallest right and load us with unbearable burdens . . . . We have gathered to shake off our heavy encumbrances after reciprocal consultations". But only one of the delegates returned. He brought back the heads of the other four, as the answer of the lords". ("In the Darkest Hungary." pp. 42-3).

"Then all of us rose together. Under Budai Nagy we won great victory over our lords in 1437 . . . . Our representatives and those of our lords signed the treaty. Unfortunately the peasants did not take the fullest advantage of their victory. So the lords broke the treaty and started their war against peasants. The peasants were strong. The lords were stronger still. We concluded a new treaty at Apati . . . . The only right this treaty left us was the right to move wherever we wanted to." But to ensure an effective compliance of the lords with this treaty, peasants sought the sanction of the King Emperor Sigimind. But the lords started the attack. In 440, they finally beat the peasants. The serfs who were captured in that battle "had their right arms chopped off and sent home". Then the lords,

the priests and Saxons now mode alliance against the godless peasants. There came to be inter-racial alliance between the lords.

Mr. Paloczy Horwath gives details about the great struggle that Dozsa waged against the lords upto 1514. We shall content ourselves with giving a few extracts from his speech. "Slavery is not natural. It was created by . . . . the covetousness of men . . . . . The Hungarian nobility do not look upon you as fellow citizens but as slaves . . . . . We produce the crops for them, tend the cattle . . . grow wine grapes, weave cloth for them . . . . and you get only slavery and misery. You have to give forced presents if a noble is born, if he gets married, if his children marry . . . if he builds a house, if he dies . . . How long shall we Magyars suffer these indignities ?"

No wonder he was called the King of the Peasants. He was followed by 120,000 armed men. But, alas, in the end he was defeated. He was first crowned with a burning iron crown and afterwards, while still alive, he was tied to an iron throttle and torn to pieces . . . .finally his body was cut into four pieces and put on the spit." Seventy thousand peasants all over the country "were killed in various nauseating ways". A special vindictive law was passed placing peasants "under eternal servitude to their landlords," in order to show "what a sin it is to rise against the lords." (pp. 47-48.)

Dozsa, that Magyar peasant chief, was made to hold, according to another authority, a "hot iron sceptre and was seated on a hot metal throne, wearing a crown of molten wire buffalo muzzles" as befitted a peasant king. Their brutality did not stop there. Nine of his comrades who had been starved for days were driven up and under swinging sabres, made to eat from his charred corpse. Meszaros Dozsa's trusted commander was roasted alive on a spit before a crowd of noble onlookers."

Hungary at last gained freedom from feudalism which has impoverished her peasantry for so long. The post-war Government has confiscated "all church and other non-peasant property over 150 acres" and also "all private estates over 1500 acres without compensation." The land thus gained covering 5,800,000 acres has been distributed among 700,000 landless and poor peasant families, each family thus getting on an average about 7.5 acres. Co-operatives are being started to help the poor peasants.

Inter-War period—Balkan peasants' failure. Once the War had liquidated the Russo-German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, the Balkan peasants were quick to seize their opportunity and make short work of most of their local feudalism, during that very valuable interregnum between the collapse of their empires and the enforcement of the Versailles Treaty. They had swung forward, as if by an open and pre-meditated conspiracy, drove away most of their landlords, declared null and void all their rights and privileges so far maintained by the evil forces of the State and distributed all their lands among themselves, formed their local civic guards to maintain their new order and presented the newly-formed Governments with their *fait accompli*.

This demonstrates that under the seemingly unruffled and non-frightful atmosphere of rural politics, there goes on, continually and with growing intensity, an unspoken and unorganised but spontaneous revolutionary fermentation of peasants' minds which assumes concrete shape in a few elementary methods of action and elementary needs. Since, unfortunately, this subterranean and volcanic revolutionary momentum and fermentation was not strengthened and canalised, either fully or effectively, by any revolutionary, well-intagrated, nation-wide organisation with conscious and competent leadership capable of formulating and popularising their political aims and objectives, the sudden outbursts of peasants' movements did not lead to

more permanent and comprehensive national revolutions or to capture of power over the very state that had been keeping them down for millenniums and robbing them of their deserts.

The Balkan peasants missed the golden opportunities offered by that interregnum and temporary collapse of their imperialist feudal State, because of this organic defect of their movement. Even when the local Communists formed their regimes, they could not cement any effective and powerful alliance with peasants, owing to their non-peasant-wise politics and both the peasants and the proletariat lost their great chance, thanks to their unpreparedness.

A Serbian speaks. M. Pribichevich, a Serbian, has eloquently pleaded before the second World War the cause of the European peasants in his book *Living Space*, and the passages which follow deserve to be reproduced :

"Marx taught that small capital breeds big capital; therefore, even the smallest peasant is an incipient capitalist as he has private property in land. However, the peasant has an entirely different attitude towards private ownership from the capitalist. The latter believes that each man has the right to accumulate as much wealth as he can at the expense of others. The peasant, as a rule, never wants more than he needs. He believes in private property for everybody."

"On the city market, in an office, the peasant may look humble and timid but watch him on his own land ; there he behaves like a sovereign."

"On his land, the peasant satisfies the strongest of all human instincts, the sense of power, and there, no matter how underprivileged he is otherwise, he fully exercises his personality."

"There is nothing one can love with more passion than the land; patriotism, home-sickness, native worship, all spring from the elemental feeling for the soil."

No wonder Pribichevich, strongly dissents from Marx's view that "peasantry is a separate class of barbarians which stands half-way outside human society and combines all the coarseness of primitive social forms with all the miseries of civilised countries."

He says that the Communist prejudice towards peasants' co-operatives is due to the fact that the Communists are "children of the city and industry, not of the village and agriculture." One of the chief reasons for the complete helplessness of peasants in bargaining with city groups is that "When he lost his old collective organisation, he did not get a new one." The peasant party co-operativ es have to fill this gap; "to readjust the peasants' life to modern market economy by giving him new up-to-date collective agencies."

This co-operative movement is eagerly accepted by the Balkan peasant "because of his remembrance of the common work and life in the old Zadruga" (like the Indian joint family).

Pribichevich complained that this "ageless class, the longest on earth, the cradle of all civilised nations has never, except for brief seconds, here and there, exercised political power."

Yet, "there is something mysterious in the indestructability of this class . . . . . Villages have existed without cities but no city without a village. You can live without factories but not without fields."

But always "non-peasant groups have run the government, the noble, the bourgeois, the worker". Referring to Soviet

Russia, he says " technically the worker succeeded the landlord as the peasants' ruler or tutor. Not even the most enthusiastic Communist will assert that the Russian peasantry has the best influence on Government matters."

But now, even in the enlightened, democratic European countries, do the peasants except in a very few instances—have their full share in the national administration ?

The French worker, through his powerful Marxist parties and labour unions, has a greater control over the government of this capitalist (now socialist) country than does the supposedly capitalist-minded French peasant. This anomaly is determined by the simple fact that in our time industry is better organised for political power than agriculture."

" Of all the classes, the peasant has been the most disarmed; and thus he has sealed his fate in the class struggle."

" If he is ever to succeed, he will have to re-examine his conceptions of State authority. History will be quite different when he realises that you have got to have a government and the only question to be fought out is who is going to run it."

" Two main social groups feed on the Balkan peasant; bureaucracy and private industry. Estimates have been made that 35 to 45 per cent. of his gross income goes to taxes, 20 per cent. in tariffs to protect domestic industries and another undetermined percentage in high prices for government-controlled necessities."

" The city has taken the place of the old feudal castle in exploiting the peasants. . . . . The real social division nowadays is between the city and the village." Today, the peasant " must produce for the city market, sell for what he can get and buy from it what he needs. Manifold are the forms in which

the city takes advantage of the peasant. The most common is the tax for the right to sell in the city—a capitalist translation of an old feudal due."

The peasant complains : "We got rid of the Begs (Turks) and fell under a worse breed, the merchants."

The Balkan peasant also has a vision of ploughing some day, all the cities off the face of the earth.

Pribichevich raised the anti-town and anti-merchant slogans. They are negative. His only positive lead was that peasants must capture political power. Towards that end, he commends the co-operative peasants' political party and organisation. But alas, the Communists have banned all peasant organisations and he has lost his faith in democracy.

Green International.—As the consciousness of this defect and the need for removing it was discerned almost simultaneously by the peasant leaders of these countries, the Green International was formed to integrate all the peasant parties of these countries. It was expected to serve the peasants almost in the same way as the International Trade Union alliance and the Third International were serving the proletariat. But it could not become a political force. Still that very effort indicated that the Balkan peasants were finding their way towards a revolutionary economic and political programme of their own . . . They were no longer content with occasional and spontaneous risings. They realised the need for planned political action. They were organising themselves into political peasant parties. They led the way in the whole of Europe in capturing majorities for peasants in many of their legislatures. They were developing their constructive programme. They were realising the need for "their rightful voice and place in the government of their countries." (Agrarian Problems from the Baltic to the Aegean. P. 23.)

While the Soviet is the form of the Communist State, the Corporation of the Fascist State, the Co-operative is the form of the future peasant State. Co-operative rural democracy is also propagated as a means of securing the political independence of a whole area.

"Capitalist middlemen, traders and financiers are to be eliminated through peasant co-operatives, not through forcible socialisation ; State control and ownership would be established only over essential public services. Its slogans are "Political democracy plus social democracy." (Living Space . . . p. 233.)

Thus they realise the need for peasant Raj. This was so natural to them because not far from their borders was the proletarian raj. They were beginning to understand the mischief of world markets, thanks to the evil impact of the great economic depression and the Western European Economic Imperialism. They were also becoming aware of the evils of unequal distribution of the world's wealth between towns and villages, but they had not yet realised the incessant struggle that prevails between industrial and agricultural peoples. Thus the Balkan peasantry were getting ready in their political and economic consciousness to shoulder their new responsibilities that would fall to them at the end of the second World War. They were not in favour of compulsory collectivisation of land, or the Russianisation of their rural life. But they wanted to co-operatise their agriculture and make the peasant the central figure of the post-war raj of their countries, if we are to judge from the peasant programme prepared by a number of Balkan peasant leaders in 1942 and published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

In spite of the age-old "humiliation of the peasant as a human being" perpetrated by feudalism, that the real regal spirit of the peasants could not be destroyed is indicated by the fact that the Slovak peasant leader, Janosek, who was condemned

in 1731 "refused to ask for pardon and was hanged by a hook under the rib" . . . . (Living Space . . p. 201.)

From time immemorial, the European peasants, more especially those of the Balkan countries, were aiming at political power. This was being expressed by some of their leaders posing as pretender kings, other leaders being hailed by peasants themselves as kings, and their enemies, the feudal lords, consecrating peasant leaders as kings at least on the stakes. That to become a king was an ambition that a peasant leader could naturally think of shows that peasants did realise their need for political power.

The end of the second world war has seen Soviet Russia establish her political domination over these countries. She is driving the Balkan peasantry into accepting her creed and system of proletarian dictatorship. She is certainly not helping the local peasants to reorganise their peasant parties and achieve political power under the banner of their Green International. So far as we know, Dr. Manieu of Rumania has been forced to retire from politics and to flee the country and we are not allowed to know anything about the fate of the other political leaders. The peasants' unions and peasants' parties have been banned. Indeed the peasants' parties of Rumania, Hungary and Poland are having a hard time in the Bolshevik dispensation. This is what Mr. Ernest Bevin, the Foregin Secretary in the British Labour Ministry, says about the crimes and murderous attacks on the peasant party made by the Soviet-sponsored provisional ministry of Poland, despite the fact that its Vice-Premier is M. Stanislaw Mikalajech, leader of the peasant party.

"Circumstances in many cases appear to point to the complicity of the Polish Security Police . . . . I regard it as imperative that the Polish Provisional Government should put an immediate stop to those crimes in order that free and unfettered

elections may be held soon. I am looking forward to the end of these Police States." He naturally refers to all the South Eastern States where there used to be such vigorous peasant parties. As was the case before and during the war, so also now, these peasant parties are obliged to go "underground" and publish many an illegal pamphlet and withstand the repeated raids on their offices and homes and work for the eventual emancipation from the thraldom of Soviet dictatorship. (*Time*, U. S. A., February 4th, 1946) Mikolajczyk also has had to escape to the U. S. A. because he was threatened with Soviet vengeance. Thus the peasants were robbed of their leadership.

Results of Second World War.—Most unfortunately the second world war has proved disastrous to the peasant parties of South Eastern Europe. When the terrible Nazi invasion of these countries overtook their peoples, the peasant parties split. Many of their established leaders either became inactive or succumbed to Hitler's regime and so lost their hold over their rank and file and lost their leadership to the younger section which threw itself whole-heartedly into the Resistance Movement. Just because the Resistance Movement owed so much to the initiative, arms and encouragement of Soviet Russia and the local Communists, the young peasant leaders were carried away by their enthusiasm for the heroic Communist leaders and gradually developed comradely attachment to them and their party. So when the Russian forces overran these countries and drove away the hated Nazis and liberated their peoples the local peasants found themselves in a difficult predicament. They could not gather round their traditional and well-known leaders as most of them became discredited by their collaboration with the Nazis or safety-first policies. They could not reconcile themselves to the Communist demand for absorption in their Trade Unions. So there arose the small farmers' parties in a number of countries. But whereas in Czechoslovakia,

the farmers persisted in their loyalty to their old farmers' unions and parties, the new regime which was so much under the control of the Russians banned the peasant unions and parties and forced them to distribute their votes as between the other political parties. This is indeed a major calamity for those farmers. Again in countries like Yugoslavia, where a new peasant leader like Marshal Tito became a Communist and also the most outstanding resistance leader, the peasant movement lost all individuality and got itself swallowed up by the aggressive Communist Party and its political dispensation.

Thus, all over South Eastern Europe, the pre-war peasant movement is no longer functioning with anything like its former vigour and self-confidence. Even M. Pribichevich, the Serbian historian, has lost faith in the peasant movement. This is indeed a first-class tragedy.

Another unfortunate thing is the failure of the Socialists of these countries to shed their urban prejudices and their practical partiality for the urban middle classes, professionals, intellectuals and proletariat and to make a genuine attempt to understand the revolutionary urge and capacity and needs of their peasantry. They continue to entertain their pre-war prejudices and are disinclined to develop healthy and comradely contacts with their local peasantry, their unions and parties.

Yet, they deplore their inability to stand up to the aggressive Communist Party backed as it is by the Red Army and Soviet Russia and also by the Soviet food and cloth supplies. They have not yet begun to examine the ideological weakness of the position and they have not realised the impossibility of making any effective stand against the Communist Party so long as they do not develop a more positive and progressive ideology than their previous colourless and insipid copy of the Communist ideology.

I had an opportunity of meeting them in London in June and in Copenhagen in September 1946 and I suggested to them the need for building up a common front with their local peasants on the basis of democratic and socialistic co-operative relations between themselves and their local peasants. I explained to them the ideological significance of our Indian ideal of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj and asserted that it alone could enable socialists or peasants or both to present a more progressive, comprehensive and democratic solidarity of all toiling classes than what could be offered by the Communist Party. They then expressed great interest in India's evolution towards the attainment of this ideal and offered to work on that basis and try to win the co-operation of their local peasant parties.

But I found, to my great disappointment, that many of their local peasant leaders, who came to Copenhagen had developed such strong prejudices against these urban socialists because they have had such bitter experiences of their repeated attacks and betrayals of their cause in pre-war days and also during the war, that they were very unwilling to agree to build up a united front with them.

It is due to this unfortunate atmosphere of mutual distrust and failure to understand their need of each other, that it is not possible for us to entertain hopes of the recovery of these socialists and peasants from their mutual distrust and overcome the corroding effects of the sedulous communist propaganda.

Communists' Tactics.—On the other hand, the Balkan Communists have been displaying much better tactics and adaptability and are adopting a policy, so much like our ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj which is well suited to the genius and local conditions of the Balkan peoples.

They are building up what is known as 'Peoples' Front' or 'National Fronts' with the peasants, proletariat, professionals, artisans, small shopkeepers and tradesmen and intellectuals. But this is so much like Lenin's NEP, a half-way house, intended to trap these peasant-minded rural masses in the Balkans into their leadership and later on, to engulf them inescapably into the dictatorship of the party and of the proletariat. This danger was recognised by the leaders of both peasants and socialists and so they have promised to do their best to obviate that dangerous possibility by themselves combining on the basis of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj ideal.

But in the meanwhile the Communists are going ahead, implementing much of the agrarian revolutionary programme of the former peasant parties. To start with, they confiscated the landed and other properties of all those who had been proved to be the avowed allies of the Fascists and enemies of the Resistance Movement. Secondly, a large number of people whose politics was not to the taste of the new rulers have come to be deprived of their lands, if not liquidated, on the allegation that they had been the enemies of the people.

Thirdly, peasant parties are banned and thus peasants are deprived of their leadership. They are also being split up and broken down in a merciless fashion. Fourthly, the estates of the landlords are being broken up, and their lands distributed among the peasants. Fifthly, a differential scale of prices of good grains sold by peasants owning varying extents of land and producing various quantities of food grains is being imposed as for instance, in Czechoslovakia, in order to treat the smaller peasants more leniently and the bigger peasants more harshly and thus permanently to split up the ranks of peasants and to ensure the alliance of small-holders party with the Communist party.

A veritable agrarian redistribution of land is taking place

It is true landlordism is gone, and the big peasantry too is being lequidated. But is it an agrarian revolution ? It is decidedly not that. For there can be an agrarian revolution only if peasants, as peasants, come to attain political and economic leadership and control of power. Such a revolution was about to take place just when Hitler went into the Balkans and subverted all democratic movements. It could have taken place soon after the downfall of Hitler if only Socialists and peasants could have displayed the necessary statesmanship and agreed to work in co-operation with each other on the basis of the ideal of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. But that ideal was not at that time discerned or desired.

During 1946-49 the position of the peasants of South East Europe has grown distinctly worse. The Communist parties of these countries have shaken off their disguises of 'National Front,' and 'United Front' with Socialist parties.' Everywhere parties have been declared illegal, peasants treated as enemies and suspects and persecuted and deprived of their leadership, all under the pretext of a drive against counter-revolutionaries. The Soviet pattern of declaring the peasant parties illegal, imprisoning their leaders, starting rival peasant parties and splitting the peasant leadership and lastly foisting treason charges upon peasant leaders and liquidating them, robbing peasants of their unity, leadership and organisation and thus making them helpless, is being scientifically pursued by these ill-disguised Communist regimes. In Czechoslovakia, not being satisfied with declaring illegal the peasant party which had the largest following in 1939, Communists destroyed even the Benes' democracy and have established their own party's regime. In Hungary too, the peasant party was banned and a small-holders' organisation was brought to rival with the peasants organisation in order to confuse peasants and persuade some of them to slowly divert their allegiance and affection to the new small-holders organisation, set up by the Communists. In Poland, M. Mikolajczyk

a former premier and vice-premier during the post-war Communist-controlled regime has had to flee to Londen to save his own life. It is interesting to note that for well over one year, the peasant party of which he was the leader was being treated as an enemy by the Communists and Government and was subjected to many police raids. During the last elections, peasants were denied the full and free opportunity to vote for their peasant candidates. And even here, the so-called small-holders party has been created to confuse the peasants.

Mr. Ferenc Nagy, Ex-Prime Minister of Hungary who made a tour of Europe recently, says in his book *Stalin's War on Peasants* :

"The farmers of middle and Eastern Europe are being unremittingly driven into serfdom.'

"The democratically-minded farmers of Eastern Europe is the only section of the population behind the Iron Curtain which continues to struggle against Stalin's dictatorship, the destruction of personal freedom and the expropriation of private property."

"The peasants who still own land are forced to work 2 days a week on Government farms for the equivalent of a loaf of bread a month."

Reign of terror to destroy the peasants' leadership.—Mikolajczyk, the Polish peasants' President, was exiled ; more than 10,000 Polish peasant leaders were exiled to USSR. In Rumania the peasant leader, Maniu, and 18,000 of his followers were jailed for treason and most of them have since disappeared. In Bulgaria, the farmers' leader, Dr. George M. Dimitrov, had to escape but his deputy, Nikolai Petkov, was executed and 12,000 of his followers were removed to Russia In Hungary, after the capture of the Government by Communists, Rakosi forced peasant leaders Bela Varga and Nagy into exile in 1947 and sent one-

third of the farmers' representatives to the U. S. S. R. ; younger peasant leaders were imprisoned ; more than 8,000 of them were sent into the U. S. S. R. for work in concentration camps and forced labour camps.

Smaller peasants were subsidized with livestock and seed and allowed to use Government-owned tractors. But anyone owning more than 15 acres was throttled with heavy taxes. Capital levies absorbed 50 per cent. of the finances of farmers and often even 75 per cent. in the case of the bigger farmers. Annual soil tax on all properties above 10 acres and agricultural development tax on holdings above 15 acres proved confiscatory.

Agricultural labour, controlled by Communist Labour Exchange, is allowed to work only when, where and to whom directed. Crop planning has worked against the freedom of farmers.

"The foremen of the Collectives are police agents and informers, not farmers. One does not dare complain about anything for fear of punishment. In Hungary, a peasant with 2 acres is as violently opposed to collectivization as the man who owns 200 acres—the largest amount of land that an individual may own."

"The 1948 autumn levy in Hungary left the peasant only enough grain to last until January of 1949. Since then he has had to turn to the State for his supply. Any 'political misbehaviour' is immediately punished by withdrawal of the ration card."

One discontented, collectivized peasant exclaimed : "I would not count too much on our loyalty or assistance if anything ever threatened our particular Peoples' Republic, if I were Stalin."

For fear their crops might be taken away by urban tax gatherers, many peasants resort to the traditional practice of agrarian revolt and catch at night as many wheat ears as possible for home use and destroy the rest. 'Scorched earth' is being practised by them in many places. Such cases of sabotage are visited with confiscation of property, exile and capital punishments by the Communist regimes.

Thus a Communist regime has crept into South Eastern Europe in the wake of the camouflage of National Front of Peasants, proletariat, intellectuals and artisans. Having once established itself, it has proceeded to destroy the freedom of peasants, their leadership and degraded them to their medieval plight of peonage, villeinage and feudal slavery.

Why are these peasant parties being so disrupted and their leaders liquidated ? That it is because the Communists cannot reconcile themselves to any democratic partnership in the control of the State between the peasants and proletariat is becoming clear every day and that they cannot be at peace with peasants until the peasants are deprived of their leadership and their parties and are so hopelessly disintegrated and confused as to be prostrated before the Communist Party.

The charges framed against Dr. Maniu and others, such as high treason, conspiracy and fomenting of armed rebellion, indicate how the peasants of those countries have not at all been reconciled to the camouflage of National Front which was supposed to provide a democratic platform for the peasant parties, the Communist party and intellectuals and artisans created by the Communist party and that they have been trying with all their might to win back their former political power. No amount of political propaganda even under the disguise of court trials can deceive the peasant masses of the world. How can anyone believe that the

peasant parties and their famous leaders who had fought so bravely the pre-war Fascist regimes and then feudal princes and who had resisted the Nazi aggression and who had saved the souls of the peasants from being demoralised by Fascist ideology and who have been considered good enough by the Communist Party to be invited into political and governmental partnership in the post-war days can possibly be traitors to their own countries. All these 'treason' trials conducted by the Communist Party regimes against the peasant parties and their famous leaders make it perfectly clear that the biggest bulwarks for democracy are being destroyed by Communists in order to pave the way for the Communist Party dictatorship. By all rights it is the peasants and their parties which ought to have been allowed to achieve the premier leadership in the governance of their countries, once the Fascist regimes were ended. But instead, it was the Soviet power which forced peasants into a subordinate partnership with the Communist Party which was its pet child and protege and now it is again the long arm of the Communist dictatorship which is denying the right of peasants to maintain their own political parties under their own well-tried and experienced leadership. These are the first results of the Cominform.

CHAPTER VII

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT.

There is an erroneous notion that Russia did not witness any large-scale revolutions before the much-advertised 1905 and 1917 revolutions. As a matter of fact, there were a number of peasants' revolts in different parts of Russia. Their main defect was that they were not planned, nor did they take place on a national scale.

The most famous peasant revolts were known by their leaders, Bolotnikov (1606-07), Stenka Razin (1670-71), Bulavin (1707-8) and Pugacho (1773-75). Mr. N. H. Sumner who has made a special study of the peasant revolts and sufferings of slaves in his "Survey of Russian History" (Duckyworth 1944) says that the "main seriousness of the revolts lay in the combination of Cossacks with the serfs and other classes of peasants," and it is interesting to note that it is these Cossacks who provided some military organisation and leadership" and who later on came to be violently liquidated by the Bolsheviks on the complaint that they were Kulaks.

As for the objects of these revolts, Mr. Sumner says that "the watchwords and the slogans in the four great revolts show the same primary characteristic, the appeal to elemental uprising against serfdom and oppression".

Razin wanted "to remove the constables from the towns and to go to Moscow against the land-owners to kill the land-owners". Bulavin wanted "to slay the land-owners and the profiteers". He appealed to the barebacks to come on horse or on foot, naked and bare foot . . . "there will be horses and clothing and money for you".

Pugachov pretended to be Emperor Peter III, thus unconsciously giving expression to the peasants' latest ambition of being the masters of the State. The ideals and aims and also the needs of the Russian peasants could be gleaned from the following extracts from Pugachov's edict.

"We grant to all, hitherto in serfdom and subjection to the land-owners, liberties and freedom, always to be Cossacks without remitting levies, poll-tax or other money taxes, with possession of the land, the woods, the hay meadows, the fishing grounds, the salt lakes, without payment and without rent and we free all those hitherto oppressed by the malefactor land-owners, the bribe-taker officials and judges." He called the land-owners as "perturbators of the empire and ruiners of the peasants" and exhorted the peasants to "seize them, punish them, hang them, treat them in the same way as they oppressed you, the peasants". When Pugachov was declared a criminal by Empress Catherine, the wife of Peter III, the ordinary people reacted to it by calling Pugachov "our friend and protector".

Unfortunately, those peasants did not think of rising against Tsarism itself. They could not conceive the idea of capturing the State for themselves. They could not overcome the various racial, linguistic and provincial schisms that Tsarism had perpetuated. Yet, because of the continual readiness to revolt, they were able to force the Government to make a series of concessions. Emancipation from slavery was achieved in 1861. By 1916 more than two-thirds of the cultivable area came to be in the peasants' hands. Peasants gained in political stature. The village communal assemblies are frequently converted into political meetings. The Peasants' Union was founded in 1905. One peasant deputation was able to thunder in 1907 in the Duma. "In my opinion it (property) cannot possibly be inviolable; nothing can be inviolable once the people build it... Gentlemen of the gentry, do you think that we do not know how

you staked us at cards and bartered us for dogs ? You have stolen our land. We have come here not to buy it but to take it."

Russian peasants were fully emancipated from slavery only in 1907 and afterwards. Their earlier sufferings can easily be imagined. "So bitter was the suffering of the peasants in Razin's life-time (he was murdered in 1671) that, able to bear no more, they rose in rebellion and in their mad frenzy murdered their masters, burned their houses and even the Churches and slaughtered the corrupt, prosperous priests who had forgotten all true religion and were ready to give their blessing to every tyrannical practice of the gentry." (Our Ally Russia, by Jennie Lee. p. 41.)

The 1905 Russian Revolution had actually demonstrated the revolutionary ripeness of the peasants ; but for the fact that their leaders did not march with events and failed to provide for them just the required revolutionary lead and organisational strength, Russian peasants could even in 1905 have achieved much success. The Bolshevik Party, as is usual with the orthodox Communists all over the world, with all their anti-peasant and pro-proletarian prejudices and their anxiety to misinterpret facts in harmony with their pet dogmas, had tried to mislead the world into thinking that "the strike movement roused the peasants !" *

While in fact large-scale strikes took place in 1904-1905, peasants' revolts were increasing in their numbers, areas of activity and intensity throughout the five years from 1900 to 1905 and could properly be taken as having set the pace for and encouraged the proletariat to throw in their lot with the all-enveloping

* Victor Gollanz who has examined the foreign policy of the British Communist Party has also concluded that "the chief lesson, then is that nothing can be more dangerous than to make the facts fit a given theory, rather than to be constantly revising the theory in the light of facts". (Russia and Ourseloes.... P..90)

wave of revolution. The Russo-Japanese debacle affected peasants much more, as it was their sons who were sacrificed so foolishly in that disastrous war. Between 1900 and 1904, there were 670 uprisings of peasants of which 441 were against landlords and 196 against government authorities. In 1905 alone, as against two million proletariat who were on strike, there were fifty to seventy-five million peasants who rose in rebellion. While the proletarian revolution had hardly captured the working class quarters of the two cities of Moscow and Leningrad for even a few weeks, peasants in their characteristically revolutionary, constructive and thorough manner, destroyed nearly 2,000 mansions, burnt down various feudal properties and turned out a large number of feudal lords and distributed large portions of their lands among themselves. "The peasant movement reached and acted on the defence forces" so that some of the armed forces began to fight on the side of the people. "In this manner, a colossal country . . went into revolution. Thus, slumbering Russia became transformed into a Russia of the revolutionary proletariat and the revolutionary people" said Lenin. But notice their orthodoxy in not recognising the independent and nation-wide revolution raised and carried on by the peasantry! And after all, the part played by the proletariat, though heroic and noble, especially when the Black Sunday and subsequent events are remembered—was not equal to that of the more heroic, daring and desperate peasantry. For, during the previous ten years, the large number of workers who took part in strike movements averaged only 54,000 per annum and only half a million came out on strike in January 1905 and with greater strength on a wider field in subsequent weeks. These events alone cannot be considered by an impartial student, to have given rise to the much greater, intenser, more widespread and sustained peasant revolts from the Baltic to the Black Sea and beyond. Anyhow the 1905 Russian Revolution had for the first time demonstrated the possibility of simultaneous revolts from both the peasantry

and the proletariat—an experience which Blanqui and his comrades of the ill-fated French Commune of 1870-71 yearned for but in vain. Until then, all over the country peasants were rising in the wake of or simultaneously with the rising bourgeoisie against their common or imperialist tyrants. Like so many colonial peasants and masses of today, the Russian peasants too were very much under the influence of interested bourgeois-cum-feudal ideology and an anti-imperialistic and intensely nationalistic fervour that they could not take the fullest advantage of their risings and other demonstrations of revolutionary strength. They lost their chance while the proletariat took the fullest advantage of the lesson of 1905. (History of Russian Revolution, 1905-1917, by Page Arnot. P. 55.)

When the Russian November Revolution took place, and Lenin declared his slogan "land to the peasants" it was not a passive peasantry simply awaiting Government's legislation and decisions as to how the land of the landlords was to be distributed among them but a politically conscious peasantry who sent their representatives to the Constituent Assembly with revolutionary mandates. They urged the liquidation of landlordism and the ending of war and the cessation of military levies upon their grain and had themselves already liquidated landlordism in most parts of the country between March and November 1917. No sooner had Lenin taken charge of the Government in Moscow than the peasant masses proceeded to make good his declaration by driving away even the few landlords who had not been liquidated since February. They declared themselves to have been the owners of the holdings they had been cultivating and distributed the unoccupied lands and home farms of landlords among themselves with some preference to the hitherto landless peasants. In the usual traditional manner of peasants all over the world, they got possession of their local lands and trusted that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party would keep faith with them by making their government a truly peasants' and workers' organ.

Here is Jawaharlal Nehru's appreciation of these peasants' achievements : "This confiscation of the big estates took place entirely on the initiative of the peasants and many months before the Bolshevik revolution. Lenin was in favour of the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants in an organised way. When the Bolsheviks came to power later on, they found a Russia of peasant proprietors." [Glimpses of World History, (Indian Edition), Vol. II, P. 1013.]

Lenin and Stalin knew better. They did not wish to saddle themselves with the peasant mind, while they were in a great hurry to achieve Socialistic reconstruction. So, while actually the February Revolution of 1917 was the materialisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry "inter-woven in a peculiar way with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie," as Stalin himself put it, and while the November Revolution was said to have been based upon the alliance between the workers and the peasants clad in soldiers' uniform, actually the 1917 Revolution resulted only in the dictatorship of the proletariat ; the poor peasants being quietly dropped out of the centre of authority. How could they do this ? Stalin provides the clue :

"The Bolshevik Party realised that once 'the revolutionary demands of the peasants' party' were adopted, including the slogan of 'land for the peasants,' peasants could be trusted to go on masticating their gains, neglecting their political rule, especially as their political leaders would be discredited after their failure to give them lands after the February Revolution and would be given short shrift by the new Dictatorship." (Stalin's October Revolution.) Here is Stalin's exhortation to peasants :

"Peasants, your leaders have not justified your hopes. They have followed in the wake of counter-revolution and you are left without land ; for as long as the counter-revolution rules, you will not get the landed estates. The workers are your true allies.

Only in alliance with them will you obtain land and liberty." (Stalin by Kalinin. P. 63.)

Having given them the land in the first instance, the Bolshevik Party had proceeded to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. So the peasant masses had to throw themselves heart and soul into the struggle against the counter-revolution and they fought hard, in order to safeguard their newly-won holdings; little knowing that their better prepared partners were all the time scheming as to how best to get the better of them. When once the Revolution was saved and the Soviet Constitution was passed, it was found that peasants had already only one-fifth as much voting strength, man per man, as what was granted to the proletariat. By that time, their erstwhile leaders were either liquidated or effectively silenced. Trostky's militarised levies of grain, that were being so mercilessly and so forcibly exacted from them, made them aware of what terrible consequences awaited any one who chose to rebel against the noveau dictatorship.

And why did the Bolshevik party thus betray the peasantry? It is not so much because of its want of sympathy for the peasant humanity. It is because of its Marxian prejudices against peasant cultivation, its dogmatic obsession about the virtues of large-scale cultivation, its confidence that peasants could not develop an all-Russian revolt, its special partiality towards the proletariat and necessity for feeding the proletariat who provided its best cadres and which had been declared by Marxism to be the historic agency and the heir to social revolution. There was also the realisation that unless peasants were muzzled fully and held down effectively it would be impossible to commandeer grain for urban consumption, especially when the post-revolution industries could not issue forth the necessary stream of manufactured goods to satisfy the peasants.

Pat Sloan, one of the apologists of the Soviet treatment of peasants, wrote in 1941, "the peasants were still cultivating the land in small strips, each household working in isolation. Under such a system, the ambition of every peasant was to become more prosperous and the index of prosperity was the extent to which he could increase his farm and thus become an employer of labour. So long as this peasant individualism continued, the Soviet State was of necessity organised so as to ensure that the working class should have a dominating control over policy in the interests of socialism. (How Soviet Russia is Run . . P. 23.)

Therefore, every hundred industrial workers were given as much voting power as five hundred peasants—a precedent not unlike the demand made by the Indian Muslim League to turn Moslems who were in a minority into a majority. Why was this done ? Pat Sloan justifies it on the plea that "it was the town workers who took the initiative in the Revolution of 1917, together with the fact that the power of the working class was the only guarantee that the new state (proletarian dictatorship) would continue steadfastly on a policy of Socialism." But was it not the peasants who actually liquidated the landlords, the most powerful reactionary force, defeated the counter-revolution headed mostly by the displaced landlords and kept the Soviet State going and fed its armies and the towns even while the mills and factories were unable to produce hardly anything more than munitions ? But all such considerations were not to be weighed by the proletarian dictatorship. In the last resort, they had their justification that "it was the town workers who took the initiative". If so, what became of the assurance given by Lenin and Stalin of their keenness to achieve a permanent alliance between the peasants and the proletariat and their assurance that both revolutions of 1917 were won only by the combined peasant and proletarian masses ? Like all other class dictatorships, the proletarian dictatorship too betrayed the peasant masses during 1917-21.

But then Lenin and Stalin had had to struggle against the more cruel and sectarian anti-peasant policies of Trotsky and Radek. Trotsky was all out for the military liquidation of peasantry, for he believed that the "proletarian vanguard would be forced in the very early stages of its rule to make deep inroads not only into feudal property but into bourgeois property as well. In this, it would come into hostile collision not only with the bourgeois groupings which supported the proletariat during the first stages of its revolutionary struggle but also with the broad masses of the peasants who had been instrumental in bringing it into power". And Radek held an equally anti-peasant view that the war "rendered possible, not the dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry (as Lenin and Stalin maintained in the beginning) but the dictatorship of the working class relying on the peasantry". Little wonder, if some of the conscious peasants felt that after all Lenin and Stalin were better friends of theirs than the Trotskyites.

It looked as if Trotsky was having it all in his own way. Peasants were faced with the awful prospect of having to slave hard on their holdings and produce bumper crops, only to hand them over, at the peremptory behests of the Soviet armed proletariat, to the Soviet authorities without any hope of receiving any of their most elementary necessaries. They did not take long to react to this oppression in their traditional peasant manner, known to them; that is, by cutting down production, laying large portions of their lands waste and hiding or destroying their grain stocks. When thus faced with the ferocious revolutionary "scorched earth" policy of peasants, Trotsky would have the Soviet armies smash them into submission, but the less partial-minded Lenin decided to beat a temporary retreat and initiated his New Economic Policy. This was the first victory, though a paltry one, won by the post-Soviet peasantry. But at what a cost! The world was shocked by the continental famine that resulted in the deaths from starvation of

millions of people and the horrible infantile mortality that became the common feature of Soviet Russia for well over two years. Dr. Nansen, the famous Norwegian explorer, raised a "save the children" fund and sent ship-loads of food to Ukraine, the granary of Europe, to save a portion of the famished children.

So Lenin had then wisely inaugurated his policy of isolating the Kulak (*i.e.*, the rich peasants) from the middle and poor peasants. The Kulaks, it was, who had some political experience, military leadership and capitalistic mentality. They also had some prestige and leadership among the rank and file of peasants. So, if once they were driven to a corner and other sections of peasantry were taught to look upon them as counter-revolutionaries and enemies of the people, the real backbone of any possible peasant resistance to the proletarian dictatorship could be broken.

Stalin inherited this policy. By 1927, he realised that the N. E. P. had been given . . . . . too long a lead and capitalist exploitation was growing even within the circumscribed limits set by the nationalisation of foreign trade, banking and wholesale trading and also of all the means of communications and currency. He began his preparations for the first Five Year Plan. To make it a success, Kulaks had to be liquidated as soon as possible.

Stalin declared to the 15th Soviet Congress in December, 1927 : "We have established a bond between socialist industry and peasant farming. We have strengthened the alliance between the working class and the middle peasants, while relying on the support of the proletariat in our country." (Stalin by Kalinin.)

In the 15th Congress of 1927, Stalin plumped for collectivi-

sation. "Our disunited agriculture does not possess the advantages of our large-scale and united nationalised industry .... Where lies the solution ? ..... in transplanting the small and scattered peasant farms into large united farms based on common cultivation of the soil, on the adoption of collective cultivation on the basis of a new and higher technique?" He took care to emphasise the need for "gradually but steadily uniting the small and very small peasant farms—not by pressure but by example and precept into large-scale farms run on the basis of the common co-operative, collective cultivation of the soil with the employment of machinery, tractors and scientific methods." The first part of this exhortation was taken to heart by the Bolshevik proletarian comrade but they completely ignored Stalin's caution about gradualness and teaching by example and not by force. They were already sick of Trotskyite criticisms of their tenderness towards the socalled reactionary peasants. They were annoyed at the continued failure of peasants to supply all the grain demanded of them.

So the peasant masses do not seem to have been fore-warned about the new policy by any preparatory Bolshevik educational propaganda among them. No attempt was made to convince them of the advantages of collectivisation and the national disadvantages of Kulakism. With their usual impetuosity and "shock methods" proletarian comrades were let loose, in their large numbers upon villages with only one aim, that is, to drag peasants by persuasion, if possible and by force, if necessary, within the shortest possible time into State farms, and collectives and coerce them to swear allegiance to the new drive against peasant economy. All this came on top of a continuous pressure, over a number of years for the transference of a major portion of the peasants' grain, cattle, pigs, poultry and horses to the proletariat without any equivalent exchange of urban products. Naturally peasants again struck work. Then the doctrinaire Bolsheviks who

could not so easily live down their anti-peasant prejudices and who could not understand the love of land displayed by peasants and who failed to realise the means by which the same love of land felt by peasants could be turned to progressive use, further intensified their anti-peasant, pro-collectivist repression and led to greater intolerance and cruelty, that spring so rapidly from fanaticism.

The poor, disillusioned and disappointed peasants whose holdings were smaller than what would yield any appreciable net income and who had not to engage any wage-labour, except very rarely and in small units, were thus turned against the very government to protect which they had earlier suffered and slaved so much. Many Kulaks naturally took advantage of this ferment and further fomented discontent. The doctrinaire Bolsheviks began to spy a Kulak in every peasant, whether he was a poor or middle peasant, the moment he showed a disinclination to join the collective and expressed himself in an outspoken manner, as is usual with peasants against the new dictatorial methods. Almost every peasant began to be afraid of his own skin, for once a man was declared to be a Kulak by the dreaded OGPU, the least that could be expected was transportation to Siberia, there to be condemned to forced labour. Therefore, there ensued a countrywide, prolonged, bitter and bloody struggle between the peasants on the one side and the organised might of the proletarian state on the other. The counter-revolutionary agents, Trotskyites and some Kulaks, must have attempted to fish in those troubled waters, while the fanatical Bolshevik proletariat added fuel to fire. In 1927-30, there ensued an awful social struggle in more and more provinces of Russia and scores of millions of peasants were involved in horrible and bloody encounters.

Hence Stalin had to report partial failure to the 16th Congress of 1929. "The peasantry did not swing towards collec-

tivisation all at once . . . . . True, the slogan of collectivisation was proclaimed by the party even at the 15th Congress. But issuing a slogan is not enough to start a mass swing of the peasants towards Socialism (What a realisation of defeat by the Dictator at the hands of the unorganised but stubborn peasantry!) At least one more circumstance is needed for this, namely, the mass of the peasants themselves should become convinced of the correctness of the slogan proclaimed and should adopt it as their own. Hence this swing was prepared gradually . . . by the whole course of development of our industry and particularly by the development of those branches of industry which supply machines and tractors for agriculture. It was prepared by our policy of decisive struggle against the Kulaks and by the course of our grain collecting campaign in its new forms in 1928 and 1929, which placed the Kulak farms under the control of the poor and middle peasant masses. It was prepared by the development of agricultural co-operation which accustomed the individual peasant to the collective management of affairs. It was prepared by a network of collective farms, where the peasant tested out the advantage of collective farming as compared with individual farms. It was prepared finally by the network of State Farms scattered throughout the U.S.S.R. and equipped with new technique, where the peasant had the opportunity to convince himself of the strength of the new technique." (Stalin, P. 125.)

Since the "policy of eliminating Kulaks as a class on the basis of solid collectivisation" was taken up by the end of 1929, Stalin's above statement served more as propaganda than as actual achievement, Rather under its attractive and reasonable cover, many horrors must have been committed by less scrupulous and unstatesmanlike Bolshevik rank and file.

So many collectives were sabotaged; state farms spoiled, railways and tractors wrecked, cattle killed, crops destroyed,

canals broken by enraged and discontented peasants. All the rebels were dubbed as Kulaks, driven either to Siberia or to the gallows ; their properties—domestic and agricultural—were taken away, looted or collectivised and their families torn asunder by the Bolsheviks. A perusal of Maurice Hindus' "Red Bread" and the "Great Offensive" and other books and Solokhov's "Virgin soil upturned" gives us a picture of those horrible experiences of peasants, and illustrate best the sufferings of peasants.

Lenin understood the tactical weakness of his contemporary Russia, that "the peasant has great resisting power in his own place but he has not the nation-wide solidarity nor the alertness to bestir himself and combat an attack on his dearest habits and prejudices when it is going on in another part of the country, so that by concentrating all the resources of the Soviet Government, first in one Province and then in another, all Russia would at last be won to modern agriculture and reconstructed". Stalin followed this advice. But peasants' resistance proved stronger, despite their constitutional, economic and organisational weakness. Once again they triumphed. Stalin again beat a retreat, as did Lenin before him, in the face of the peasants who proved to be made of a stronger and better tempered steel than himself. But this time, the retreat was not to the plane of capitalism but to that of a self-chosen pace on the road to socialist construction.

Statesman that he is, Stalin adroitly exclaimed "What is there in common between this Sergeant Prishibeyes 'policy' and the party's policy which rests on the voluntary policy and allows for local peculiarities in collective farm construction? Who benefits by these distortions, this bureaucratic decreeing of a collective farm movement, these unseemly threats against the peasant? Nobody but our enemies . . . . . the discrediting of these distortions can only lead to the idea of the collective farm movement." (P. 127.) . . . This admonition to the over-zealous Bol-

shevik, also acted as an assurance of consideration and some democratic action to the harassed peasants. How one wishes that the same care had been taken earlier to create a psychological atmosphere for collectivisation and to help the general body of peasants to convince themselves of the advantages of collectivisation in the manner so carefully delineated by Stalin and so little observed in practice by the rank and file of the Party ! But how could it have happened, so long as the majority of the Bolshevik comrades and their leaders who were engaged on the collectivisation campaign were not themselves peasants ? So long as they do not cease to work on the authority and encouragement of a unitarian dictatorship of the proletariat and do not establish the democracy of peasants and proletariat and other people without any special leanings towards any one section, they could not be expected to avoid those blunders. The bureaucracy, the Party and the Congresses, were packed with the proletarian comrades and those with proletarian bias. Despite the cautious lead given by their leader, the whole ideological momentum was running counter to the peasants and their outlook. Hence that crucifixion of millions of Russian peasantry during a long period of at least ten years.

Little would have been lost if the two or three million peasants who could properly be classified as Kulaks had been allowed to learn through practical experience the greater profitability of collectivisation. Just as the artists, intellectuals and professionals are now being paid enormous salaries and wages and allowances and are yet prevented from becoming capitalists through various devices of taxation, these Kulaks too could have been made harmless and gradually absorbed. A Socialist State, guided by, responsible to and amenable to the voice of peasants would have done that. But a proletarian dictatorship is by its very content and constitution, incapable of such considerate and statesmanlike policy. We can only take it that Stalin's scrupulously considerate and wise statements must have served the purpose of mere

exhortations. The whole temper and tempo of the Soviet proletarian regime was anti-peasant. Hence the infliction of such grievous wrongs on millions of innocent peasants whose loyalty and services to the Soviet State were of as high an order as those of the class-conscious proletariat. Hence arises the opposition of world peasantry to the repetition and establishment of such a proletarian dictatorship in any other country.

Let us get a few glimpses of the awful repression carried on against the so-called kulaks. Cole, a learned, genuine British socialist, though not an orthodox Communist, observed : "The ruthless liquidation of the Kulaks is not only far the ugliest chapter of the record of revolutionary Russia, but also the part of the Communist policy, which, since the institution of the first Five Year Plan, has brought the Soviet Government nearest to collapse."

Here is his warning : "How essentially different the land problem would be in any country in which the Kulaks were not as in Russia, a small fraction of the entire peasantry but rather the predominant group . . or at any rate where the main body of cultivators consisted of homestead farmers or peasant owners with "a stake in the country". Whatever might be the appropriate policy under these circumstances, it could not include either the wholesale liquidation of the Kulaks on the Russian model or the institution of the farming methods of Kolkhoz ! (Practical Economics. p. 51-53.)

Here are the observations of the American Engineer, John D. Littlepage, who worked as Chief Engineer for the Stalin's Gold Trust and who worked in Russia between 1928 to 1937 :

"For years, we found ourselves in the midst of the process described as "liquidating the kulaks". In travelling through

Siberia, we encountered thousands of families, obviously hard-working small farmers, packed into freight cars so tight that they could hardly sit down, being shifted around by armed guards ..... The dispossessed small farmers were quickly converted into forced labourers. They were free to move around an area of several miles, so long as they reported once a week to the police." Their numbers were not known. "I have run across them all over the eastern districts of Russia, not only in mines but in factories and forests and at work on dams, railways and canals; the Police can always count on a steady supply of labour, no matter what kind of living conditions exist, where the task had to be done." Even Pat Sloan admits that "for a time, certain agricultural areas were in a state almost of armed warfare." (P. 174.)

As a result, Russians "went short of food for years because of the removal of so many competent farmers from the land. It also caused many kulaks to destroy their domestic animals so that, now, after almost ten years, there is still a shortage of meat and dairy products." (1937)... (*In Search of Soviet Gold* by John D. Littlepage.)

We can therefore conclude that so far as the broad Russian masses were concerned, they may be said to "have become staunch supporters of the Soviet Power," and of "Collective Economy" and converts "to the principles of large-scale social production in agriculture" only after they were subdued, suppressed, defeated and demoralised and not so much because of any genuine, sympathetic, constructive or persuasive campaign carried on among them.

Even through their defeats, the Russian peasants succeeded in shocking the Bolsheviks into the realisation that they have to be approached and treated in a different manner from the proletariat. Not only did they win the negative triumphs of NEP

and " Dizzy with Success " confession of Stalin but also they had to be given equality of franchise in the 1937 Constitution; that is, the former statutory weightage granted to the proletariat had to be abandoned.

In spite of all the efforts of the Communist Party, there were as many as 114.6 million peasants in 1939. As a result of the splendid fight put up by Russian peasants against the Soviet proletarianism, keen observers are able to say that " it is probably more correct to discuss the influence of the peasant character upon the wishes of the Government". State Collectives were so effectively opposed by peasants that " State working was retained only where such farms could particularly improve crops or strains of livestock". No wonder that " a great antagonism still remains," and so " the Commissariat of Agriculture with an obligation to feed the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is endeavouring to oust the precariousness from farming". Whatever price the State wishes to pay for the produce of the land, the State has to come to the village and bargained ..... "Actually the State buys at a medium price and sells much of the food crops to the town consumer with a heavy subsidy," observes Mr. Maurice Levell in his " Soviet Way of Life." (1948) Such is the measure of the Russian peasants' success in Sovietism.

Yet, they are in a poor way in Soviet politics. They were able to capture in the Soviet Legislature, in 1938-39 only 23 per cent. seats as against 31.3 per cent. got by the office workers and professionals and 45.2 per cent. by industrial workers. This is why the modern world peasant is so dead set against the dictatorship of the proletariat and distrusts the orthodox Communists who can think of only such a dictatorship. Collective or Co-operative cultivation he too desires, but he wants it to be achieved by adopting scrupulously the cautious and persuasive steps indicated by Comrade Stalin but not practised by his comrades.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFRICAN PEASANTS.

As is well known, the African Negro masses fought hard and for long against the European missionaries, traders, slave-robbers and invaders. But their forces were too meagre. They were divided into so many small tribes, unrelated and often opposed to each other. So, theirs was always an unequal and losing struggle against the better-armed and organised European conquerors. With all that, the Zulus put up a heroic struggle and inflicted repeated and severe defeats upon the British and the Boers. In the end, they too were defeated. The saga of the sufferings of the Negro masses at the hands of the Whites has yet to be told in full. Let us hope that some gifted and scholarly Negro revolutionary will do it.

The Negroes live their own tribal life. Their internal tribal economy is based on self-sufficiency. There are many praise-worthy Communist elements in it. The profit-motive does not enter into their internal economic relations. The community is treated as almost one family. Lands are held in common, private property is not exalted and riches, in terms of money or of goods, are not so much valued in themselves or accumulated. It is a planned economy, in which everyone is insured against the fear of unemployment, starvation, or exposure to cold. Such a degree of communistic organisation, Soviet Russia has not yet attained.

It is true that there are many defects in it. For instance, individual initiative, civil liberties and democratic panchayat rule are not well developed, owing to the autocratic or here-

ditary powers of the tribal chiefs. The influence of the chiefs, their witch-doctors and their other ideals are generally harmful and not at all conducive to progress.

The suzerainty of the Whites has played much havoc among these people and their social and economic institutions. Instead of developing their democratic institutions and traditions, it has further strengthened the dictatorial powers of the chiefs and their councils of elders; instead of encouraging their communistic economic organisations, it has injected the poison of private property; instead of modernising the tribal planned economy, it has been trying to achieve destructive de-tribalisation. Instead of protecting the communal property rights of these people over their lands, it has been alienating the best blocks of their lands, at nominal prices, to European and Asiatic settlers. Instead of strengthening their social systems which have assured everyone an equal and honourable living, it has been driving more and more Negroes into towns with all their horrors of unemployment, vagrancy, starvation and slums. It has replaced their self-sufficient economy by its risky and disastrous dependence of vast peoples on world markets.

It has naturally taken quite a long time for the Negro masses to comprehend these dreadful trends of reaction that has been imposed upon them by Imperialism.

But the very capitalistic elements which Imperialism has been introducing into their midst have come to produce their anti-capitalist revolutionary forces. Thus the Negro proletariat of the towns of the Gold Coast and of West Indies have organised themselves into Trade Unions, staged their local as well as general strikes and have begun seriously to embarrass their European masters.

The introduction of such commercial crops as cocoa on the

Gold Coast and coffee, cloves, cocoa, oil-seeds and cotton on the East Coast has resulted in the growth in numbers, power and landholdings of Negro small-holders. They have begun to understand the intricacies of a money economy and capitalist machinations. They have realised the need for co-operation as a result of their sufferings during the last economic depression. So they have developed their co-operative societies. Through their efficient management they gained self-confidence. So they began to ask for the banning of all private trading in the marketing of these crops. This did not please the European traders and the civil service. So repression was resorted to, evoking much organised resistance from the Negroes. Thus a political agitation on modern lines has taken roots among the West and East African Negro peasant masses. As in India, so in Africa, these growing struggles of Negro peasant masses are getting intertwined almost inextricably, with the rising political movements for freedom. But they are all as yet in their infancy. In fact the Negro masses have not yet become free from the threat of further expansion of political imperialism as South-West Africa has not escaped annexation by South Africans and her race-mad Whites. Owing to the concentration of all commerce in the hands of Whites and non-Negroes, the national struggles of Negroes are bound to be pre-eminently peasant struggles.

African Peasant Revolts.—That it is not without repeated struggles to retain or regain their freedom that the Negroes of Africa had had to go under European Imperialism is borne out by the following facts given by Du Bois in his "Black Folk".

"Africa has been literally bathed in blood at the behest of Europe. Not only was there the decimation due to the African Slave trade but there were eleven Zulu wars in South Africa from 1659 to 1893; there were seven wars of the English against Ashanti; there were the wars around Benin and the

French War in Dahomacy and other parts of West Africa ; there was the English attack on Ethiopia and in the Sudan and the rise of the Madhi ; there were repeated rebellions as the English and Germans entered East Africa, to say nothing of the fights in Egypt, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco and sporadic rebellions in French Equatorial Africa, the Belgian Congo and German South West Africa. There was the Italian slaughter in Tripoli, Eritrea and Abyssinia."

"The revolt in the Belgian Congo in 1904 and 1906 ; the riot in Dahomy in 1923, the mutiny on the Ivory Coast in 1923 and 1924, the revolt of the Senussi in 1916, the turmoil in the French Congo in 1923, ..., the revolt of Harry Thuku in Kenya in 1922 ; the mutiny of black Sudanese troops under English officers, and the riots by former Gordon College Boys, the riot of Port Alice in South Africa in 1920, at Bloemfountein in 1925, the revolt of the Wahia against Germans in 1891, the Magi-Magi in East Africa in 1905, the wiping out of the Houro in South West Africa, the disgraceful massacre in Uganda by Catholics, ..., the Hut-tax rebellion in Sierra Leone in 1844, the Zulu rebellion in 1906 ..... The total loss of life was immense." And in these post-war years, there are small revolts, strikes and agitation in every colony.

That African peasants led the way, by many decades to the 1942-43 Russian policy of scorched earth is shown by the following incident. In the sixties of 19th century, a leader arose among the Xosa tribe and told them that "God would drive these White oppressors into the sea and bring back the great heroes of the Kaffir nations if only they would sacrifice to heaven the blood of their cattle, their most dearly-prized and venerated possession. The cry of their hurt and the stench of their flesh swept over the veldt and famine fell and a hundred thousand black men starved." This sacrifice can be excelled only by the wholesale *hara kiri* committed by the descendents of Black Slaves

who threw themselves into the Caribbean sea rather than succumb to the domination of the conquering Whites.

New Africa.—The Negroes and others of Africa and her extensions like West Indies and the United States have also begun to think for themselves. They are turning their back upon their earlier fascination for and imitation of the European dress and social life. They have begun to take pride in their own tribal culture and ways of life. They have started a number of weeklies and dailies in English and in their own local languages and are publishing them in Africa, the United States and West Indies. Even the American Negroes have begun to stop aping the Whites and hearkening to the voice, thought and ways of Africa.

Under the influence of a number of Negro intellectuals, like Dr. Du Bois, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, Mekennon, Dr. Melliard, Peter Abraham, and Koinange theyhave federated all their local national organisations into the Pan-African Congress.

They have declared themselves against every vestige of imperialism and the system of mandates. They are determined to end colonialism in both the political and economic spheres. They have welcomed our move to form the Colonial and Coloured Peoples' Freedom Front. They have hailed the emergence of the 'Mighty Indian National Congress' fighting a successful battle at the UNO Assembly (November-December 1946) against racialism and colour bar.

The Pan-African Congress realises that the individual achievements of the few cannot solve the problems of the colonial masses. But the right to claim these achievements of one another in a world divided on racial lines leads to greater heights. The experiences of the world wars have made it clear to it "how one group of people" caught in one Imperialist system "trying to

develop its own freedom may be and is called upon to fight, in others, this very aspiration desired for itself. Therefore it is determined that the world must know that a backward, degraded, vilified African people retard the progress of all. So it realises the responsibility to rouse the consciousness of the common destiny of all peoples, of whichever nationality or race. Therefore Mr. Peter Abraham, the well-known Negro writer, says that " the liquidation of Imperialism is the pre-condition for the world struggle for the social, political and economic freedom of all men. The Colonial Freedom Front is capable of playing a special and extremely important role in that struggle for human liberty". It has raised the slogan "Quit the Colonies". In London a Conference was held with the objective of closer colonial co-ordination. In Manchester, the first really Pan-African Congress (in 1945) declared the awakening of the Negroes of the world and endorsed the objectives of the London Conference and referring to my thesis on "Colonial and Coloured People" (1946) stated that "from India, at the threshold of national liberation, Ranga brings the ideological basis for the new movement".

And recently I had the good fortune of contacting the leaders of the Pan-African Congress and also the European 'Left' during my two visits to Europe in 1946 and 1947 and 1948 and exchanging views and experiences with them. I am glad to say that certain extremely important organisations have been brought into existence in the wake of our discussions ; the Asiatic African United Front Committee and also the British centre for Colonial Freedom and also the African-Asiatic-European Peoples' Congress. The latest news is that the Pan-African Congress is bringing out the journal called 'Pan-Africa' to be a living expression and a reflection of the every-day life of African peoples.

Mr. Peter Abraham of the Pan-African Federation says "there

is in fact wide-spread support for the Colonial and Coloured Peoples Freedom Front among the coloured and colonial peoples themselves." He also realises that the "colonials have had very little, if any, hand at all in the formulation of policy of the European left. The Left-wing Movement of the West has been in fact 'European.' It has long since ceased to be a crime against the principles of Socialism for this or that Left group to advocate some form of international control of the colonies on a special plea of trusteeship. Somewhere along the long road of Socialist history, the principle of the right of all peoples to immediate self-determination without any strings, has been lost. That, then, is the cause. The effect is the birth of the Colonial and Coloured Peoples Freedom Front. It represents the unconditional acceptance of the fact that their salvation rests in their own hands and that the initiative is with them. . . . The ideological platform of Ranga while sharply critical, is not anti-White as such. But it does insist most sharply our colonials running their own struggle under conditions native to them."

For instance, Mr. Norman Manley, K. C. of Jamaica, declared in November 1946: "Until the day when subject peoples of the world themselves step out as free men and demand an end to the evils of the Imperialist system, the relations between the races of the world will continue to be charged with high explosives of suspicion. I am no believer in empires. Peoples are fit to govern themselves when they are capable of making an effective demand for it. No development offered to people from outside, no system, benevolence or philanthrophy can promise progress for people. The springs of growth are within. The test is our own, independence of mind and implacable will for action."

As for the suggested lines of action, he said : "I know no other course than the Socialist one which will inspire men to give that

self-sacrificing development which we need. Every colonial should throw his weight into Trade Unions. Every colonial should support and seek to develop the co-operative movement not only for the economic possibilities it holds but because it is a movement which in the last analysis has built a faith in the common people. The development of an organisation and Trade Unions has inspired many people who could by comparison enjoy comfort and ease to accept the burden of comparative poverty and hard work among the people."

In Sudan too the Umma Party has come to be organised during the war and it demands that the sovereignty of Sudan be restored to the Sudanese to set up an independent democratic Government of their own.

Belgian Congo.*

There were 3,028,895 people in 1944 in Belgian Congo. Of these 691,067 were able-bodied proletariat, of whom 330,433 were working far away from their homes.

There has been a revolution in the minds of these workers who are making ever greater demands on the material plane and who have been affected by the Trade Union claims of Europeans.

There was "mass migration of Africans to European centres—in order to escape the work imposed on the African sub-districts as their contribution to the war effort". Another cause of social distress was the shortage of goods. In 1941, a general strike of indigenous workers broke out immediately after a strike by European workers. Troops were called in "owing to the revolutionary and violent character of the upheaval".

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*All the information in this section was taken from the International Labour Review, May-June 1945.

As in the 18th and the 19th century Russia and in 19th century India, the faith of the masses in the emergence of a religious messiah was made use of by several revolutionaries to rally the masses of this colony round the banner of revolt to overthrow the "social and political order". These revolts were due to the activities of "pseudo prophetic anti-foreign sects", in particular the "black mission" There was a widespread "Watch Tower" movement in South Africa and Rhodesia which infiltrated into the Congo a few years ago. This announced the "forthcoming arrival of Jehovah on earth to take over the leadership of a great fight against all established authorities". He was to "set free the Africans from slavery and the labour imposed by the White man". One leader Mr. Bushiri thus influenced Masisi and Lubutu peoples to revolt. He ordered all work to be stopped and caused among other things the desertion of many mining workers. Later on he and his workers were arrested and their rising was suppressed. Another revolt in the military camp at Lulaubourg was also cruelly suppressed.

The latest report says : "Everywhere among the African population we are confronted with a vast stirring of ideas and men returning from the war, in which to the astonishment of the natives, the very existence of the dominating Whites was at stake."

Thus the denizens of even this benighted colony are aflame with new ideas, discontent and revolt and revolutionary spirit. And who are they but the peasants of Africa who are reaching out for a new order ?

Uganda.—Uganda is not a British colony. It is a Protectorate based upon the Uganda Agreement of 1900. Its Negro peoples are now trying to get out of the control of British Imperialists and achieve self-government. Mr. Semakula Mulumba says "we want a democratic African Government".

The people are united within a Totemic Social Organisation under the leadership of BATAKA, that is, the heads of all the clans. Matters connected with Uganda's national cult and welfare are submitted by the people to the Bataka, the elders.

Mr. Semakula Mulumba says "The British Government divided and sub-divided our country for administrative purposes. Thanks to the rivalries between missionaries—British and French—religious civil strife further divided the people. The Governments fanned the fire of mutual tribal dislikes. Thus for the last 70 years national disunity was developed".

The Bataka has acquired great influence on the people. The British did not like it. So a campaign of repression has been inaugurated. Messrs. Sebbanka and Kibuka, leaders of the Bataka, were arrested in August 1948 with a view to suppress this freedom movement. It is an entirely peasant movement.

Nigeria.—In this colony too, there is much awakening among the people. Recently the British had to pursue a repressive policy. The Government charged four leaders with sedition for "uttering, publishing and distributing" a seditious document called "A Call or Revolution". "Political Nigeria" is on the edge of a precipice and nationalism is in a state of siege against the forces of imperialism.

That the African people and their leaders and workers are realising the value of leadership is indicated by the title for a lecture by one of their leaders, Dr. Azikiwe, namely "Reward and penalty of leadership". They are also making an enthusiastic study of India's successful struggle for freedom and are trying to learn from the teachings and achievements of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru. That they have a high sense of responsibility is indicated by the statement made by Dr. Azikiwe that "a leader must be brave and possess moral and physical courage and above all know when to refuse or agree and

finally stand by his conviction ..... One of the penalties of leadership is ostracism." Marcus Garvey was exiled for preaching his doctrine of New Africa.

Everywhere in Africa the Negro people are being inspired by India's achievement of freedom. They are all anxious to follow the Gandhian Way. "The light of truth, once lit, shines ever more. To point the way free men shall ever walk. Such indeed is the spirit of New Africa." (*Empire*-January 1949.)

The Peoples' Congress which met in Paris in June 1948 has put forward the following socio-economic demands on behalf of Colonial peoples.

(*a*) "*The Need for comprehensive agrarian reform.*—The majority of the peoples are agriculturists, but millions of them live under starvation conditions. Land hunger is appalling and the land question is fundamental to them. The soil is suffering from erosion, and there is lack of irrigation and fertilisers and productive cultivation. There is a grave lack of mechanical aids, scientific agricultural education and co-operative organisation (credit, marketing and cultivation).

(*b*) "*The need for industrial development in the interests of the people, accompanied by co-operatively organised cottage industries in the rural areas.*—Private enterprise is no longer capable of any comprehensive industrial development and is in any case actuated only by the profit motive. Any future development must, therefore, be initiated by the government in full consultation and free association with representatives of the colonial people. The industries established must be handed over to the governments of the independent states as soon as they are formed and the right of these states to decide the future status of existing private industries must be recognised. Meanwhile, big monopolies like Unilever should be socialised and used for the benefit of the peoples concerned, and the profits of other industries should be

heavily taxed to provide a fund for the improvement of health and educational facilities.

(c) "*The immediate abolition of any repressive colour legislation in the economic, political, social and legal spheres.* The right of free association and agitation including a free press, unhampered trade union and peasant union activity, etc., must be restored. Existing legislative and administrative bodies must be immediately democratised on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

(d) *Complete impartiality on all issues relating to religions, communities and minorities.*—Imperialism has used religious, communal and racial differences to maintain its power by the policy of 'divide and rule'. Even today new antagonisms are being aroused in West Africa between the Moslem and other communities, whilst in East Africa the pernicious principle of special electorates for the Hindus and Moslems has been recently introduced. So far from fostering such divisions the aim must be to end them.

(e) *A comprehensive health scheme, the introduction and extension of social services and the minimum standard of wages and working conditions endorsed by the I. L. O. Convention* 1943.—It is estimated that in Africa, on the average, infantile mortality is 50 per cent. The population is ravaged by sleeping sickness, malaria, tuberculosis, syphilis, intestinal worms and other diseases whilst the shortage of doctors, nurses, hospitals, medicines, etc., is appalling. This is illustrated by the situation in Nigeria where there is one doctor and 0.3 hospital beds to 133,000 of the population. Old age pensions, unemployment insurance and other aspects of social security hardly exist and where they do exist are a mere pittance.

(f) *Free education for every child.*—The fight against illiteracy and cultural backwardness is a fundamental problem facing the colonial peoples and they require assistance in the form of schools, buildings, books and educational experts, etc.

CHAPTER IX

UNITED STATES FARMERS.

The original settlers of America were Red Indians. They were a powerful people, brave, honest and Communistic. They lived in their forests and plains and enjoyed the benefits of freedom and organisation provided by their tribal democracy. But they were too much under the authority of their tribal chiefs.

The Whites when they landed, and for a long time after their immigration, had to fight many a time against these courageous and martial people. English textbooks bear testimony to the cruelty, chicanery and downright loot practised by the Whites on these great people in their attempts to subdue them. When they found that the Red Indians refused to be subdued, a policy of extermination was pursued with zeal and determination.

The European continental Whites, especially the Spanish and Portuguese who had emigrated to South America, displayed greater humanity and had tried to convert the Red Indians to Christianity. They accepted the natives into peonage after having defeated them and thus abstained from exterminating masses of them. The result was that whereas there is today no such national group as Red Indians, worth speaking about in the United States, South American countries are predominantly populated by the Red Indians. In the United States too, the Red Indians put up a tremendous fight against the inroads of the Whites and continued to fight to the finish; so much so that today, there are left only a few hundred thousands of Red Indians in the whole of that vast country.

In the South American States, the Red Indians have liberated themselves in most parts from their horrible subjection and forced labour and have begun to aim at capturing political power. In some notable instances as in Mexico, they have even ventured to dispossess landlords and confiscate their ill-begotten estates and distributed those lands among millions of the Red Indian peasants. Thus while modern United States has the ghastly record of having exterminated a whole nation of brave peasants, the South American States have the more humane and progressive record of having allowed the Red Indians to live, eventually to come into their own, even in the modern complicated industrial economy, and rule in their own lands.

We find that from the very beginning the farmers among the European settlers were particular not to lose their importance, relatively to the growing industrial and commercial economy of the coastal States and Northern areas. But statesmen like Hamilton were more keen on developing the growing urban centres and giving an impetus to the fast-developing moneyed class in the commercial ports. This was not to the taste of farmers and their great leader Jefferson. So even while Washington, the Father and first President of their Constitution, was alive, farmers founded the Democratic Party under the leadership of Jefferson and began to struggle for political power. Some of them went to the extent of initiating and carrying on a "No Tax Campaign" in a few States (like that of Stay against Duties on breweries in Massachusetts) even while they were struggling in a constitutional manner for power at the White House. Of course that 'direct action' was put down with a heavy hand by the Federal forces but their political action could not be subdued so easily. Jefferson at last was elected to the Presidency and during the two terms of his presidentship, he did try to stem the tide of the growing industrialisation and protect the home markets for American farmers' produce and keep open the door for cheaper industrial imports. The obvious contra-

diction inherent in this—the one-sidedness of his policy—brought upon it the natural reaction and the farmers lost power again.

But during that short spell of power, the farmers did try to reduce their tax-burdens and give themselves a fair deal *vis-a-vis* the urban and industrial classes. Because they had not at that time worked out any plan or plans for industrial and commercial development of their country in harmony with the expansion of agriculture and because they could not develop a well-thought out economic policy for maintaining just terms of trade between agriculture and industry', they soon lost their grip on the White House and the State. Once again in 1829, Jackson, a farmer, rose to be President. Ever since, farmers have had some influence on the American Presidency. But the American farmers had to wait again until the advent of Franklin Roosevelt's regime in 1932 before they could begin to regain some effective hold over the Government.

The Jefferson-Jackson experiment is noteworthy for the display of farmers' affection for democracy and also of the farmers' failure to retain power when they did not have a full-fledged policy that could comprehend and come to grips with modern industrial problems.

U. S. A. Negro Peasants.—Soon after the liberation of Negroes as a consequence of the American Civil War, a Freedmen's Bureau was founded. It came to achieve such a moral hold over the freed Negroes that Carl Schuzz could declare in 1865 that the social structure and food production would have been hopelessly dislocated if it had not been for this Bureau. Its objects were :

(*i*) To oversee the making and enforcement of wage contracts for freedmen;

(*ii*) To appear in the courts as the freed men's best friend ;

(*iii*) To furnish Freedmen with a minimum of land and capital ;

(*iv*) To establish schools ;

(*v*) To furnish such institutions of relief as hospitals, outdoor relief stations, etc.

In the wake of its work the "Freedmen's Book" was founded.

The Freedmen began to exercise their newly-won political rights to gain political control over the Southern States. In a number of States, they did succeed in using their votes, to capture local governments and to take the first vigorous steps to raise the cultural levels of Negroes. Du Bois says that "in 1887 a dictatorship of the proletariat was established in a large part of the South, with black and white workers in the majority". Of course it was not a dictatorship, nor was it of the proletariat, for it was only the Negro and White peasantry who had won a parliamentary majority. These governments " began a new social legislation which gave Government aid to the poor ; established a public elementary school system." Du Bois adds : " We may recognise three things which Negro rule gave to the South ; (1) Democratic Government, (2) Free public schools, (3) New social legislation.

But the Whites saw red in all this. So they created racial animosity between the White and Black workers by playing on the white man's ignorant racial prejudices and shortsighted economic interests. This started a regular reign of terror against the Negroes and thus " forcible overthrow of democratic government in the South followed from 1872 to 1876. Negroes were kept away from voting by force and intimidation while Whites were induced to vote as employers wished by emphasising race-hate and fear. The disfranchisement of 1876 and after was followed by the widespread rise of 'crime' peonage. Stringent laws on vagrancy guardianship and labour contracts were enacted and large discretion given to judges and jury in cases

of petty crime. As a result, Negroes were systematically arrested on the slightest pretext and the labour of convicts leased to private parties".

Laws too were promulgated to break their political power, and while all this venal procedure was going on, the " neutrality of the White people of the North was secured through their fear for the safety of large investments in the South".

Mr. Howard Fast has given a fascinating account, of the social revolution inaugurated by the Forced Negro Statesmen, in his novel called "Freedom Road". Explaining this story of the rise and fall of American Negro democracy, he said "When the eight-year period of Negro and White freedom and co-operation in the South was destroyed, it was destroyed completely. Not only were material things wiped out and people slain but the very memory was expunged". Powerful forces did not hold it to be a good thing for the American people to know that once there had been such an experiment and that the experiment had worked, that the Negro had been given the right to exist in this nation as a free man, a man who stood on equal ground with his neighbour, that he had been given the right to work out his own destiny in conjunction with the Southern poor whites, and that in an eight-year period of working out that destiny he had created a fine, a just and a truly democratic civilization."

What sort of men were they who destroyed that fine and just democracy which was being created by the Negroes and poor Whites ? " Those men down there want to destroy us. They are not human as we think of human folk. Their world means nothing. Good and bad, in their eyes does not exist. You cannot reason with them ; they have corrupted reason. It is because we were such fools as to consider them bound by the rules that bind men, because we laid before them, on a silver platter

decency, right and justice that we are here today. That is why they are winning. That is why all over this Southland of ours, good, decent men and women are cowed, divided, confused". So declared the disillusioned leader of the Negro Social Revolution of the eighties' of the last century.

Why had he to come to that conclusion ? Because the President of the U. S. A. refused to retain the Union troops in the South and protect the Negroes from the Ku-Klux-Klan's cruelty and organised violence. Mr. Fast makes his hero, Gideon, state the case for the Negroes :—

"Democracy worked in the South. For the first time in the history of their nation, black men and white men together built a democracy. You have the proof, the schools, the farms, the just courts, a whole literate eager generation". "But the planters organised their army, white-shirted scum, by the thousands". There was terror "such as this land never knew, murder and destruction and burning and looting until every vestige of that democracy we built is destroyed". (Freedom Road p. 181).

In spite of all this persecution, Negroes "had begun the accumulation of land and property and had eagerly accepted the democratic ideals of popular suffrage and the eventual accomplishment of social and economic salvation by means of the vote". And they succeeded in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples in 1910 (N. A. A. C. P.) and fighting successfully in the Supreme Court against the Louisiana's obnoxious "Grandfathers Clause" which allowed only those persons to vote whose father or grandfather had had the right to vote before Negroes were enfranchised.

The tragedy of the American White peasantry and labour has been their failure to see the oneness of their interests with the

coloured people against their common exploiters, the planters and industrialists, the trusts and racemongers and their suicidal neglect of each other's movements of liberation. Thus, for instance, the White workers and peasants joined the reactionaries in Alabama in 1901, in Virginia in 1902, in Georgia in 1909 and in Louisiana in 1898 in passing legislation to rob most of the Negroes of their votes and the Negroes remained indifferent while the " political revolt of White labour against prevalent conditions " was suppressed by the White ' Haves '.

The N. A. A. C. P. inherited the traditions of work of the earlier Afro-American Council and proved to be one of the most effective organisations of the liberal spirit and the fight for social progress which the Negro race in America has known". The first World War increased the Negro's political as well as economic power. The second World War has further strengthened him. " When the War Department determined not to appoint Negro officers, a nation-wide Negro agitation compelled the opening of a special camp for their training. Eventually seven hundred Negro officers were commissioned during the Great War alone. "

The Negro has come to realise that mere educational advancement and race collaboration as preached by Booker Washington in 1896 or the securing of votes are not enough and that his effective emancipation can result only when he has a voice in the production and distribution of wealth. Du Bois says quite rightly that he has now ",the opportunity of starting towards it through the organisation of his power as a consumer and by the utilisation of the cultural bonds of his racial grouping to secure industrial emancipation".

U. S. A. Farmers Under Economic Depression.—Contrary to the general prejudices that they are individualistic and unco-operative, the American peasants (known generally as farmers)

reacted to the 1929-35 depression in a very revolutionary and socialistic manner. When millions of them were threatened with foreclosure of their holdings by the affrighted banks which were making a " run " on their resources for the repayment of their debts, they rose to the occasion and raised slogans very much like those of the poorer Indian peasants such as "Human Rights are above legal and property rights " and "Wives and children have the First Mortgage". Like their brethren in India, they too banded themselves into emergency organisations and would not allow the sale of their farms and cattle. The result was that no one dared to bid for a farmer's property at any auction and " the banks were forced to agree to the farmer's terms ". Another weapon of farmers was the " Farmers' Holiday " that is, their refusal to supply the towns with food, milk, etc. The Hoover and Roosevelt Administrations, which could normally be expected to care more for the urban classes, were obliged to bend their energies to afford some emergent help to farmers. Thus did the American peasants derive useful experience of " turning more aggressive and revolutionary in outlook " in answer to their changed objective conditions than even the proletariat of many countries. (Nehru's Glimpses of World History—Indian Edition, Vo. II, p. 1380.)

The conclusion of Vladimir Woystinsky is significant. He says : " The depression tended to produce discord within the ranks of wage-earners in industry. In agriculture, on the other hand, the depression united the farmers, stimulated their activity and taught them to use various political weapons."

Community Feeling of U. S. A. Farmers.—American Farmers are getting together in the market through the radio, clubs, unions and discussion groups, and are thus getting over the main difference that has distinguished them from the proletariat congregated in their factories. In "Rural America," Mr. Archibald Robertson tells us that "discussion groups" have been

sponsored by Church groups or local chapters of the National Farm organisations.

"A broadening sense of the community is most evident throughout rural America in the work which farmers do together, in the administration of the National Farm Programme, and in soil conservation districts and rural electrification co-operatives, as well as in their co-operative marketing and purchasing activities".

Dr. Raper writes : "The farmers now live within a country-wide unified farm programme. Here we are today, White men and black, landed and landless, with our interests and fears and hopes". Thus are the new farmers of the States being welded into one great revolutionary co-operative force.

In the South, share-croppers have organised themselves into the Tenant Farmers' Union in 1944. Both White and Negro share-croppers have joined it. "It has obtained for some of its members written contracts with farmer owners and public sales of crops at published prices ; it has worked towards better rural housing, education and soil conservation and is operating two State-chartered co-operative associations for purchase of supplies and sale of farm products".

The Grange.'—The American farmers began to realise the need for organisation when they found that railways, grain elevators and banks were taking undue advantage of their key position and charging unconscionably high rates for their services under the law of Key Services. Therefore, they formed the famous GRANGE in the sixties' of the last century. True to their American traditions of dynamic action, the farmers rushed into their movement with such enthusiasm that by 1875, the GRANGE came to have 2½ million members. They proceeded to form "their own co-operative societies, grain elevators, plough

factories, stores, mutual insurance companies and even banks". They began to vote into office such public officials as were honest and vote out of office those who were being subsidised by the railway companies. Thus from step to step, the American farmers have gone on gathering strength and grown to be very powerful. Verily, the GRANGE can be said to be the oldest farmers' organisation in existence.

The GRANGE has 8000 county branches, 4000 of which own their own halls, and about a million members. It is based on the family and paternal relations of farmers. Women are encouraged to join it. It has local and Provincial units. Their leaders are known as Masters and they are National Delegates .It runs social and educational activities; State and national units interest themselves in legislative work and so do a lot of lobbying.

The Farmers' Union.—The Farmers' Union of the U. S. A. is an organisation of the family-type farmers. It was first organised in 1902 in the State of Texas. It has grown since that time into an organisation of 450,000 members representing 151,000 farm families. Its purpose is to improve the welfare of families who earn their livelihood from agriculture. The following is their programme:

"We stand for the family-type farm.

"We believe in the ownership of land by the people who cultivate it.

"We believe in abundant production of farm crops because we know there is an ever-present need for the food and fibre we produce.

"We advocate the use of freely-elected farmer committees in the administration of the nation's farm program.

"*We believe that fair exchange must be the basis for the farm price structure.* We, therefore, advocate an orderly process of negotiation between producers and consumers in establishing farm prices.

"We are in favour of an Ever Normal Storehouse for the nation's food and fibre supply, as a measure to stabilise farm markets and to protect both farmers and consumers.

"We stand for universalle ve'-premium crop insurance, with the costs shared by farmers and the public as consumers.

"We believe that every farm family has the basic right to earn an adequate minimum income either at full-time farming, or at farming plus outside employment. We favour a generous minimum wage for hired labour in agriculture, as one important measure to protect this right.

"We know that an ample supply of low-cost credit is necessary for family-type farming. We, therefore, support both co-operative farm credit asssociations and federal farm credit agencies.

"We believe in Co-operatives.

"We recommend social security protection for all people in agriculture.

"We recognise the need for improving the efficiency and technology of family farms.

"We oppose speculation and profiteering in farm machinery.

"We believe that the United States must have full employment.

"We favour a taxation policy based on ability to pay, and with the graduated income-tax as the principal source of public revenue.

We oppose discrimination in any form against people because of their religion, race, colour or personal beliefs.

We declare that it is the responsibility of every Farmers' Union member to give all possible patronage to our Co-operatives. We call attention specially to the importance of patronizing our insurance co-operatives, because these gather capital for expansion of the entire Farmers' Union.

We find that the majority of our representatives in Congress and in our legislatures are serving private corporate interest, instead of the public interest or the family farmers' interest. We, therefore, propose to increase our activity in the political field in order to improve our legislative system. We will reserve our votes for representatives who will serve the public interest and support the Farmers Union programme. We will give more attention to their voting records".

This Farmers' Union maintains paternal and intimate relations with the urban proletariat and derives help from and also gives support to the proletariat whenever a strike occurs. For instance, in 1939, when the New York farmers went on Milk Strike, a sum of $ 10,000 was contributed by Workers' Unions. The Union promotes Co-operative Societies in every field of work. The Roosevelt administration fully adopted its programme.

Farm Bureau Federation.—The Farm Bureau Federation is an organisation of, by, and for the farmers. "It is a great institution of social democracy, co-operating with the Government in the improvement of human relationships. Through it men and women are learning to live and work together for the individual and common welfare. After all, most of our problems

are basically the problems of human relationships. We may remake our laws; but it is not that for which we live. We may remake our commerce; but commerce serves only desire. We may even remake our institutions; but institutions are only a frame. All these are not industry—they are tools. And these tools, however well-constructed, are, nothing save in the hands of men and women of vision, of courage, of faith, proceeding from an inner spiritual strength and discipline."

It is this type of leadership that the Farm Bureau has developed throughout the nation. The county Farm Bureaus early set themselves to the task of improving the status of farmers and of rural community life. The biggest thing that the Farm Bureau has done has been to develop thousands of strong, unselfish agricultural leaders, imbued with the spirit of humanitarianism and possessed of great vision and faith in the fundamentals of democracy.

It is in the year 1920 that the Federal Farm Bureau came into existence. The basic philosophy of the Farm Bureau embodies the ideals advanced by one of the greatest leaders of the United States. Thomas Jefferson said "Farmers, whose interests are entirely agricultural, are the true representatives of the great American interests and are alone to be relied on for expressing the proper American sentiments. (1797) . . . . . Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests, by the most lasting bonds . . " (1785).

It is interesting to note how its program is formulated. The individual farmer, joining hands with his neighbour in his Farm Bureau helps to work out the programme for the community, and helps to mould State and National policies through

his county, State and National organisations. Each unit is free to build it own local programme—the community unit planning its own activities, and the county and State organisations planning county and State programmes. Then working with other States they unite to develop national policies that will co-ordinate the aims and activities of agriculture as an industry.

The Farm Bureau is not a commercial organisation; yet it has done more than any other single group in America to foster collective buying and selling on a sound basis. It is not primarily a civic organisation, yet it is deeply concerned with everything affecting the civic welfare of farmers and their families, and it is promoting broad civic programmes to improve community life. It is not a social organisation, yet it is vitally interested in fostering better human relationships, the spirit of brotherhood and fair-play, and the development of wholesome recreational and social life. It is not an educational institution, yet it is one of the greatest educational forces in America.

It is decidedly not a political organisation, yet one of its greatest aims is to aid in establishing and maintaining sound political institutions and policies. It is exerting a profound influence upon political policies, because its leadership advises the President, the Governors, the members of Congress and the State legislatures, and other responsible government officials. Its advice is eagerly sought by Government leaders because it reflects agricultural sentiment from the grass roots.

Women take an equal part with the men in building the organisation and its programme. Just as the farm woman is a partner with her husband in the operation of the farm enterprise and in making the home, so she is his partner in this great social institution which is building a better rural civilisation and a strong and vigorous nation.

Farmers' Co-operatives.—Mr. John H. Davis says that the National Council of Farmers' Co-operatives differs from the other major national farmers' organisations in that its members are farmers' business associations rather than individual farmers.

"The Council has a direct membership of 105 Co-operative Associations who in turn have a membership of over 4,800 local co-operatives with more than 400,000 farmers' patron members. The Associations engage in the marketing and processing of all important commodities and in the purchasing of practically all types of farm production supplies" Mr. Quentin Beynolds, the President, says that the "National Council has made it possible for farmers' co-operatives to solve their own problems which are national in scope and enables these co-operatives to exert their influence more effectively in Washington".

All the four National Farmers' Organisations are, in a sense, non-political but are extremely powerful in influencing both the great political parties of the States. It was mainly due to their political influence, that the Roosevelt administration adopted the New Deal for Agriculture which attempted to equalise the price-levels of agricultural and industrial goods and services. Thus between 1932-34, the agricultural prices were raised by more than 25 per cent. and the terms of trade between agriculturists and industrialists were made much less unfavourable to the farmers.

CHAPTER X.

LATIN AMERICAN PEASANTS.

In Latin America, the Red Indians were first cheated into a false treaty ; next their chief was murdered in cold blood by treachery, and later, they were all converted into a subject race. Then followed the confiscation of all their lands, and their conversion, without their knowledge, into the status of peons of the Spanish landords who were imposed upon the country. Large numbers of them who rebelled were either massacred or driven into the hills and forests or turned into forced labour to work on the plantations of their alien rulers. At first they simply refused to work and were content with what little they could get to eat from their forests and fugitive cultivation. Thus their early "stay-in" strike was so successful that their masters were completely nonplussed for a time. Then was devised the legalised institution of peonage and the assumption by their White masters, of their new duty towards civilisation, that is, to teach these Red Indians who preferred poor feeding coupled with a lot of leisure to work for the European masters, the virtues of diligence and wage labour and also the beauties of drinking "rum" and wearing imported clothing.

Then the White settlers found that they must liberate themselves from the imperialist suzerainty of the Spanish Emperor. So, Bolivar, the 'liberator' led the revolution, liberated six States from the Spanish Crown, in which he was ably aided by the Spanish, Croele and Red Indian peasants. This was during 1810,20.

The next series of revolutions took place in Mexico during 1850-1911. Two great Red Indian leaders and a number of

Spanish leaders had contributed much to their cumulative success. Jaez, Sapates and Cardenaz were the Red Indian Presidents who engineered these revolutions. The slogans of the revolution were "Land and Liberty" and "Freedom of the State from the Church," Jaez was the first Mexican President to work for education, land reform and for the Indians. He attacked the Church and took advantage of an earlier law separating Church and State. Another Indian, Zapata, "stalking across the sierras on his black stallion, inflamed the peasants with revolutionary slogans". He declared "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees", a typical peasant expression. Last came Cardenaz, who ruled up to 1940. He split up a very large number of great estates, distributed many millions of acres among more than a million Indian peasants, confiscated the oil wells and other foreign capitalist ventures and introduced partial socialist control of industries on Guild Socialist lines. Although he admired the Soviet proletariat, he was convinced that only a peasant revolution would suit the Mexicans and that a peasant economy, coupled with education and utilisation of scientific methods of co-operation, would be best suited to the Mexican Indians. John Gunther says: "It is the only country in Latin America with an advanced social-economic programme with definite collectivist aims, principles and accomplishments." Is this not a good enough record of revolutionary action and Socialist construction under the circumstances of Latin America?

Mr. Trend writes in his *South America*: "With all its courage, with all its devotion, with all its failings and with all its horrors, the Revolution has brought a profound and beneficent change . . . which has deeply affected the lives and thought of all Mexican citizens. Yet it would never have come to be the great chapter it is in the history of the country without the tenacity and persistence of its leaders including Madero and

Sapata. Sapata won and so did the revolution, because he would make no compromise over his simple *demand of land for the people.*"

"The Mexican Revolution began seven years earlier than the Russian. It is distinct from Communism . . . It is entirely Mexican." The spiritual change brought by Revolution is best seen in the new attitude towards the Indian ; and in the discovery of the country as well as the city, the country with its sharply different culture, its great variety of life, its needs and its poverty. The country has become a matter of concern to the Mexican Government in a way it never was before ; and the discovery of the country means the transition from a colonial mentality to pride in a national state. . . . The revolution brought ruin to the old ruling class ; it awakened the political and economic power of the Church, awakened a feeling of national pride and racial consciousness, gave power to labour and abolished peonage. But all these changes depended on the altered social structure brought by the change in the land system... (*America* by Trend).

There were two famous articles in the 1917 Constitution : "Article 123 guaranteed to labour those rights which labour commonly enjoys in a progressive State. Article 27 declared that the ownership of lands, minerals and waters is vested in the nation, which may grant a title thereto to private persons and has the right, subject to indemnification, of terminating that grant for reasons of public utility. Villages deprived of their common land were to have that land restored and all villages were given the right to receive land by outright grant."

"The Indian, the forgotten man of Latin America, is being discovered anew by painters and poets, folk-lorists and sociologists and even by Government and it is increasingly obvious that both the Indian and the Mestizo are destined to play a more important part in the future of the Continent."

Mexico.—The next great revolutionary reconstruction of the psychology of peasants is met within the great Latin American country, Mexico. Cardenaz, the hard-headed military leader, has provided a new ideology as indicated by his revolutionary activities to uplift his fellow Red Indian masses. During his Presidentship (1934-40) he achieved a phenomenal revolution, mostly through the activities of the State. He broke up the ill-gotten estates (Laciendas) and distributed 30 million acres among 1,700,000 peasants. He expropriated most of the oil-companies owned by the Anglo-American capitalists, with all their hundreds of million dollars worth of investments and thus displayed the power and magnitude of passion for justice latent in the peasant masses. He placed workers in charge of the management of railways, mines and oil-wells indicating thereby that a peasant President knows to treat the proletariat much better, more wisely and with much greater camaraderie than the Russian proletarian dictatorship had displayed towards peasants. His "instinctive kinship with common people and the way his aims and his ideals have expressed the inarticulate aspiration of the Indian masses" have metamorphosed the Red Indian peasantry from a listless and lethargic mass into a progressive and revolutionary community out to achieve glorious things in future, passionate for gaining education at present and determined to safeguard and develop their achievements. He understood so well that "for the Indian, land is life" and that the "Indian's conception of life depends on his having his own land". He hastened to give effect to the 1915 decree of President Carranza which nullified all the seizures of all communal lands made since 1856. His successor, a moderate, dare not weaken Cardenaz's revolutionary achievements. He has proceeded to confirm the ownership of peasants of their shares within the Ejidos, the ancient communal holdings, subject only to the general supervision of the Ejidos. Thus, care has been taken to ensure the continuity of communal tradition and also

to enhance the peasants' efficiency. He has achieved modernisation of the communal methods of cultivation, so that, what all is being claimed for the Soviet Collective so far may come to be achieved, by peasants through their own initiative and organising genius. How much more humane, economical of human life and exertions and in the long run, more effective, is this Mexican institution and reorganisation of Ejidos or communal lands than the Soviet manufactured "Collectives"!

In Mexico, the middle classes and the capitalist Whites might, however, succeed to gain power either to weaken or arrest their progress for neither the 1911 Revolution nor Cardenaz's revolution had succeeded in placing power in the hands of the toiling masses. There is one safeguard ; as Gunther rightly put it, the loyalty of the masses to their Ejidos is so strong that " no Mexican can dare abolish the Ejidos." Though he is no philosopher and has no ideology to spread among his people, Cardenaz has achieved a veritable revolution. But owing to the lack of a revolutionary peasant organisation and his failure to build peasants into an alert, political power, Mexican peasants have not yet emancipated themselves as fully from their age-long indifference to national life, outside their Ejidos and to enter politics with their own definite ideology and aims. The psychological reconstruction that Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen have aimed at and succeeded so largely in achieving, has yet to be inaugurated in Mexico and other Latin American States.

Nevertheless, the Mexican peasant is today a new being, far superior to his brethren in other States, in his growing self-confidence, in his rising hopes, in his flowering zest for public life and in his progressive aspirations. That they hold a pistol at the head of capitalism and are capable of thwarting its machinations was displayed by Mexican peasants and their leader. The Mexican revolutions have also demonstrated that the old era of unimpeded capitalist domination over peasant masses is coming to an end.

The Mexican revolution has had a great and ennobling effect upon the peoples of Latin American States. The Red Indians in particular have begun to breathe a new spirit of revolution.

Peru. There is the President of Peru, the State which could not enable its President to take charge of its Government. He is much younger than Cardenaz of Mexico and has had greater educational opportunities having studied at the Oxford and London Universities, visited Russia and toured on the European Continent. He has formed a nation-wide and disciplined party called "A Primso," formulated an ideology and carried on a tremendous educational propaganda among the Red Indians and White proletariat. President Haya de la Tare studied the lessons of the archaeological remains of the Incas civilisation and deplored the "crushed, whipped and beaten" state of their fallen descendents, the Indian peasantry. He has come to the conclusion that all rights in South America belong to Indians and Latin America ought to be called the Indo-America. So he strives for the "liberation and education of the Indians and their incorporation into the life of the State, . . . for land reform and restrictions on foreign and local capital".

Just because the American and British and other foreign capitalists who control almost all minerals and industries of Peru did not want him to get into power, he was kept out of power for a number of years. Though elected to the Presidentship he was driven into exile by the capitalist-sponsored local dictatorship. This seems to have influenced his attitude regarding the place of nationalism in the new powerful pan-Americanism and the role of foreign investments. He has come now to be not so keen on nationalism as on Pan-Americanism, possibly in the hope of winning over America's support for his party. He is prepared to welcome foreign capital provided he can control it.

Anyhow, President Haya stands for a powerful, resurgent modern peasantism of Indo-America. By organising a revolutionary party for the peasants, and the proletariat, the former being the predominant partner, by holding the view that Communism cannot flourish in Indo-America ; by insisting that the peasants must control capital " instead of letting it control us", Haya is filling up the gaps that one finds in the revolutionary equipment of Cardenaz. The younger man admires the older. If only both of them could think of working out a common peasant platform, much can be expected. At last Haya has come to be installed in power. Even as it is, Haya's challenge to world capitalism and capitalist-dominated Pan-American ideals is great and peasant-wise. He is equally opposed to Marxism and the Soviet attitude towards peasants.

West Indies.—The several islands of West Indies came to be peopled largely with the descendents of the Negroes who had been captured and brought from Africa as slaves by the White traders and planters. Thanks to the series of revolutions of slaves that followed the French Revolution and the excellent leadership provided by such great Negro leaders as Citizen Toussaint and Christopher, the Negro masses of these islands have gained freedom from slavery.* The British declaration of emancipation of slaves only put the seal upon what was almost a *fait accompli*.

But their political emancipation from slavery has only intensified their economic dependence upon the European planters because, freed from the obligation of having to feed and to maintain their slaves, the planters began to display awful callousness about the fate of their erstwhile slaves. So the Negro population began to dwindle and discontent began to grow. At one time, serious revolts were feared. The rising tempo of agitation

* See my book "The Colonial and Coloured Peoples Freedom Front".

and discontent forced the planters and Government to grant some land to sections of Negro agriculturists and thus encourage them to become peasant proprietors.

The awe-inspiring sacrifices made by the Negroes of these islands in their attempts to achieve freedom are symbolised by the pillar raised on a sea-washed cliff in Johnston. That spot was consecrated by the heroic act of self-immolation of hundreds of Negro-fighters who simply threw themselves into the sea rather than surrender to the victorious imperialists. Such is the indomitable spirit of Negro peasants. Ever since, they proved to be the stabilising force in the social economy of the islands.

"When the Royal Commission visited the islands in 1897, it was struck by the difference between the turbulent and threatening conditions in colonies where there was no peasantry and the relative stability and prosperity of those in which a substantial peasantry had emerged." (*The West Indies Today*, p. 11.) Such peasants "show independence on a modest competence".

But what that Commission had then recommended has yet to be fully implemented. No reform affords so good a prospect for the permanent welfare of the West Indies as the settlement of the labouring population on the land as small peasant proprietors and thus to destroy the economic foundations of slavery. Even the Communist-minded revolutionaries maintain that "if the West Indies is to become a peasant community, it is therefore necessary that the plantocracy should be dislodged from its seat of political power".

The West Indies have at last realised that unless they act for themselves, they will get little. Peasants too had taken part in the series of strikes that took place in 1939. They contributed their share to the growing unrest during the War. Now that

Provincial Autonomy has come to be inaugurated in Jamaica and other islands, peasants have organised themselves into their own National Union. Their Union has now become so powerful as to control the policies of their Agricultural Department. But the labour politicians have not begun to make common cause with the peasant leadership. Here is their National slogan for the right leadership :

" God give us men ! A time like this demands
Good hearts, strong minds, true faith and willing hands
Men whom the lust of office does not kill ;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy ;
Men who have honour, men who have opinions and a will."

CHAPTER XI.

ECONOMIC DEPRESSION.

The great economic depression of 1929—35 is a notable event in the history of world peasants. It is doubtful, had it not been for its terrible and, in places, disastrous impact, whether peasants, especially the comparatively prosperous farmers of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, would have begun to think in terms of revolutionary organisation and action of world peasantry and the need for international combination of peasants to tackle this new menace of world-wide economic fluctuations.

The Great Depression threw off their feet millions of erstwhile prosperous farmers of the New Continent and Australia. All their farming operations over hundreds and thousands of acres, with scores of tractors, harvesters and combiners, hundreds of horses and thousands of sheep, and large credits in banks proved futile in their painful and heroic efforts to overcome the ravages of that economic blizzard. They saw their liabilities not only mounting in terms of cash but also in their real value, their assets falling in value and liquidity and their golden harvests becoming more a burden and a source of anxiety than hope. They could not cut down their establishments as rapidly as the prices of agricultural produce were falling. They could not sell their grains as quickly as the pressure of their liabilities was increasing. The very same bankers who had been so obliging in 1928-29 proved to be their cruellest taskmasters demanding foreclosures. The world market on which they banked, collapsed suddenly and farms by thousands failed miserably even to yield the barest living to the farmer. It looked as if the whole countryside of all those otherwise pros-

perous countries of America and Australia were faced with wholesale bankruptcy, unemployment and starvation.

It was that calamity that had stung their swarming millions into political action and into direct action in a politico-economic sphere. In the United States, farmers turned upon the bankers and refused to repay their debts. In Australia and Canada, Governments were forced to come to the rescue of farmers in various ways, including subsidies on exports, more reasonable prices on home consumption and moratorium on agricultural debts.

Similarly, the Governments of South Eastern European countries had all to adopt a number of protective measures to sustain the bottom of the economic stability of their peasant masses. What was actually achieved was not much. But a way was thus shown for the farmers and peasants for their protection. The depression opened their eyes to their need for political power and to the possibilities of such power to afford them their much-needed protection.

In that way much more propaganda was done in a spontaneous manner to make them realise the need for both national and international co-operative and political action than had been achieved by their Green International. If only the Green International had at that time come to be in possession of that later-evolved ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj, it could have taken the fullest advantage of that great opening made by the depression for the building up of an international farmers' political and economic front.

The East too was prostrated even to a greater degree by that depression. Both Indian and Chinese peasants reacted to it vigorously, though not on a national scale. Their peasant movements have, however, gained their biggest momentum during that period due to the ravages caused by that depression.

Thanks to that depression, the American farmers who were most developed politically and were most powerful economically, reacted to it in an extraordinarily dynamic fashion. They realised that while they did suffer, the urban classes suffered less; while their farms failed miserably, the industrial and commercial undertakings failed less miserably and that on the whole their collapse was much greater.

What had incited them more to rebel against the modern unjust economic dispensation which had come to impose itself on them all unnoticeably, was that both in times of prosperity and adversity, booms and depressions, the urban, industrial and commercial interests were in a much more advantageous position. So, they enquired why? And they found that the real cause for all the mischief lay in the unfair terms of trade between agriculture and industry and in the consequent drain of their resources into the coffers of the industrial and professional classes. They demanded that fairer terms of trade should be enforced by State; and so Roosevelt's N. R. A. attempted to satisfy this demand by raising agricultural prices by more than 25 per cent. *vis-a-vis* the industrial prices, on the plea that parity should be achieved between agricultural and industrial prices on the basis of what was considered to be a fairer balance in terms of trade obtaining in 1929. Although this was not much, in that there never had been a fair parity between these two sets of prices ever since the industrial revolution, it was a good beginning for the triumph of the farming population.

The second world war has brought the peoples of all nations to the realisation of the strategic importance of agriculture. So many a State had offered to pay remunerative prices for agricultural produce and assure a decent wage standard for the worker on land. And this comparative immunity from the growing fear of instability of market prices and unemployment has made the agricultural masses of the whole of the West apprehend a

repetition of another post-war depression in agriculture, a glut in world markets and disastrous fall in the prices of agricultural produce, stock and other assets and even land. On the other hand, food consumers too were frightened at the spectre of food shortages and consequent widespread food famines in the post-war years and the rising spiral of food prices. So, from both sides, the awareness has grown of the need for world planning of food production. Hence the Hot Springs Conference on Food and the resultant founding of the 'World Food and Agricultural Organisation (F. A. O.)' The F. A. O. today stands for three great objectives ; to raise the nutritional standards of effective levels of food consumption of the masses of the world, to give a fillip to greater production of food grains and fibres needed to satisfy the two fundamental needs of people, *i.e.*, food and clothing, and to assure the food producers remunerative prices and decent and progressive standards of living and the consumers stable and adequate supplies of food and clothing at prices within their capacity to pay.

Everyone knows that the consumers are effectively protected, at least so far as their dealings with producers are concerned, by the world markets and the Governments, which are mostly under their influence, and also by the merchants who are most effectively organised and powerful. But it is the peasants who have to organise themselves, on a world scale, if they are to see that the F. A. O. also will not be exploited by world markets and their merchants in the interests of urban consumers and the industrial and commercial classes. That the world peasantry and farm population are in no mood to forget the bitter lessons taught by the last economic depression and are anxious to react to the latest demands of these post-war times has been displayed by their readiness to organise the World Conference of Agricultural Producers in London in May 1946. I had the honour of representing the Indian peasantry at that Conference. We brought into existence the International

Federation of Agricultural Producers (I. F. A. P.) But unfortunately none of the representatives of the Peasant Unions or parties or Co-operatives of the ten South Eastern European countries were able to attend that Conference, possibly because of the unwillingness of the local Communist-dominated regimes to allow their peasants to gain world contacts and to develop their class-consciousness, independently of their growing local proletarian hegemony. Anyhow their absence was significant, especially in view of their earlier initiative in organising the 'Green International'.

But some of us were able to contact both in London and Copenhagen some of the leaders of the Balkan peasant groups—for peasant parties are banned by the Communist-controlled National Front Governments—and they assured us that they would try to break out of the iron ring of Communists that was strangling them and come and join our International Federation. Anyhow this World Conference, F. A. O. and I. F. A. P. have become centres for the growth of world consciousness of peasants. They are, besides, only advisory bodies, leaving complete autonomy and initiative to the national peasants of farmer organisations. They have begun to make the modern peasants think consistently and constantly in terms of world trade and world markets. Thus a beginning is being made by world peasantry for revolutionary action on a world scale. True, the world proletariat made such beginnings a hundred years ago and so, have made much progress. But our peasantry have the advantage of learning from the proletarian experiences of the last 100 years and from the inspiring achievements and instructive failures of Soviet Russia. Therefore, the time has come when the world peasant revolutions, which till now had been local or national can and will become international and hereafter both their political and economic struggles will be inspired by their ideal of democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj which is itself an upshot of Soviet Russia's achievements and experiences.

CHAPTER XII.

PEASANTS OF THE WORLD UNITE

The peasant is a revolutionary. He needs a revolution to set right his position. He must resort to revolutionary means to come into his own. Either he must become the vanguard of revolution against world capitalism and imperialism or he must perish. Such is his historical position. He cannot escape it. The modern peasant can no longer be merely village-minded or nationally minded. He is forced to be world-minded. The world market drags him into the world arena. Capitalist exploitation forces him to become a socialist. Imperialist impact forces him to get out of his nationalist moorings and to seek allies in the international field. He is fast becoming a world force. Thus, world capitalism and imperialism are giving rise to their antitheses, world peasantry and proletariat.

The peasant cannot, for long, be a reactionary, even if he wishes to. For, to be a reactionary, he must become an ally of capitalism, his deadliest enemy. And how can capitalism accept him as an ally, a permanent and contented ally, even if the peasant is foolish enough to agree, so long as it can thrive only on the exploitation of world peasantry? Either the one or the other must eventually triumph and all other positions can only be transitory. Therefore, this is the age of the revolutionary peasant and this revolutionary phase can come to a fitting culmination on the destruction of capitalism and imperialism and also the destruction of all dictatorships.

That the peasant has, for many centuries, been in a revolutionary age and that he has been moving towards the fulfilment of his historic revolutionary role are incontrovertible historical

facts. This is sought to be graphically, if briefly, established by this thesis.

Naturally this goes against the century-old Communist orthodoxy that the peasant is essentially a reactionary. It explodes the Marxian and Leninist prejudices against the peasants. It proves how unhistorical has been the anti-peasant attitude and policies of the Western socialist.

The Serbian writer, Pribichevich, himself a peasant, has rightly complained that peasants have never had a historian of their own. It is extraordinary how all the revolutions which were fought and political achievements which were experienced by peasants were allowed to be claimed as the special achievements of all other classes. Even the Communist orthodoxy attributed the victories achieved by Russian peasants to the leadership and struggle of the proletariat. It is high time that efforts are made to explore and unravel the revolutionary aims, achievements, methods and struggles of peasants down the course of history. The present thesis is only the beginning of such an effort.

Why were peasants' exploits and achievements neglected ? The answer to this, if only it can be fully discovered, will, I am sure, give us an opening into the reactionary and diseased mind of the non-peasant classes of the world.

The peasant is, after all, a basic factor in any social economy. In their numbers, in their relation to land and the most fundamental aspects of social productive efforts, peasants as a class are marked out for the supremest position in the political, social and economic dispensation of any society of any age. Yet, they have come to be the most down-trodden. Why ? Because, then all other classes would have had to accept a subordinate, though a co-operative and comradely partnership in

society. That would not be to their liking or to their interests. So they worked for the peasants' downfall.

But how did they succeed ? By various means. By exalting the intellectual efforts and raising to supreme heights of aristocracy, the so-called practitioners of intellect. By inculcating among the masses false values of life and by making it appear that to pay "scarcity prices" for the "key services" rendered by the intellectuals was the most natural and God-ordained social duty. Indeed by ignoring the achievements of the toiling masses, by magnifying the activities of the snobs and the so-called elite of cultured society, by failing to record the contribution of peasantry to the history of the world. Thus was the downfall of the masses brought about and perpetuated.

For well over 600 years, the Andhra peasant class and tribes ruled over Southern India below the Godavari river and kept off the foreign invaders of the Islamic faith. For six centuries, South India, below the Godavari, was assured of peace and prosperity, culture and statesmanship by the peasant tribes whose descendants today form the backbone of the peasant movement infusing confidence into the present-day peasant revolutionaries and demanding Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. Yet, we have had no full-fledged and truthful history right up to 1920 of their great and revolutionary achievements.

Communists and socialists who are keen on maintaining in a pedantic manner that peasants have been passive, unrevolutionary and uncreative, are blind to the peasants' constructive achievements and revolutionary struggles. They prefer to believe that peasants do not count at all in the modern revolutionary age.

My regret is that I have not had enough time to gather

such fuller facts of all the revolutions and revolts that peasants have staged in different countries and at different times and give a fuller picture of their effective and revolutionary ideology and methodology. I trust that *this little volume* will induce other sons and daughters of world peasants to write a fuller history.

We are living in happier times. Peasants are going to be the architects of their own fate and also of the freedom of their countries. For a whole century Socialists and Communists have been shouting and working for the consummation of the slogan "Workers of the World Unite". They have achieved a lot. But it has not been enough either to unite the workers or to usher in world revolution. Despite all their fears and even non-possumus attitude, peasants too have come to be organised on a national scale and now, they are hastening to bring into existence their own world peasants' and farmers' conferences and to found the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, and to shout the slogan of "Peasants of the World Unite". Mahatma Gandhi, the arch-peasant of the twentieth century, and so many of us who have learnt from the achievements and failures of the socialist movement in and outside Russia have come to realise the necessity for building up and leading the modern revolution, not with the aid of only one of the classes of toilers but with that of all classes of toilers. So, instead of aiming at the dictatorship of the proletariat, we are fighting for the democracy of all toilers, that is, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj. And in such a raj, naturally, peasants will form the major partner and the vanguard, not to exploit but to serve all others and to live, not by their own dictatorship but in a democratic partnership with all other toilers.

In one respect what Karl Marx said in the Communist Manifesto has come to pass so far as agriculture is concerned. He said that Capitalism would come to take within its vicious embrace more and more of the world and its peoples, not only the

industrial classes but also the agricultural peoples ; not only the advanced peoples but also the backward tribes and that it would come to control their destinies in an effective manner. All this has come to pass. Unfortunately while he and his disciples in Europe have analysed the laws underlying the impact of Capitalism upon industrial classes especially the proletariat, very few have cared to devote sufficient time and thought to discern the laws that have come to govern the impact of capitalism upon peasants and rural peoples. On the other hand, the world's thinkers have been influenced either by the Marxist fear and contempt of the peasants as the last of the capitalistic outposts and as inveterate counter-revolutionaries or by the Capitalistic liberals' neglect of the peasants as being reactionary forces which were bound to be liquidated by capitalistic advance in the farming industry.

But the two world wars have made them realise the failure of capitalism to liquidate the peasants and replace their economy by mechanised agriculture. They have also seen how greatly capitalistic economy has come to depend upon the co-operation of peasants and how the peasant economy occupied the cornerstone in the world's social life which could not be ignored and whose co-operation had to be won at a basic price acceptable to peasants.

On the other hand, peasants themselves have taken a long time to realise how much they have come to depend upon Capitalism for their daily bread, raiment and other necessities ; how their agriculture could be a source of profitable occupation and assured income only if Capitalist economy would co-operate with them. They could not understand how the rapidly growing world transport system, the hegemony of processing industries and insurance schemes, the banking system and marketing were gaining a stranglehold over their very source of living. They failed to realise their growing dependence upon these key services with the

result that they continued to part with an ever-increasing portion of the fruits of their own labour in payment for the key services rendered by capitalism and be content with a stable or dwindling share of the world's wealth while the industrial, commercial and intellectual classes have been taking for themselves ever-larger portions of the expanding totals of the world's wealth, thanks to the progress of industrialisation and modern mechanism of transport, credit and commerce. They have come to accept as truth the assertion of capitalists that the peasant economy is unprogressive and unprofitable and that, therefore, their comparatively lower incomes were the natural result of their own unprogressive means and methods of production. They were also unable to realise the need for organisation on national and international lines. Only in the Balkans and in India did peasants realise in the pre- depression years that they had to organise themselves in self-defence against the ravages of capitalism. But the world economic depression of 1929-34 proved to be catastrophic to large sections of world peasantry and also to the merchants who were engaged in marketing of agricultural products. Agricultural prices fell precipitately with the result that the burden of peasants' debts was more than doubled and their ability to repay them dwindled into nothing in most parts of the world and peasants were faced with the spectre of foreclosure of their holdings and consequent unemployment. When, therefore, they were thus brought face to face with that economic disaster, they began to think furiously about their own helpless position in the world's social economy and to realise however haltingly, the mischief that world markets have come to play in their life and their own need for self-defence in order to retain their slender hold upon the economic life of the world.

During the war periods, the non-agriculturists have had to pay in most cases specially high prices for agricultural produce and in some countries and on some occasions even famine prices.

With their realisation of the destruction of large percentage of agricultural stocks and vast extents of fertile land and the fall in the production of chemical manures, the world's statesmen foresaw a great shortage of agricultural products and a disastrous fall in the production of food grains after the end of the war. Therefore, they feared that unless special steps were taken to step up production of food after the war, food prices were likely to soar so high as to threaten the world's social life and submerge the toiling masses in starvation and undernourishment. So they wanted to take concerted measures to regain for world markets, control over agriculture and agricultural prices and assure the world of expanding production.

But peasants on the other hand were afraid that if their production were to be further expanded and if the war-time high prices came to be abandoned, they might again become victims of economic depression like that which followed the first World War and so they were naturally suspicious of any capitalistic plan for expanded agricultural production. Indeed they began to demand in America, England and the Scandinavian and Benelux countries assurance of remunerative prices at least for some years after the war. They did succeed in making the American Government pass necessary legislation to assure minimum prices at 80 per cent. of war time prices for 2 years after the war and to make the British Government also give similar assurances and fix the price of crops two years in advance of the sowing season. In Sweden, Denmark, Holland and also in England, the new and healthy principle of fixing the prices of agricultural produce on the basis of a decent and rising standard of living of both agricultural workers and farmers and of average standards of efficiency and equipment, has had to be adopted by their Governments in order to ensure continuous and increasing production of agricultural produce.

To assure the world's peasants that any enlarged production of agricultural produce on their part would not result in another

economic depression and in a slump in agricultural prices and in their bankruptcy, consumers' interests have accepted the long-ignored advice of nutrition experts that if the world's population were to be adequately fed and clothed, world production of food and fibres would have to be more than doubled over 1939 production levels and therefore there would be no fear of over-production in the agricultural sector and that Governments of all nations should be persuaded to adopt such policies of stabilised prices of agricultural produce and the subsidisation of the food consumption of the poor sections of masses in order that all the production would be usefully consumed while the price of agricultural produce were kept up at reasonable and remunerative levels. They therefore wanted to found a world organisation which could reconcile these two principles; expanding production and assured prices and full employment for agricultural producers and adequate supplies of food and clothing for all the consumers, higher remuneration for the producers and large supplies of food and clothing for all the masses.

The F. A. O.—While the economic depression awakened the peasants to the need for organisation and self-defence, the two world wars have forced on the agricultural masses and their politicians and economists to realise their ultimate dependence upon the co-operation of peasants for the security of their social economy in times of war as well as peace. Both parties have thus reached the psychological awareness of their dependence upon each other. They both have realised how utterly impossible it would be for them to get on alone. The Hot Springs Conference was the result of that realisation of the need for mutual co-operation. Th Food and Atriculture Organisation came into existence as a result of that realisation.

The F.A.O. has brought together for he first time the agricultural ministers, agronomists and other scientists and economists interested in the agricultural situation, agricultural econo-

mics on to one platform to concert measures on a world scale for development of the agricultural economy and the assurance of increased and efficient production and higher agricultural incomes. It has made it possible for agriculture and all those interested in it to think in terms of their world unity. Today the F. A. O. is making it possible for agrarian movements of different countries to be linked up with each other to follow certain well-understood world ideals of the peasantry and the agriculturists and to make their contribution to the awakening and organisation of world peasantry.

Already the F. A. O. has placed before agriculturists the inspiring and inter-dependent aims of increased and efficient production on their past in return for higher remuneration and greater social conveniences and comforts in keeping with and equal to those now enjoyed by all other classes of toilers. It has also placed before them the ennobling ideals of economic democracy and service of the general public through more efficient and better agricultural production, preservation and utilisation of agricultural resources and produce.

The F. A. O. has helped the peasants all over the world to realise the importance and the need for world agreements for production, prices, sale and distribution of staple cereals. It has drawn the attention of world statesmen to the need for the establishment of a World Food Board, to discharge the functions of planning, and expanding food production, its storage and preservation, and its equitable distribution among all peoples at prices which should be remunerative to growers and just to the consumers. The World Wheat Agreement even as an idea is one of its first significant achievements. It is likely to be revised and accepted by all countries of the world before the end of 1950.

It has also formulated the idea that it is the duty of food sur-

plus countries to go on producing more and more ; of the richer countries to take delivery of all the food surpluses in their own countries and in others and to make them available to all poorer countries at specially low prices—certainly lower than domestic prices prevailing in richer countries and sometimes lower than their cost cultivation—for distribution among poorer consumers and thus help to raise the nutritional standard of the population of poorer countries and their sub-human standards of living. This is indeed a progressive and revolutionary ideal when contrasted with the usual capitalist device of dumping surplus production of one set of countries in another set of countries merely for the sake of markets but to the destruction of the merchants and producers of importing countries. Today due to the capitalistic system of markets and prices, the poorer sections of people of most countries in the world are obliged to go undernourished and underclothed because of their inability to pay the cost price of essential supplies while paradoxically large productive resources of the world go either undeveloped or unexploited or are even destroyed after production because of want of markets and effective demand at remunerative prices. This F. A. O. solution will cure the world of this capitalistic disease. Once this solution is adopted, peasants need not be afraid of their bumper harvest ever resulting in a slump for their produce. Producers and merchants need not have to search for markets. There would be no need anywhere either for restriction of output or for the destruction of what is produced with a view to obtain an overall price for producers. All that is produced can be put to the best possible use and the marginal utility of every additional contribution to production can be continually raised until all the peoples of the world, irrespective of their economic status, colour or creed or country, can come to be fully fed and clothed and otherwise provisioned. It is thus a democratic and socialistic ideal for the achievement of which world peasants are now being prepared by the F. A. O. That the Governments of the world and their leaders on the

agrarian front should have come to accept this ideal as their immediate goal is indeed one of the greatest achievements of twentieth century democracy.

To achieve their objectives of better and greater production the F. A. O. is trying to bring about world co-operation in the wide-spread and planned production of fertilisers and agricultural machinery, the protection and improvement of cattle and other agricultural stock and the development of processing industries. It is also studying the land tenures prevailing in different parts of the world with a view to relieve the peasants of the burden of absentee landlordism, and uneconomic rents and to assure them proprietory or co-operative rights over their lands. It also seeks to promote consolidation of holdings. It wishes to develop co-operative cultivation and marketing and also co-operative processing industries. It is also studying the possibilities for the early improvement of technical knowledge and equipment of peasant masses. It is making careful studies of the trends of world prices and marketing conditions for all staple agricultural products with a view to develop world-wide commodity agreements and thus enable peasants of all the world to gain an effective control over world markets and become masters of the very delicate, efficient, yet mischievous mechanism of world-markets. Thus the F.A.O. bids fair to become the greatest constructive and democratic revolutionary force on the side of world peasants in order to enable them to march towards full-fledged political and economic democracy.

The I. F. A. P.—But such a Governmental organisation alone cannot achieve these objectives nor can it popularise its noble ideals among all the peasants of the world. In the absence of conscious effort on the part of peasants and their leaders to reach upto their ideals, it can only end in a certain amount of spoon-feeding of the masses without actually rousing and raising the peasants to their fullest stature as full-fledged and emanci-

pated citizen of the world. Therefore, there is a great need for a peasant and farmers' movement to undertake the task of organising peasants on national and international fronts, drag them as it were into the arena of world politics, make them active and dynamic participators in the growing and unfolding world drama of democracy and to inspire them to fight for their due share of power, participation in and contribution to the full-fledged democracy of the future. It is to answer this need that the International Federation of Agricultural Producers was born in 1946 in the London Conference of World Agriculturists. Ever since, the I. F. A. P. has been trying to stimulate peasants and farmers of different countries to organise themselves on their national front, to join its annual conferences and to develop the spirit of world cameraderie of peasants. It has also been popularising the aims and ideals of the F. A. O. It is helping the hitherto capitalistic-minded peasants of Western countries to absorb the essence of democratic socialism by making them zealots of an expanding economy and production more for use and less for profit and more and more production for consumption by all the peoples of the world without any thought of making everyone pay remunerative prices.

Thus, at long last, world peasants are achieving parity, to a great extent in the ideological sphere and to a smaller degree on the institutional plane, with the industrial proletariat. If the industrial proletariat have the I. I. O. to defend their interests and to set before them the ideals of democratic partnership in industry and humane and progressive conditions of life, the peasants have today the F. A. O. to fulfil their corresponding tasks. If the proletariat have their World Trade Unions, the peasants have come to have their International Federation of Agricultural producers.

The most important means that peasants and farmers have to adopt and can adopt is co-operation among themselves for the elimination of capitalistic exploitation and for maximising the

fruits of their own labour and the enjoyment thereof. Already notable achievements have been made by the farmers of Holland, Denmark, Ireland, France, Sweden, Norway, Canada and America. Farmers' co-operatives hold the key for their future effective role in the social economy of the world. While industrial co-operatives have made very little progress in most countries of the world, agricultural co-operatives have marked much progress and promise to achieve much greater progress in the near future because peasants still possess the abilities of the enterpreneur with habits of planning, direction and management. The Farmers' Co-operative Movement is the constructive aspect of the twentieth century peasant movements of the world. Naturally both the F. A. O. and the I. F. A. P. as well as the peasant movements of India, Africa, Indonesia and Burma are paying special attention to its development.

Ever since its birth in May 1946, the I. F. A. P. is daily growing from strength to strength. I was happy to be able to go to the London Conference and contribute my share in framing the constitution of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. It was indeed a high privilege for an Indian peasant to have been one of the founders of the modern Indian Peasant Movement in 1923 and also of the World Farmers and Peasants' Federation in 1946. I was also elected as one of the seven members of the Executive of this International Organisation.

That London Conference evoked mixed feelings in my heart. I was pleased because for the first time in history, more than 30 nations of peasants had got together in that conference and begun to grapple with their world problems in a statesmanlike and far-sighted manner. Peasants and farmers were giving the lie direct to the declaration of all those Western intellectuals and socialists and communists that peasants were parochial-minded and unorganisable. And they were demonstrating in the most irrefutable manner that they are not only nationally-minded but also world-minded and that they were also as keen on orga-

nised efforts in the modern sense as the proletariat. My heart leaped with joy at that great spectacle of farmers rushing into that Conference from all parts of the world in order to take the most determined and concerted steps to safeguard their interests on a world scale and no longer to leave any scope for their case to go by default in the councils of the World.

At the same time, I was a little depressed by the complete absence of awareness on the part of most of the delegates of the immense political significance of that meeting of various national farmers and peasant unions exchanging their experiences and developing their world contacts and consciousness. Quite many of them were still attached to the capitalist ideology that had enveloped them and had as yet not realized the need to break through the vicious ring of world markets and gain real freedom that can come only through a socialistic reorganisation of the world. Indeed a good number of them were much prejudiced against a consciously socialist way of thinking. But I had the satisfaction that however much those farmers' representatives were steeped in the capitalist lore of profits, they did realise the need for an expansionist economy, protection from the ravages of world-markets and the attainment of stability of prices, remunerative returns for farmers and rising standards of living for agricultural workers. They have also begun to demand the same social and economic comforts and conveniences, rewards and political rights as are enjoyed by all other sections of the masses and classes. Anyhow a beginning has been made in the direction of giving an organisational shape to the conception of world peasantry. The first wedges have been driven into capitalism. And the growing passion of peasants and farmers for an expansionist economy is sure to break up capitalism sooner or later. At long last, the world peasants are on the march. It is bound to be a revolutionary march. It is bound to lead to success, that is, the end of capitalism and the dawn of a socialist Commonwealth of peasants, workers and professionals, in all countries and all over the world.